

The Guppy and the Sharks

A Mind Wander by Lisa Hering

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Music by Nature Healing Society

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XX9fVzyrbMw>

I'm underwater scuba diving in a suit with mask, flippers, and a flashlight. I'm exploring in the sea, unusual for me, as I am terribly afraid of the sea. But I have been on the shore, lounging in the hot sun, partially in the surf, going in and out of a dreamy sleep. I came to the island to escape the city where I have experienced hardships in my business and lost so much. A dear friend told me years ago that I was a guppy swimming with the sharks and they were going to eat me up. I didn't exactly know what he meant at the time, and he didn't go into detail, but now I understand and I need to get away from the world of people, the village where I don't fit in.

I have known about a certain music that would call me to a certain spot, something vague in my memory. I don't remember if it is real or imagined, if I should expect to hear it or not. And I can't remember what significance it has in my life. But I have stayed on the beach in moderate anticipation. But only when I fall partially asleep do I think that maybe I have heard it. It is persistent, and I believe it is time to follow it. I put on my gear and wade into the turquoise water.

As I swim, I begin to get some images in my head. In the back of my mind are images of me playing notes on a large keyboard in a public plaza, the kind you have to jump from key to key and step on the note with your foot. I'm hearing these notes as I swim. I continue exploring. I seem to be looking for something. Bubbles rise from my mouth as I exhale. I have always been afraid of gigantic creatures in the oceans, and simply of the ocean itself, the massive amounts of water, the crushing pressure against one tiny human, me, so frail, so powerless under the ocean. I saw movies about ships

sinking when I was young and impressionable. And yet, here I am going about my business as though being in the sea was a normal and habitual part of my life. It is something I know how to do. I am skilled at this, and am not afraid, but rather practice it with the competence of a master.

I eventually come near coral reefs. I am swimming through them, in and out of them, using them as protection against the openness over there, out there where the sharks swim. I am small in this environment, like a guppy. And I need shelter. It is instinctual to stay as protected as possible, and not be so daring that I swim without regard to my vulnerability. My species may be at the top of the food chain, but not here, not in a scuba suit, and not alone. Maybe in a boat or a ship, yes, we might wield strength, so long as the mighty boat floats. But I am not in a ship. And I cannot see or smell as far as sharks can.

What is my purpose here? It has not yet been revealed. I swim, then I pause and watch. I anchor myself on a wall of coral to view ahead. I survey. The water is cool and clear, but I cannot see as far as I'd like. Some things are still invisible to me. There are small fish swimming near me and plants on the bottom swaying in the current. I must keep a sharp watch.

I keep swimming. I am looking for something. And I know I am in a potentially dangerous place. But I need to see this thing that is a mystery to me. So I keep going. And eventually, I see something unnatural, something man made, a glass cupola rising out from the sea plants, covered partially by coral and sea debris, like a ship wreck becoming part of the environment. I swim towards it. It sits in an old sea settlement, with a building and a park. The memory comes back to me as though remembering a dream. And then I see what I am seeking. It is partially covered in sea bottom calcareous mud, but I can see it. It is a large keyboard, like the one in my memory. I hover above it. Yes, this is what I've been hunting. This is where the music has been coming from, the music that caters to my needs of calmness. I swim down to it and touch it. Yes, it is real. I make waving motions with my hands to clear off some of the sea mud. I run my fingers up and down it. I do not expect it to play anymore. But I just want to touch it. I continually keep my eyes moving around, watching the sea life, perusing for danger.

I once lived here. This is the place in my memory. This was an outpost. Next to me is a building, a center that was filled with hundreds of people, families, part of a trial, part of a new life, a place to get away and be safe. Then I see a red light from the keyboard appear. And I hear a note, middle C, all by itself. How could the keyboard still function? It would have long ago run out of power. I listen. One single note that continues to stream out and propagate itself in every direction. I head down to the keys and tap a note 3 above it, F, and hold it. A blue light appears. The C is released, and to my right, I hear a B note 3 more up. I quickly swim to my left and press both hands on another 3 notes higher, E but an octave lower, and I hear the most beautiful broken chord in E, 3 notes played one after the other, separately, not in unison, an E then a G followed by a C, the same thing repeated one octave up, and then repeated again one octave higher. Colored lights appear and disappear with each note. I quickly press the A, and 3 broken chords in A are played always on the white keys, simple, like a message or a code. Then I go left again to a deep D, it plays 3 broken D chords, and I follow with a G and a final middle C again, the music lavishly following my lead in broken chords, all the while with different colored lights appearing and disappearing, like a light dance. Was there someone here, or was it my imagination? The lights stop, and the keys fall silent and inoperable. The ballad is over.

I swim to the building. It has a hemispherical dome as its central roof, made of thick glass formerly used as a look out. There are carved stone statues all around of the ancient classical gods, Zeus, Persephone, Apollo. I look down from above. Sunlight filters in and shines through to the floor of mosaic tiles in the pattern of a mermaid. But her tail fin is not what one would expect, rather it is a butterfly reflecting a blue iridescence in the sun rays. And beside her is the whale shark, largest fish in the ocean. All three are symbols of this place, land, sea, and air creatures together. The mermaid has a wistful look, as though she were trying to speak, but she is silent. The building is now filled with ocean water, and the life that was once here is now gone.

This place, this Atlantis, is frozen in time. It is from a time when I was much younger and inexperienced, a time when I, a mere guppy, swam with the dangerous sharks and took too many chances. And I have come back to re-examine that life, replay the tragedy in a new light, give it a new ending, if that is possible. I go in through the front doors that lie open for anyone, any creature who dares to enter. I swim around and revisit moments in a seemingly previous life, but now they are watery and quiet, whereas

before, there was bright sunlight and harmonious voices filling the air. I re-examine every inch, and I see myself a million million times, in the bits of broken mirror, in glass crystal drops from the chandeliers, a faceted mirrored ball that hung on the dance floor ceiling, the mirror behind the bar, prisms that give me a window into the past, memories of me, motivated, working hard, excited. But I didn't understand the system, those talked about sterling qualities of opportunity that stand square in the mainstream of American business, criminals disguised as bankers, sharks looking for guppies, appetizers. And as my friend predicted, the sharks devoured me. I have not known how to recover. There is a fire that will not be doused. My life has been on hold, in quarantine, disjointed, silent motion. I have been lost and need to find my way.

I swim back through the doors into the music court, then up to the hemispherical domed cupola. I hug the glass dome and place my face upon it to see better, mashing my face mask as closely as I can. At just that moment, a large shadow slowly crosses the floor below me. Adrenaline shoots through my veins as I fear the worst. I have failed to keep a watch in my intense interest and my thoughts have drifted. With fright gripping my heart, I snap my head to see what immense beast is causing the shadow. As I look up, I see the outline of a large water creature, the largest I have ever seen. He is not headed for me, but rather casually passes as if out for a Sunday drive. He is many times my size. I am doll size compared to him. It is perhaps a whale. I look at him. He has a large blunt nose and white dots on a charcoal background. It is indeed a shark and a whale at the same time. Now I recognize him and remember. It is my harmless old lovable friend, the whale shark. He has no teeth and no taste for flesh, a plankton eater. The music must have signaled him. Does he recognize me? I have been gone so long.

He descends upon the bubble building, and I rise to greet him. With him are other whale sharks. I swim with them in the clear waters for a some time, swimming as play, playing for the joy of play. The big piano keys light up each time one of us passes within a certain distance of them, and it's a light show set to music, the guppy and the sharks swirling to the music of the keyboard. This place is not just for memories. It is not just a place to try and learn from my mistakes. It is here for me to enjoy, in this moment. Not a place for the past. Not a place for the future. It is a place for me to experience joy right now. It is a place that is showing me the simple purpose of life, my reason for being, to experience everything to the fullest, and that the only possible purpose for me is to have

and experience this contagious joy that I not only share with the whale sharks, but I only have because I experience it with the whale sharks. The presence of these magnificent beings amidst a backdrop of an elusive Atlantis and unexplained lights to unexplained music is an unparalleled experience. I am the guppy and I swim with sharks, and they do not eat me. These gentle creatures remind me that what I have is worth so much that my cup runneth over. The peace and happiness that I get for free grows exponentially and runs over the edges of my limitations and flows wild enough to fill up the vacuum of space and the grid of love that is omnipresent. Money cannot buy this, yet it is the thing of envy, the feeling that everyone wants, the belonging to something worthy, the acceptance and inclusion without judging. Others try to buy it, but it can't be bought.

When I finally learn what I had come to learn, the whale sharks begin to dissipate into the distance. There is more than one way for a guppy to swim with the sharks, and now I understand. Though the future is not ours to see, it possesses a great miracle for us. The wise will rid themselves of an enemy by turning him into a friend. And though the future of mankind often seems bleak and on the perimeter of self extinction, it holds this contagious joyful message for us in the form of peace and understanding, human to human, and species to species. And the peace that I seek becomes an evolutionary instinct planted within me.

Thank you and good night.