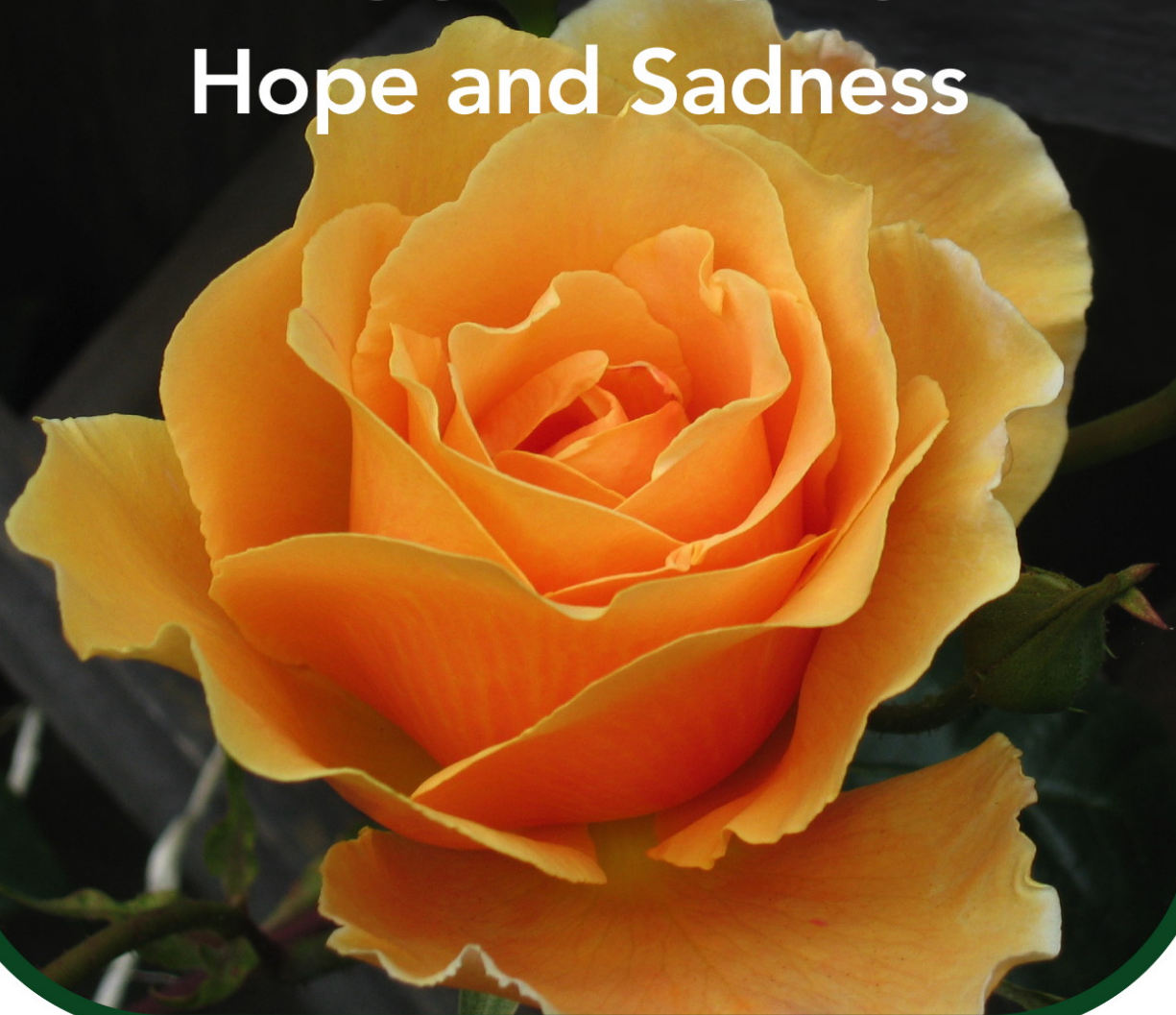




# Dear Elena

## Hope and Sadness



DANIEL H STEINBERG

Editors Cut

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## WORMHOLES

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Four words and piano line takes me back thirty years and thirty-two miles south and west.

It's summer, 'cause it's always summer when Springsteen is singing. Kid Leo's gravelly voice announcing that "it's a baker's dozen past two" as he talks over the harmonica anthem that starts off Thunder Road.

The Kid knows the intro as well as we do, if not better. He sits miles away from us and yet he's with us. The digital clock in front of him counts off the time of the intro as he reaches through the speakers and pushes us out the door. At fourteen seconds in he says "here's the boss on M—M—S" and Bruce sings those four words.

"The screen door slams."

Time is fuzzy lately. I'm living somewhere between dog years, human years, and some sort of quantum time thing that I can't put my finger on. A song on the radio or a voice on the phone can transport me back as if no time has passed. I'm older than I ever thought I'd be. Not that I thought I'd die young—who does. Just that I never stopped to think of myself sitting here at almost a baker's dozen before sixty.

"Like a vision she dances across the porch as the radio plays."

The phone rings and it's Loren. I haven't heard his voice in twenty-five years and yet it is as if no time has passed. A deep connection from so many years ago, picked up in a matter of seconds right where we left off. We're different people than we were then and yet this friendship continued without us noticing.

"So you're scared and you're thinking that maybe we ain't that young anymore."

These songs are like wormholes that we can slip through to those other places and times we were listening to the same song.

It's my parents' Buick Station wagon, metallic green, listening to Ted "the Bear" Richards on the Big Eight from Windsor Ontario. Farmer Jack Savings time.

It's Steve's Gold Duster with the eight-track tape player. Bump the button and we switch tracks. It's the driving guitar intro to Born to Run.

From time to time a lyric jumps out and whacks us on the back of the head insisting that we sing along.

"The highway's jammed with broken heroes on a last chance power drive."

On the eight track or on Fridays on the radio. Cranked up loud. Back when a weekend meant something. Fridays afternoons just before six o'clock when Kid Leo would get the weekend going with Born to Run.

"Everybody's out on the run tonight but there's no place left to hide."

Through two wormholes at once to seeing Bruce on stage separated by twenty some years. As Clarence plays a sax solo and Bruce stands by entranced—we follow his gaze. It's an inter-racial love affair that's all about the music.

The song comes to an end and I'm transported back to the present. Not jolted. More like the slow braking and clicking at the end of a roller coaster ride. I'm back in my room. Back where the ride began. The safety bar releases and I feel my legs back under me as I stand. A glance at the clock and it is indeed a baker's dozen past the hour.

I've got time to take one more spin around the track. I hit play again and close my eyes.

"Princess cards she sends me with her regards,"

Bruce sings of one love. I think of another.