

## Sun Shower

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North Universalist Chapel Society

G Good morning and good Sunday. I hope this new day finds you well. Today is Sunday, June the 9<sup>th</sup> and the title of this reflection is Sun Shower. A sun shower is a natural coincidence of opposites. This reflection is about the experience of standing in the sun and in the rain at the very same time.

The light always come sun the morning but you can never tell whether the day will bring sunshine or rain. So, I grabbed myself a decent pair of sunglasses (not a great pair because I have a habit of losing them).... I grabbed a decent pair of sunglasses and also I grabbed myself an umbrella, just in case. I didn't know for sure which way the day was gonna go. All I knew for sure was that I was going for it either way. Life can be ambiguous but we go for it, come rain or come shine. As if to the sunrise, I imagine Johnny Mercer singing,

I'm gonna love you like nobody's loved you,  
Come rain or come shine.  
High as a mountain and deep as a river,  
Come rain or come shine.  
I guess when you met me  
It was just one of those things,  
But don't ever bet me,  
"Cause I'm gonna be true if you let me.  
You're gonna love me like nobody's loved me,  
Come rain or come shine.  
Happy together, unhappy together  
And won't it be fine.  
Days may be cloudy or sunny,  
We're in or we're out of the money,  
But I'm with you always,  
I'm with you rain or shine.

I imagine this music like a prayer...a prayer from 1946, the year that Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen created it. We remember Harold Arlen from his windy Kansas days.

When all the world is a hopeless jumble  
And the raindrops tumble all around  
Heaven opens a magic lane

When all the clouds darken up the skyway  
There's a rainbow highway to be found  
Leading from your window pane

To a place behind the sun  
Just a step beyond the rain

Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high  
There's a land that I heard of  
Once in a lullabye

You know the song...most of us know it. It's almost inescapable. I imagine music like a prayer...and it almost always takes me to a good place—fearlessly and compassionately...sometimes surprisingly.

I never know at first, whether it's gonna be good or bad...because some aspects of life are positive and some aspects of life are negative. Some aspects of life are both but most of them are neither...or are some combination of the two—like ice cream...delicious and fattening or like brussels sprouts in childhood or technology when we get older. For these things, it's a mix of extremities—some parts rain and some parts shine. And we wander between the two, no matter how deeply we meditate. In fact, it's the practice of meditation, this oscillation between extremities, between the yin and the yang of life, between the inbreath and the outbreath of life, between the apex and the apogee of spiritual complexity that animates the living of our lives. We're always moving between one thing and another. We wander between the longest days and shortest nights of the year, between the longest night and the

shortest days of the year. We expect life to be one way when most days, it's actually two. It is so good to be prepared for both of them.

I imagine music like a prayer. A few nights ago, however, I was restless. The night was complicated. I had had a fitful sleep.. In my dreams, I was hearing a musical prayer but it was not a gentle one. It was good but it wasn't restful and in my dream state, I was confused. I was hearing not the peaceful, musical prayers of Mercer and Arlen. I was hearing the loud and raucous prayers of Steve Perry and others on the journey. They sang,

Those crazy nights, I do remember in my youth  
I do recall, those were the best times, most of all  
In the heat with a blue jean girl  
Burning love comes once in a lifetime  
She found me singing by the railroad tracks  
Took me home, we danced by the moonlight

Those summer nights are calling  
Stone in love  
Can't help myself, I'm falling  
Stone in love

It was raucous but, somehow, that was fine and good. I slept right through all of that that...but when the guitar solo came in, I started to wake up. I dream in the language of poetry. I don't dream in language of guitar solos, especially if I'm not the one in the dream who is playing it.

It was an otherwise peaceful night. Quiet. Restful. Restorative...even through the raucous poetry. It was the guitar solo that woke me up...56 seconds into what I thought was a musical prayer...three nights ago...at 1:53am. Can I play for you what this dream state sounded like? Between Diane and I, we can reproduce this moment almost exactly. []. Good. Anyone who is so moved, feel free to respond as youthfully and as foolishly as you please. Diane...

[twinkle, twinkle, little star

how I wonder where you are...whole scale]  
[play Stone In Love]

Those crazy nights, I do remember in my youth  
I do recall, those were the best times, most of all  
In the heat with a blue jean girl  
Burning love comes once in a lifetime  
She found me singing by the railroad tracks  
Took me home, we danced by the moonlight

Those summer nights are calling  
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Journey. The Escape album, 1981. It was 1:53am on a work night and my neighbor's old school stereo shattered the night. It was really loud. I mean, it was really loud. And I came out of nowhere which was the strange thing about it. It didn't shatter me from my sleep—not until the guitar solo, at any rate.

I was super annoyed, for sure, but I also just loved the song. And I loved the boldness of blasting it out in the middle of the night. I haven't spoken to my neighbors yet about it. I'm sure when I do, it will be funny. I hope I see them in a public place—in the post office or the general store. I'll just strike up a normal conversation and then, when it's their turn to talk, start singing,

Those summer nights are calling  
Stone in love  
Can't help myself, I'm falling  
Stone in love

Then, I can say something cheeky, like, "I'm sorry. I could hear you talking bout the music was so loud. What did you say?" And then, when they started again, I could repeat the pattern until they got the joke...and they better laugh. If I could do it, they can do it.

What I learned from that experience is that our spirits have a choice—honey or vinegar, sunshine or rain. Life can be ambiguous but Spirit often asks for clarity.

When my father died, Spirit asked for clarity. My father died in January of 2019. I knew that he was going, not consciously...but I knew. I was living up here at the time. I packed a bag, I grabbed two guitars—an acoustic and the national—and I drove down to New Jersey early in the week. I think it was a Tuesday but I can't remember now. I parked and walked into the hospital in Neptune where my dad had done some consulting. I stayed with him until he went—five days in a single room. I felt only once, to have lunch with Mike who drove over from Philadelphia. Michael Thomas Joseph Carey, the III. He works for Disney. He did lighting for The Lion King in its performances all around the world. He's usually in London, Rome or Singapore or something. Lucky for me, he was home in Pennsylvania, just over an hour away.

We went to high school together, he and I. We shared powerful experiences. One of the times I remember the most was in the beginning of our sophomore year in high school. It was 1981. It's funny but that raucous Journey song that we were just talking about, that song came out that year! Anyway, it was the beginning of the school year and we were both on the football team. Starters. Mike was a defensive end and I was an outside linebacker. We both did well as freshmen and we were hoping to make varsity in our second year. We had a meeting—a skull session, we called it—in one of the classrooms before the practices began. Our team captain said something of a joke. He said, "If someone doesn't bleed at every practice, the practice is wasted." Mike and I thought was hilarious. Sitting in the back, we both started laughing...only it wasn't a joke. He was serious...and so was the rest of the team. Mike and I laughed out loud...and with confidence, anticipating the protection of a larger crowd. When it turned out that it was just he and I, we looked at each other and left the room. We lost a lot of friends that day. We probably even made a bunch of enemies. But

neither of us ever looked back. Our spirits were quite clear. We just went on to do other things. For us, they were better things. I love football. I love the strategy...but there is no need to bleed. For us, bleeding meant that we were doing something wrong.

So, anyway, Mike and I went to lunch and we talked about our families. We talked about fathers and love and about life and aspiration. I told him that my Dad was very glad for my company but that I wasn't always sure that he remembered who I was. I told Mike how little that bothered me. I cried about it but I wasn't that said. My crying felt like a sun shower. I was with him rain and shine.

So, I grabbed a decent pair of sunglasses (not a great pair)...and also I grabbed an umbrella, just in case. You never know. Life can be ambiguous. It can go either way...usually both.

Months before those last days with my Dad, I visited him in the hospital. His mind was going a bit but not his spiritual disposition. In fact, I think that strengthened in him over the course of his journey. I was with him in the morning one time. I got to the hospital before he woke up. I just sat with him and prayed...not like my raucous neighbor but in my own more quiet way. The nurse came in, guns blazing, and said, "Good morning, Leon!!" I am Leon Dunkley, Jr. She said, "Good morning, Leon!" loudly. And it woke him like a Journey song.

Only slightly startled, he responded without hesitation, "Isn't every morning a good morning?" His spiritual choice was clear...no matter what the weather may bring.

Days may be cloudy or sunny,  
We're in or we're out of the money,  
But I'm with you always,  
I'm with you rain or shine.

And I feel he is with me always—come rain or come shine or come both at the same time.

Before we close this morning, I have two things to share with you. Firstly, we had a double rainbow this week. Did any of you see it? I was working in South Royalton, meeting with Josie Watkins about her

role in Brave Light. After a courageous meeting, I walked out into the parking lot and BAMM!, there it was. A rainbow in the sky as clear as day! I ran over near the train tracks to take a picture as a second rainbow appeared. I met a young man later who said that actually, there had been three!

One rainy and super depressing week at Star Island, a beautiful rainbow appeared after five or six days of rain. It's terrible when you go away for a week and it rains for five or six of the seven days! I was a Pelican that year. A Pelican is someone who works on Star Island throughout the summer. I was on a good crew—Buildings and Grounds. We were in the tool shed when the weather broke, when a rainbow suddenly appeared. So, to strengthen the spirit and to improve the mood of the island, we all grabbed rakes and shovels and pick axes and buckets and we got together and made a plan.

Most of the Star Island conferees were gathered together on the front porch, under the giant awning that was protecting them from the rain. When the rainbow appeared, it seemed to touch down right in front of us, in Gosport Harbor. So, to please the crowd, assembled for days and days at the edge of the rain, my good crew made a joyful and terrible noise, clanking and screaming and running across the rain-soaked front lawn toward the rainbow's end. We were getting terribly wet but it was worth it! We were hunting for the mythical pots of gold. I won't reveal to you whether or not we found them.

Secondly, Joelle Seavey and Andy Wood got married yesterday. I was honored to officiate. The rains broke off only minutes before their outdoor service was set to begin. I won't share much. It is their story to tell. I will take only one liberty and I pray it is with their blessing.

The otherwise solemn service called for a moment of silence midway through. Silence is important. It allows us to take stock of the miracles of life. It reminds us that we are only one small part of a much larger world—adventurous and tameless. I called for the moment of silence, just as the ceremony required. I asked those assembled to quiet down and to listen to what the world had to say at that moment. And

just then, as if on cue, a small child, a young boy, conjoined his voice with nature's music, added to the winds and raindrops and the gentle singing of the birds were the faint noises of a young soul wandering off in the distant grasses. And not just once. He repeated himself several times. It was holy.

What is the choice of your soul? Do you incline for sunshine or for rain? ...or are you good either way? Life can be ambiguous.

The light always comes in the morning but you never know if the day will bring sunshine or rain. It's wise to grab a decent pair of sunglasses and also, an umbrella, just in case. You never know which way it's gonna go. All we knew for sure was that we are going for it either way. We go for it. We say yes to life, come rain or come shine.

May it be so. Blessed be and amen.