



Dire Straits

"Why Worry"

Brothers in Arms

05/1985

Vertigo / Warner Bros.

On "Why Worry" by Dire Straits

Cory Funk

I was wearing a paper suit. That wasn't the strangest part.

The comings and goings in rooms about me had gone from plebian to existential. That is what happens at night in a hospital, though it was only night in an academic sense. It would be fair to say it was as early a morning as could be. Few things are easy to categorize at three in the morning.

Fears that turn your blue skies into grey.

I was a nervous child. When I was in sixth grade it got to the point that I worried myself into hives. My Mom did all she could to give me tools to deal with this growing problem, and while I never broke out in hives again, I still privately worried. The next year my family took a road trip west, as was our tradition. This time we stayed in Glacier National Park. Before we settled into our cabin in the shadow of the mountains near a broad stony creek, we checked in at the ranger station. There, in the gift shop, I was introduced to a practical magic. It was a teardrop shaped piece of white quartz with a thumb sized divot carved in it. Mom bought it for me, explaining it was called a worry stone and that if I got anxious, I could rub my thumb in the divot. This charm kept me from trying to claw my way out of the car as we drove over The Road to the Sun the next day. In the long run it taught me that worry is motion without action and that to beat worry I had to make a plan and act on it. This is a lesson that can be forgotten all too easily under stress.

The things they do, the things they say

Early and late. Two weeks and counting late. So late with little progress that no one could wait any longer. Action had to be taken before things started to go wrong. So the two of us, and the one soon to be with us, went to the hospital. We watched a rotation of *Star Wars* and *The Princess Bride* and waited. I slept on whatever surface there was, smiled when the nurses said I was helpful, and thought about books.

I didn't buy these books. They were present and I read them with a sense of curiosity, duty, and hopefulness but was disappointed that in all these chapters and guides there was naught but an appendix for me. All the knowledge for soon-to-be Dads in these books on what to expect can be summed up as such: your body isn't changing. This isn't for you. Go talk to other Dads about what to do.

So I did. Or, I tried. There were more shrugs than I expected, searching looks that said I was the one people went to for advice and this reversal was unwelcome. While it is true that I did receive a couple pieces of brilliant advice, it is also true to say I was starting to worry as the date drew closer and there was less and less I felt I could plan for or help control.

Just when this world seems mean and cold

There are two times in my life when I felt beyond the reach of all people. This is one of those moments: 3 am on a bitterly cold late January morning in an empty hospital suite, wearing a paper suit, waiting to be called into the next room where my wife is undergoing surgery. The room where she would be Mom and I would be Dad and our dyad would become a triad.

I didn't have a worry stone to work out my vibrations on. I had an iPod.

All the rest is by the way

The song I needed came to me softly and without doubt. Apropos that it is the beautiful closing track to the A side of an album as I was about to start on my own B side. Stretching out over eight minutes with the vocals in the first half being balanced by an achingly nuanced instrumental back half, the song is gentle, simple, and gave advice that struck a true and pure tone in my heart of hearts. The chorus in those minutes transformed from a reassuring refrain into an anthem:

"Why worry, there should be laughter after pain / There should be sunshine after rain / These things have always been the same / So why worry now?"

There was no point or help to be had in taking this last half hour of a known life and shredding it in debilitating worry over the next life. I had resources: A caring family. A job. A home. A loving and committed partner. I had my wits about me even in sleeplessness. Most of humanity has done this before us and gotten away with it so surely I must be able to manage my part.

In those minutes I came to see that a new adventure and the people that I love the most were waiting in the next room and my plan was to meet the opportunity head on with a heart as open as a sunrise.

That was nine years ago, so why worry now?