



Video Story Transcript

MUSIC TO DREAM OF CUBA BY

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://youtu.be/muis-LTV2lc>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

My Dad used to have a state-of-the-art alarm clock, and I feel old describing it to you. It would play music AND wake you up, and it had an incredible feature called the sleep button. You could hit it, music would play, and 29 minutes later it would actually turn off! It was amazing! The problem was, you had to wait the whole 29 minutes to see it work its magic, but that wasn't too bad, because you could watch the numbers change on the clock, and I mean actually change. Each minute of the hour and every hour itself was its own little plastic tab that actually flipped down or folded over the other number, an interior dial of time perpetually flipping forward, clicking, keeping perfect rhythm, lit by a little light, just bright enough to see the numbers themselves change.

It was endlessly fascinating to watch the numbers flip, time flipping forward, and wait for the sleep button to magically shut off the music.

I loved sitting in my parents' room listening to the music that played on the only station my Dad listened to before bed, WJBR, Just Beautiful Radio. My Dad's from Cuba and my Mom's family is Irish, but they both loved classical music and this station played only classical music, 24 hours a day. My Dad would hit the magic sleep button, the music would start, and I would watch the little plastic tabs click off the time until it was time for bed, but hopefully, not before the sleep timer did its things. My Dad would often stand, transfixed, in front of the radio. I always thought he was looking at the numbers as well, but he would close his eyes, sway very slightly and say, "Mijo, can you hear that?" I strained toward the radio. "What?" I asked.

“That, right there, and there again? There, right on top of the piano, the violin?” I couldn’t hear anything. “And now, the clarinets, and the drums rolling in the back, like thunder over the hills? It reminds me of Cuba, right before a storm, can you hear that?”

I could never hear anything he heard, but I loved watching him go to the place where the thunder rolled over the hills. The only time he ever talked about Cuba was when he listened to classical music, otherwise it was just too painful to talk about being forced to leave and all the family had lost. Then, the sleep button would do its things, and he would scoop me up, and bring me to my room.

When I was about 10 years old, my Dad gave me that radio. He got a new one with a sleep button that could actually be programmed to any amount of time he wanted, from one minute to 59 minutes, and with numbers that actually glowed, floating like green fireflies, silently changing with no click at all to tell you that time still moved, whether you saw it or not.

I asked him what I could listen to, and he said whatever I wanted. Over the course of the next few months, I listened to every radio station my hometown carried. I listened to pop and country and late night baseball broadcasts from far away – 29 minutes every night – but none seemed as mysterious and as beautiful as the classical music station that transported my Dad back to Cuba.

I began to listen to it, and while I never heard drums rolling like thunder over the hills, I pretended like I could, hearing something that only adults could hear, and the complexity and the beauty of the music would make me forget about time falling down and I would fall asleep.

In my home town, WJBR doesn’t play classical music anymore, but where I live now, there is one station left that still does. Now that I am older, I can hear the drums underneath the violins, and the swelling music reminds me of egrets landing in shallow water.

I have a son now and, someday, when he is older, I will stand in front of the radio, or whatever new music playing device we’ll have then, and say, “Mijo, can you hear that? The piccolo over the strings? Like butterflies landing on flowers? No? Can you hear that? The piccolo over the strings? Like butterflies landing on flowers? Can you hear the strength of your grandparents and great grandparents coming from Cuba and Ireland to start a new life here in America? Can you hear that? Don’t worry. When you get older, you will.”