



Chamber Music in the Forest

Music by NatureHealing Society

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDCA1xKTPBw>

A Mind Wander

by Lisa Hering

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In my mind was the memory of my visit to the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River I first saw when I was only six. It's great architecture stretched over a vast unexplored area of temples and monuments, relics of ancient times when another world occupied this space, beings long since gone to dust, leaving behind only their impressions as evidence of their great dynasties. It was peaceful, painted with misty earth tones, red oxide, yellow

ocher, burnt sienna, sage, colors that calmed the spirit and faded into the horizon unobtrusively, so that it seemed to never end. It was inhabited now by only the most tenuous of creatures and plants, clinging to vertical rock wall, and seeking rare shade under ledges of what used to be sea bottom. The black ravens seemed to be the only ones taking advantage of the immense amount of material that's been removed. It was a virtual playground to them. They'd rise on a thermal and then free fall till they were out of sight. I swear they were laughing as I held my breath, hoping to see them rise again. They didn't seem to mind sharing the canyon with us, as witnessed by the number of ravens feeding on leftovers in the parking lot. I decided I wanted to fly like the raven, even if it was just for a little while, to have that feeling of soaring across the ages and down into something bigger than I had ever seen before.

I fell in love at that moment for the first time in my life, and it would be a love story that would last a lifetime. As with all exceptional love stories, the path of two lovers, who care for nothing so much as their bond, is filled with obstacles which keep them apart, whether physically or emotionally, for much of their lives, with tiny morsels of actual togetherness when they are in the same place at the same time. Those moments are worth the long years of waiting, tragic as it may sound. But time is different for everyone. And for true love, there is no time too long to wait for that special moment when they finally meet again. They mate for life, and no boundaries, no distance, no amount of hardship or work is too great to douse the fire burning in their desires. It is a feeling they will have until death does them part. And even death will not stop their love. It's the type of love where one might spend 99% of their life slaying dragons, jumping hurdles that require super human strength, and eons of misery chained in a dungeon, but that 1% that they've tasted is worth the rest of their life trying to get it back.

I basked in the peace I felt when I saw the great canyon, powerful and yet delicate. The dusty colors calmed me and set my mind at rest. The distances were unimaginable, even though I was right there and could see the stony monuments and the tiny river at the bottom, the mighty Colorado, the ancient artist who had carved this place one crystal at a time, the time frame unfathomable to such a short lived human. Here was everything I desired, the omnipresence of something greater than myself in which I could find shelter and safety, something big and massive that would protect me, a presence that was always there, something I knew I could count on. It scared me and excited me at the same time. I

could not take my eyes away. And I could not ever forget the moment I knew this was what I needed to make my life complete.

Back home in the city, the years passed and I often longed for the canyon. But I lived far away and I needed time to grow up. From the second story window in my bedroom, I could look out and see a forest on the other side of the two lane road that passed by our house. On many an overcast or rainy day, the hot Houston sun would be enveloped in a cool blue green mist that would put a dreamy somber mood over the city. I was drawn to the unusual light that emerged and I watched as raindrops bounced off the yellow honeysuckle vines covering the fence below. My gaze would linger there, admiring the symphony of their tiny bells bobbing in the rain. Then, I'd move my focus to the trees beyond. I heard music coming from that direction, soft and melodic, a piano whose keys would hit each time a honeysuckle bloom would dip. It was as though the honeysuckle itself were playing the notes. The cars that passed between me and the forest each had their own sound. The vibrations that the rubber tires made as they whizzed across the asphalt road, humming on their axles. It would begin softly from a long way off, and rise to a crescendo the closer it came, and then gradually taper off until the sound and the car were gone, like a deep breath, inhaled and then exhaled. And then, the next one would take a deep breath. Birds were singing and dogs were barking. Occasionally a truck would blow its horn. Together, they made an entire range of symphonic life. I knew the canyon was in that direction a thousand miles away. And I was sure if I could just see beyond the trees, it would somehow be there, just over there, on the other side of the tall evergreens and the spreading oaks. Was the music only my imagination, or was it real? Was I really hearing the canyon?

And then one day, after the rain let up, I walked outside and across the two lane road which separated the rural country from the fast paced city. I crossed the ditch that I had fallen in years ago on my bicycle. I marched through the buttercups and wildflowers, and then parted the tall wheat-like grasses and weeds until I found a path barely traveled that led through the trees into the forest. And I followed the path.

The floor of the forest was covered in mulchy goodness, clean and fresh smelling. As I continued deeper into the forest, it broadened into a clearing. I was enjoying the smells of pine sap and moist earth. Ahead of me, the path was beginning to widen into a clearing. I could make out some people, women. I slowed my pace and walked as quietly

as possible so as to not attract attention. As I neared, I could see that the women had instruments. I hid behind a bush and peered ahead, hoping to hear them play, hoping to hear the music of the canyon.

There were a total of three women, chamber music trio. The first was a blonde with red lipstick. She had a violin under her chin. The bow was poised to play. Near her was a white grand piano under a tall pine. A woman with black hair and a red velvet belt sat on the piano bench. Her fingers were poised ready to strike the black and white keys at any moment. A third woman, with thick, curly auburn hair, was poised on a small stool. Her long dress split apart just above her knees to accept a very large and bold instrument, the deep voice of the cello. Her legs were slightly revealed, and the curves of her calves led to red velvet high heels. One hand was placed on the strings in a chord yet unknown to me, the other hand holding a bow outstretched and ready. They were set for a magnificent concert. But there was no audience. There was only me, and I was certain they had not yet seen me as I was watching in secret from the side of the clearing within the dense forest.

But the raven saw me. Ravens have keen eyesight. They are clever and they see everything. There was not a sound. The raven stared straight at me. I had not escaped his watchful eyes. His black feathers reminded me of a formal black suit such as a conductor might wear leading a symphony. He squawked twice, then flew down to the ground and picked up a long twig. He brought the twig to me and dropped it at my feet. I wasn't quite sure what to do. He squawked again, louder this time. He was trying to tell me something. The three women had turned their attention to me and appeared to be waiting, with instruments poised. So I stood up, and walked into the middle of the clearing. They did not act surprised. They acted expectant. I, a young barefooted girl in a simple white button down shirt and denim jeans, with a white ribbon in my hair, was responsible for this music. The raven had plans for me. He was challenging me to be in partnership with him and the music.

I was hesitant as I stood in front of them and they waited on me. With the twig in my right hand, I very slowly raised both arms and said to them,

“It's time to begin.” Rhythmically, I brought my arms down in a circular motion. I began beating them to a tempo of an unseen metronome. The violin put out a magnificent and resounding and long mid tone, followed by several short ones high notes. That was

followed by the pianist who chimed in and gave a fast paced melody. The cello brought in the lower tones in a complimentary fashion at precisely the right moments. Although quite professional looking, it became obvious to me that they were having fun as they seemed to speak to each other, even tease each other, and dare each other, through their instruments. And the three of them played for me and the raven in the forest. The raven flew from branch to branch, diving near me. Once, the raven sat down upon the ledge of the grand piano and he let me put my nose quite close to him. I danced to the songs they gave to me, songs they had composed, songs that nobody else had ever heard. I laughed and ran from each instrument as the next would come crashing in with an unexpected explosion of sound, and I would pretend to try and grab the notes as they flew off like butterflies. Finally, I was exhausted from the activity, and I fell to the ground, a peaceful, happy young girl run completely out of energy. There I rested and there I napped. When I awoke, they were gone. My hair was a mess, filled with bits of leaves and honeysuckle. The ribbon was half laying on my shoulder and I pick it up to place it back on my head, and noticed that it no longer was white, but rather red, the same red as the muses. I got up and made my way back out of the forest, impregnated with a new spirit inside of me, a spirit that said I would get back to the canyon, a spirit that told me I would follow the raven someday to the hub of music and beauty,

Throughout my life, I remembered the music of these three muses to take me to the place I was happiest. All I had to do was look across the tree tops across the road from my window, go past the ditch, then walk down the path into the forest, and gently say,

“It’s time to begin.”

And the music would start. I was transported to the rim of the canyon. I looked down, and I saw the steep cliffs. The ledge I was standing on was precipitous and covered with sand and pea sized pebbles. I was only six. I had light brown hair with bangs, held in place by a white hair band. I was in my Sunday best, a white dress with puffy short cap sleeves and a wide white sheer belt tied in the back which waved in the wind. I wore white tights with shiny white patent leather Mary Jane shoes, brand new and slick on the bottom.

And there was the raven. I was watching him fly. He could hear the music playing and he flew in harmony to it, sometimes fast and sometimes slow, sometimes high and

sometimes low. He danced in flight to the music he knew so well. I didn't take my eyes off him. As he dipped into the shadows of the canyon walls, he passed the weathered buff limestone of the Kaibab plateau filled with fossil coral and trilobites, then past the cross bedded sandstone of the Coconino dunes. Down, down to the Vishnu basement of time so long ago the rocks have been remelted and obliterated the last vestiges of whatever life might have been there. I wanted to fly with the raven. I wanted to be him. And he knew I wanted to fly where he did, deep into the canyon, to the river and the monolithic obelisks that decorate the interior. I didn't know how to become him, so I reached out for him, but he was too far away. He vanished somewhere in the vast, smoky fog. I tried to follow his trajectory, but he was gone.

Moments later, I heard a bird's gentle caw very close to me, and looked down at my feet. There he was, standing next to me, watching me intently. He shook his feathers and they fluffed up, making him appear larger. In the sun, his feathers glistened an iridescent dark metallic blue and purple, making him look black, but he wasn't. He was gorgeous. He cawed to me gently again, almost like the comfortable coo of a dove. His eyes looked all the way into my mind, into my being, into my subconscious. It was as though he was connecting with a part of me I didn't even know existed, communicating with something ancient inside of me, giving himself to that being. He stretched his wings out as though he were going to take off, but he didn't. He was restless with my slowness to understand him. And he cawed this time with persistence and a strong loud voice. He was commanding me.

I knew I wanted to connect with him, but I didn't know how. I was a little girl, not a bird, and I couldn't fly. I couldn't stretch my arms and dive as he did, following the curves of the earth. I closed my eyes to try and imagine being him. The wind around me ebbed and flowed like a tide. I became so engrossed in imagining his flight, that I wasn't really paying attention to my equilibrium. I was at the mercy of the wind which was vacillating between soft breezes and strong gusts of wind. It was rocking me back and forth, like a mate or a lover coaxing me to go. I stretched out my arms and imagined I could fly. And as I was feeling the air flow against the very hairs on my skin, a gust of wind finally pushed me off balance. My new slick bottomed shoes didn't hold. I lost my grip on the stony surface. I heard the pebbles scratching on the bottom of my shoes. And then, there was nothing under me. I was no longer grounded to the earth. But I did not open my eyes.

There were shouts of panic on the rim where I had been standing. But they seemed far away and unimportant. Instead of being afraid, I felt free. I felt exhilarated. I was in a state of dreamy drunkenness and I accepted my fate, whatever it might be. The wind caressed my face and blew my hair behind me. The screams of panic ceased. I was flying earthward. I opened my eyes just in time to see a small girl looking over the edge at me. She was wearing a white dress, and in her hair was a black iridescent hair band that glistened purple in the sun. I called out to her, saying goodbye for now, in my scratchy air ingesting voice. She waved.

I took in a deep breath, so deep my chest puffed up and almost overflowed my lungs. I sucked in all the air that was streaming at me from the fall. I saw each and every layer of rock as I passed, and I strangely knew them all. There was a large pillar-like formation in the center of the canyon, and I reached for it, but it was yet far away.

“Flap your wings!” I heard someone call out to me. “Flap! Noooooooow!”

“What?” I questioned loudly, as though I were far away in a dream.

He yelled in a long monotone voice, “Flaaaaaaap! Noooooooow!”

There was a loud bang of the piano keys that echoed from the forest harmonized by a strong flat whine from the violin and cello. It frightened me. It was like a fog horn on a large ship. It seemed to wake me up from my dreamy state. I was too close to the cliff and I was going to hit. The pianist played a quick anticipatory melody of several rapidly descending notes ending in a chaotic flat slam dunk of all five fingers. In my foggy memories, I could hear him say, “It’s time to begin!”

And so I did. With my nose headed downward, and without further thought, I did as I was told, and flapped my wings, a motion which guided me into a turn, sharp enough to miss the rocks, but gradual enough to appear as smooth as an ace pilot. I focused on the pedestal monument in the center of the canyon, flapping to rise and then adjusting my weight to bank into a gradual curve aligning myself with the top of the pedestal. It was quite graceful indeed.

My buddy caught up to me and said, “Boy, you really fooled me! Turns out, you were just playing the whole time!” He let out a shrill laugh, and said, “You had us all scared, you rascal, you! I’ll remember that one a long time!”

Then he turned gradually and sailed away from me, his laughter echoing and fading until I couldn't hear him anymore. I sailed for a while on the wind and eventually I reached my perch, and landed. The rims of the canyon were shrouded in a dim smoky fog. It was difficult to see very far, but I could make out bits of unnatural colors moving horizontally on the rim in the distance from the place I had just left. I sat there for a long time resting, thinking of the little girl who had waved to me. Little did I know that a frantic mother was grabbing her by the hand and pulling her away from the edge.

"You frightened us all!" the mother remarked angrily, as the two walked across the parking lot back to the car. Lisa reached down to pick up a cracker laying on the asphalt, but her mother quickly pulled her away.

"What's gotten into you?" her mother asked, but Lisa did not reply. As they moved towards the car, Lisa turned to see a raven picking up the cracker. Then, the raven vanished.

Hours later, the sun was beginning to set on the canyon, and I didn't know how much time I would have to enjoy the beauty of my home. I flapped my wings several times, shook my body a little, puffed up the soft feathers that kept me warm, and made some strange sounds with my voice. Then I spread my wings and hopped over the edge. I smiled at the pleasure as the canyon engulfed me. I plunged with joy to its enticement, and the feeling of being immersed into a thing you have thought about for a very long time was empowering and enslaving at the same time. Now, in the midst of it, I could not have resisted had I wanted to. The canyon welcomed me. I was its long awaited guest. I was headed all the way down to the river to enjoy the refreshing and life giving, free flowing water at the bottom. I could see it deep in the distance, below the Permian, below the Devonian and the Cambrian layers of archaic sedimentary rocks into the distant past. This was my marriage, the only one I was to ever have. To most, it was barren, but to me, it was beautiful and the only thing I wanted in life. I was happy. The music of the canyon was in my ears all the way down, music that played from a place very far away.

Flying to me was like playing music. You used your hands and your arms to get the effect you wanted. Up the keyboard and down the keyboard. Guiding the bow and plucking the strings. Deciding what moves you want to make and making it happen, and getting a thrill when it happens. Several notes together in the bass clef, and a long, slow

journey back to the treble, forward again, and almost tip toeing back, uniting the two separate staves of written music to make it whole, the grand staff. One without the other is never as deep and satisfying as when they work together. I was two separate beings. The raven was my emotional self, my subconscious, and the little girl was my conscious self, the physical being. In those days, we were separate. We wanted to communicate, but the little girl was more powerful, and she had hidden her weaker side away at an early age. She had lost it. No matter how hard she looked, she could never see it, even though it was there the whole time. The canyon was the only place she had found that they could unite. There, in a place where one was dipped into a world of spirituality, the connection could be made, even if only temporarily. One could feel what it was like to be together again. Sound was the binding force, being unseen yet overpowering. An absence of sound set the stage, commanding a peace and serenity that allowed the visitor to become calm. Within this calmness, far from the rigors of a busy life, one could see and appreciate nature in her finest. That's when one creates their own music, music to laugh by, music to cry by, music to be thrilled by like no other on earth. It is one's own music. It is the music of one's own subconscious reaching out and exposing the pent up being inside, the innocent.

My sound was soulful music played with vigor and grace. Nothing could hold my attention more so than this. The music became flight. I was experiencing feelings that had been locked away most of my life. It was magnificent. It was exhilarating. I was soaring high above the canyon, dropping quickly thousands of feet in mere minutes. I had never experienced such a fast and steep ride and could only liken it to a roller coaster dive. It was an easily addicting ride, but I was not on a roller coaster and I did not have the safety net of being on iron rails that would slow me down and take me to that still place of debarkation. I was approaching the river all too fast, and I realized too late that I could easily slam into the watery rocks at the end of my fall. I screamed, not knowing if it was more for the fear of the finality of the precipitous end in front of me, or sheer pleasure of the ride itself. At that moment, I could die and know I had truly lived. I stretched out my wings, my natural ailerons and spoilers, and stretched and flattened my feet beneath me as much as possible. Then I flapped, wildly.

I came to a somewhat ungraceful landing atop a rusty colored boulder centered in the river. It was flowing a reddish muddy color and streaming at a good pace. I was near some rapids where young men had proved their prowess by going through a dangerously

narrow rapid between granite embankments that jutted out from both sides. I had gotten there more quickly than any human, and done so without the aid of any water craft. I am not bird nor human. I am an outlier, somewhere outside of the natural realm of understanding. This place I was in, my place, had a space for love and peace, moderated only by unseen forces. From here, I could see both the beginning and the end, neither of which had a beginning or an end, just opposite in direction, both vanishing from my place into infinity. From here, I could verify that we were all part of a four-dimensional continuum that changed the way we knew time itself. All of our work was innovative to us, but in reality was merely the only thing we could do, the only path open to us, the path of least resistance, even though to our micro perspective it seemed to be born of tremendous effort and thought. But it's that effort and thought that allows us to be part of this continuum. And all this made of interlocking plus ones and minus ones, ons and offs, and the ability to turn them on and off, which is really all that exists. And it goes together as it does, and no other way. And it is always in complete harmony no matter the combination because it can be no other way. Expansion and contraction are reversible and irreversible at the same time, a sequence of two things which alternate, neither being before or after the other. And that is the only way it can be. And we are balanced within that, balanced between effort and rest.

I'm listening to the sound of the water, splashing over and around the cobblestones in the river. This was music to me. All sounds have meaning, but music is a voice that talks to me in a primitive language that I was not consciously aware of. It talks to my subconscious, my soul, my gut instinct. It's the language of emotion. My conscious mind reads the written words, but my subconscious reads music, and I had time to listen on my journey deep, deep into the canyon. I had time to let my subconscious fly and be free. I had experienced what I need to experience. Something had been put into motion, something I couldn't stop, something I had no need of stopping. It was time to return to the little girl.

I flew up time as I passed back through the layers of rock to the rim, flying over crowds of tourists, and circled when I saw the parking lot. There was a mother pulling a small girl who was following somewhat reluctantly. I came to a graceful landing there, picking up a cracker she had missed. Moments later, my mother was helping me

into the car. I pulled my hair band off and laid it on the car seat. My mother picked it up and said, “A red hairband? Where did you get a red hairband?”

I replied, “From the raven.” She looked at me in an odd way. My father put the old station wagon in gear, and we pulled out to the tune of him singing “Someone’s in the Kitchen with Dinah.” I looked back, but the raven was gone, so I began singing with my father. His songs were the music of my physical world, but the muses songs were the songs of the canyon. That music was my link to the canyon. It was a message. It was the sounds heard in the canyon every day. And it was in the notes that the muses played on the violin and the piano and the cello. It was the harmonics in the vibrations through the feathers in the flight of the raven. And it was in the deepest memories of the little girl. And when she finally grew up and it was time for her to leave home her parent’s home, she packed her things, got into the car, and listened for the music. She sat and watched the sky for a time. When she saw a black bird leaving the spot where the forest had been many years ago, she waited until she saw him in the sunlight. As he turned a beautiful iridescent blue and purple, she said to herself, “It’s time to begin!”

She turned the key, pulled out of the drive, and followed the raven.

Thank you and good night.

Dedicated to AM

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Chamber Music in the Forest – Author’s Comments

Notice that the color of the hair ribbon is an indicator. As white, it means virgin, young, innocent, untouched, child-like. As red, it means experienced, wife, mature woman, fertile and fruit bearing. As black with iridescence, it means of the raven, clever and wise, teacher, conductor, guiding, watchful of the peace, leader, older.

Lisa as a young child wears a white ribbon. After her encounter with the muses, she wears red, and after trading places with the raven, her ribbon is black iridescent, indicating that at that moment, she and the raven had exchanged physical bodies. The little girl didn’t know how to experience the subconscious. She only understood the conscious or the physical world. So the raven had to communicate with her in the only way possible, physically, just as God had to communicate with the physical world by sending Jesus, a physical being, because the people could not understand God well by prayer alone. He had to show them. And the raven had to show Lisa.

After her first meeting with the muses and raven, the raven has challenged her to become the conductor, and she accepts this challenge, as God challenged Moses. She tells them it is her time to begin being their conductor, and that they are now her musicians, although she is still too young and they remain in a protector type state while also being in her service. They each wear red hair ribbons, indicating that they are experienced with the mysterious raven, although they all wear white clothing, indicative of innocence, angelic. And when she wakes up with a red ribbon, she has been impregnated with a spirit, just as the virgin Mary was impregnated with the holy spirit. And she shall follow the raven someday to the hub of music and beauty, hub being a word that means a center of activity or interest, and in plumbing is also referred to as the female part opposite the spigot, or male part. For her, the canyon represents the hub, the female part, a deep valley, and the raven is the projectile who dives in, the male part, impregnating the receiver with spirit, spirit being the subconscious, the emotion. The hub of music and beauty is the center of activity of the raven, bird, soaring spirit, and Lisa, human, the one who cannot soar but who desires to experience what the raven can do, soar, fly free, be subconscious.

The raven being music or subconscious and Lisa being beauty and, as human, conscious, male and female.

This was my marriage, the union of male and female, canyon the female, raven, the male. To most it would seem barren, in the desert, dry, bearing no fruit, no physical partner, but this is how it is seen by humans, in the physical realm, the conscious realm. Lisa is living in the subconscious realm where spirit is the dominant force, so everything is seen in its spiritual or emotional form. It was to be my only one, only spiritual union.

The music staff denotes the existence of two parts to each body, the conscious mind and the subconscious, which can work separately, but not as well as when they work together, calling the union “grand”. This is an indication that the conscious and the subconscious must be united to form a grand person. And this is what the canyon represents for Lisa.

When she first falls off the cliff, she becomes subconscious, which is the raven, she becomes the raven, he has allowed her to experience this because this is what she has prayed for, and he has answered her prayer, thus she can fly. She is so deep into it she does not want to open her eyes even though she has been blown off the cliff, and the panic does not bother her.

Names of layers of stone and time eons are all real names represented at the canyon, as I studied geology in college in hopes of being an interpretive park ranger.