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The Awe of Trumpets

Ashley Allred

Swollen raindrops hit the windshield with a thud; lightning cracked and illuminated the mid-morning sky and the roar of thunder in the distance sounded like witches' laughter. I waited impatiently for the rain to slow, my back sticking to the beige leather driver's seat. I watched the minutes go by. Time always seems to be moving faster when you are already running late for something. I searched frantically under the seats for my little black umbrella. Of all days to leave it at home, this had to be the one. I couldn't wait any longer; I had to go. I grabbed an old newspaper, all my belongings and made a dash for it.

I tried to be quick but ended up ironically dropping my keys in the rush. I watched them fall just underneath the car as if in slow motion. I could have caught them, but the rain seemed like poison. As each dropped rolled quickly off my skin, I was melting. My perfectly straight auburn hair was now frizzy and unruly. The bottoms of my designer jeans were soaked and the rain seeped into my socks. I could feel it squishing beneath my toes. My glasses were speckled with raindrops making it hard to see. I got on my hands and knees in the pouring rain. The little pebbles on the concrete cut into my palms as I tried to get in a good position. I saw my keys but could not reach them. I damned the gods and the rain poured harder. After repositioning myself, I grabbed my keys and began to run. With wet newspaper overhead, I crouched down and ran as if the rain would not still hit me the lower I ducked.

Just a couple more feet. I was almost under the safe confines of the concrete overhang. The lightning cracked like a whip directly overhead causing me to run faster, praying not to fall. The wind whipped my soaking wet hair onto my face and neck. It stuck like glue. Something stopped me in my tracks. My feet suddenly felt cemented to the ground, like I was a statue in the middle of the huge parking lot. I could not move. Something infiltrated the barriers of my ears. I did not look around to find the source of this noise. It stood out from behind the sounds of the storm roaring above. I had to go. Why was I stopped in the beating rain listening to this noise? Standing there I had to strain to hear it. I lost it for a second as the thunder shook the ground. Ahh, there it was.

My curiosity got the best of me (as it often does) and I finally unstuck my feet and turned to the left. I was able to move, but I found my self trapped. It was incapacitating. The man-made lake just to the left of me seemed a gaping black pool. The raindrops danced frantically on the surface making small waves throughout. The fountain in the middle shot up like a fire reaching for the sky. It looked like a rain dance, something foreign even though I passed it by each morning. Tiny yellow flowers, which always seemed like weeds, accepted the rain thankfully. An enormous tree seemed to overlook the lake with guidance and protection. Its leaves were drifting on the surface of the water like gifts from the wind. I was so busy taking in the surroundings I had almost forgotten about the sounds.

Someone was there, standing on the other side of the lake. Something glistened out of the corner of my eye. I took off my black frames and attempted to wipe the raindrops away. It only made them smear. I rushed to put them back on to find out what that strange gold object was. It was in the hands of a man. Not an ordinary man running from the rain like all the others. He was standing, feet planted, not in awe or amazement as I was, but in pure passion. He held the glistening instrument to his lips, breathed deep and created magic. He seemed to play these gorgeous notes for the rain. It looked as if he was thanking the gods for the rain I had previously cursed them for.

His grey short-sleeved shirt clung to his soaking wet body. He didn't care. Nothing could stop him from playing. I wondered if he even knew it was raining. He seemed so disconnected from the reality of the world around us. Maybe he was just disconnected from all the pressures of it. He was embracing it for all its beauty and wonderment. He had not a care as he stood there swaying to the music from his own instrument. I didn't even realize how long I had been standing there watching him. I wasn't hiding from the rain behind a newspaper any longer. I held it down by my side as it turned into a huge, drenched wad of paper, the ink smearing the now unreadable, horrible words.

I found myself smiling as I watched him. I let myself close my eyes and feel the rain. I felt each drop hit my skin as it cascaded off of me. The music was now penetrating my ears with anticipation. I could feel it welling up inside of me, in the pit of my stomach, like a huge red balloon being inflated with air, ready to take off into the open armed sky. I could feel my mouth stretching into a smile, inch by inch. I could hardly stand it. I was going to burst. I wish I had a camera so I could capture this moment and keep it with me always, folded neatly in the nook of my wallet. A constant reminder. But I didn't have one so I had to devour the experience. The rain didn't bother me now. The lighting seemed to crack in rhythm with the melody. The thunder added bass. The gods were not punishing us with the burden of rain; they were throwing us a party.

I wanted to thank the man with the trumpet. I wanted to run up to him and hug him in the pouring rain. But I quickly decided I did not want to know him. I liked the fact that he was simply that: a man with a trumpet. The anonymity of it made it special. We were two people having never met and here we were sharing an experience. He seemed like a teacher, lecturing me, his student, on the beauty of life. I felt as if we had just had a life altering conversation without uttering a single syllable. I wonder if he even saw me standing there watching him play. His passion exploded into the air, carried off into the wind by the notes. The trees and the grass seemed to be dancing as they swayed back and forth.