

# A Reality Carried on the Wind

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T. Colton Gavel

*“Musical hallucinations are quite different [than visual]. With music, although there are separate functional systems for perceiving pitch, timbre, rhythm, etc. The musical networks of the brain work together and pieces cannot be significantly altered in melodic contour or tempo or rhythm without losing their musical identity. We apprehend a piece of music as a whole. Whatever initial process of musical perception and memory may be, once a piece is known, it is retained not as an assemblage of individual elements but as a completed procedure or performance; music is performed by the mind/brain whenever it is recollected; and this is also so when it erupts spontaneously, whether as an earworm or as a hallucination” - Oliver Sacks, “Hallucinations”*

## Foreword

I have grown up with fibromyalgia since I was seven and, as a result, mental health has always been a part of my life. The general public seems to have an ignorant understanding when it comes to mental health. Whether it is schizophrenia or social anxiety, it is something that only people that have it truly understand. The majority of media on mental health is negative, although recently I believe that is beginning to change, and I would like to help towards that change. Not that mental illness is a positive thing to have, but it should not be treated negatively, and people who have it need to know they are not alone.

I chose schizophrenia as my topic for this story, because I wanted it to evoke emotion and imagery. Schizophrenia is a scary thing to have; to live in a dream that you cannot escape. For my research, I read many firsthand accounts from people who have dealt with Schizophrenia, as well as accounts from neurologists. I realized while writing this story that my worst fear is to lose my mind, because it is my most precious treasure.

North and west the wind blew beneath early morning sun; over endless miles of rolling sea and through thick fog, gaining speed entering the harbour and wrapping around a bridge in a furious embrace. North and west the wind danced over rooftops, leaving traces of passing. Free from external control, the wind went with the flow, invisible to the eye, but leaving imprints of existence behind. The wind travelled through the city, full of structures reaching for the sky, imposing their existence onto the wind. Growing anxious, as the fingers of society began to close around it, the wind violently sought for a way to escape. Pushing down a busy street, where a throng of people walked to the same beat. The repetitive beat of society and its normalization, where seldom heard cries come from those who suffer from the implications. In haste to escape the numbing drone, the wind briefly passed through a quiet home.

The wind carried on it the smell of the sea. As it ruffled the curtains and let in the sun, the salt stung the nose of a man who seemed to have lived alone. As the wind made a rotation of the room, it stirred up rubbish that littered the floor, causing waves to crash against the walls, like when coming ashore. The man slowly rose from his excuse for a bed; a gaunt face, covered in stubble emerged looking like death. His eyes could not see what was wrong with his life. Drifting around the room they did not see what some may call a sty, instead he saw a delightful forest surrounding him; his bed an immense mound of green moss. As a child, nature had been a place for retreat and meditation. Once beyond the confines of the city, with the trees surrounding him, the man felt

at home. The man would stare through the comforting canopy, the branches stretching out in a green embrace of empathy. It was there that he was able to think, become inspired, and relax from his daily duties. The man or rather boy at the time, would ponder the expanse of the universe and how small he felt. The wind was something that he envied, true freedom he thought; nothing controlled it.

The man stood up from his bed and began to stretch out the last remains of sleep. He looked through the surrounding forest; green melded with blue, as the giant redwoods touched the bright blue sky. The man tried to catch a glimpse of his friend, growing anxious as he realized that she was not to be found. It was sudden, and awareness overcame the man; a slight breeze had breached the stillness of his comforting forest. A low melody was being carried on that breeze, and as the music rose in volume, so did his anxiety. It was *that* song. The man contemplated his escape, but came to recognize something as the music continued to rise. This forest was not reality, and the music would bring him there. With that in mind, the man sat slowly back onto his mound of moss; his reality dismantled as he dropped onto the old mattress of his bed.

Prokofiev's *Dance of the Knights or Montagues and Capulets* had been the man's favourite classical piece when he had first started his journey as a composer. It had also been the beginning of a different journey for him; the song was the first of his hallucinations to manifest. Surveying the room that he now sat within, disgust and shame were what he felt; he despised how he had allowed his room to become such disarray. The wind began to stir once more, and with it brought the dark atmosphere of the song he had once adored. He could hear the strings, now dropping to pianissimo, he knew what was coming. Four snare drum rolls; the man had begun his internal ten second count down.

DOHN DOHN DOHN...

The man had flinched as the French horn made its presence known, and with it heat and flames erupted all around him. The blaring sound of the horns seemed closer, like knocks coming from a very loud door. The intensity of the flame, and its sway both fluctuated along with the horns as they played with the woodwinds, layering over top of the strings. The man made a frantic and futile attempt to back from the flames; contrary to the fact he was familiar to them. The life of this man could be described as purgatory; being trapped inside your mind as it slowly breaks down, and right then was a visual hallucination of his perception of hell. The man would have described his situation as being stuck in a lucid dream, stuck without agency to be truly free. Flames entrapped the man, causing a whirlwind to form; breaking the man down, his anxiety ready to burst forth from his sternum, pounding with the tempo of the music; impending doom surrounded him. Three snare rolls, and the man slumped against the wall.

Finally a moment of respite came for the man, as a trumpet began to play the soft, strong pulsating beginning of the first section. The flames reluctantly drew away from the man, slithering silently along the floor and seeping into the seams of the room. The man drew deep breaths, as if the flames really had starved the room of oxygen. Staring up at the square frame of his window, he took the moment to contemplate his current life. The string and brass battled with counter themes, and then transitioned to the flutes for the second section. The man still staring out his light filled window was momentarily blinded as someone began to float down with the wind and the music. The figure appeared to be made of mist and drifted slowly down from the light, on a breeze, like a butterfly's kiss. Warily the man stuck out his hand, asking for aid. The figure began to shift, and

Oboes played a solo welcoming the new presence into the room. Hand reached for hand, cold mist enveloped the man, and contact was made.

Grand walls surrounded the man, and he was looking into the eyes of his only friend, Phren. The song was yet over and it would return to its dark beginning, but now that the man was with Phren and within the hall he now occupied, he did not believe his mind could be compromised. An inspection of the hall had gathered that it was brightly lit, with a grand marble entrance and balconies for guests. The man knew this place, an opera hall he was supposed to perform in before his hallucinations. Pain flashed across the face of the man, but Phren was quick to react and comfort him. The song now coming to an end, the anxiety of the man at a crescendo, and Phren held him gently in her arms.

Silence. The man opened his eyes, and was greeted by the lyrical pleasure of Phren's deep concern. The worst then having come to an end, the man rose from Phren's embrace, bestowing her with his gratitude. Absent of anxiety, the man felt at ease, Phren was the one hallucination that brought him peace of mind. Phren had been his grain of salt; a hallucination that made it worth putting up with the others. Both were staring deeply into the others' eyes, they loved each other; Phren was his mind, and he was Phren. The moment was only disrupted by the melodic voice of Phren, asking the man to please play for her the piano concerto he had been composing. Taken aback by the question, the man pulled away from Phren's outstretched palm. Phren was asking him to do the impossible, to play that which he refused to finish. Swiftly like the wind, Phren crossed the short space between them, lyrical voice already sweetening the bitter aftertaste of her previous question. Embracing the man, the misty goddess proposed that they dance to a song of her choice as a substitute. Knowing that the man could not decline his love twice, he agreed that he would allow her that.

**TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP:** The sound of a conductor preparing to begin. Without the knowledge of the man, he was suddenly surrounded by men and women in full attire, readying themselves to dance. Before the man even had a moment to respond, he was thrown into the first steps of the dance by Phren. But as soon as the first note was formed within the French horn, the man knew the piece to be the Dance of the Knights. Without time for thought, he pushed away from Phren and shouted for the music to be stilled. Once again, carried on the wind, Phren was quick to comfort the man. She explained to him that he needed to face the first of his fears and to trust her, if he ever wanted to change.

As the music resumed, anxiety did not come with it. The man was taken in by the glowing smile of Phren, and followed her through the steps of their dance. It had been long since the man had ever come close to enjoying that song, but it did not take long then for him to realize the calm he felt dancing with Phren. She really was the man's soul mate and he realized then that he could change, as long as he had her. With this realization, the man let himself feel free. He drifted among the other dancers, smiling with Phren, losing himself to the music. Their dance was one of love and meeting, a dance slow and dignified. The man had briefly looked over the guests, but their lack of facial attributes and uniform dress made Phren a better subject for his attention. She wore a flowing white dress, with pearls sewn swirling down to the hem. Hair: golden, braided and tied up using a silver ribbon.

Soft piano notes drifted down to the man lost in thought, and automatically he was distraught. Once again the man slowly backed from Phren, he stared with giant eyes of bewilderment. No longer had they been dancing to the Dance of the Knights, but lost in Phren's eyes, the music had changed to his own piano concerto. Astonishment covered the face of the man

as he looked at Phren, then quickly turning to look at the piano on the stage. There was no longer any trace of any people having been in the hall at all. A shift in the space around the man occurred, and he was quick to conclude that he had been lured. He sat at the piano on stage, playing that of his own composing, but that was not all, he played what he was unable to finish, yet continued to play beyond where he had stopped.

Phren enveloped the man from behind, and pressed her delicate lips against his ear. Music matching his own was whispered: Phren had known he could do it, and she would push him as his source of inspiration. The man preferred Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* over Shakespeare: Prokofiev originally wrote for *Romeo and Juliet* to be reunited in the end. The wind gently stirred around the couple, taking in their smiles, and continuing its journey around the hall. As it came to a full rotation, paper began to fall. Phren and the man acted unaffected; locked in an embrace, the man continued to play. His music filled the room and the wind danced with the falling paper, tearing down the hall as they fell. As the final paper hit the floor, their reality shattered, and the wind gathered itself in preparation to leave. The man sat at a piano covered in dust, impossible to have been seen, as it had been buried in his past. The wind caught a draft and fled under the door, and there made contact with the mother of the man from before. She stood at the door, left hand raised to knock, right hand clutched around an unopened bottle of pills. Tears filled her eyes as she heard her son playing the piano, and with all her restraint stopped from shaking. She could not spoil this moment. The wind wrapped the woman in an invisible embrace and wiped the tears from her eyes. North and west the wind travelled yonder; the mother left behind with new questions to ponder.