

Second Ending

Music: Herin, Chown / Lyrics: Herin

Drums: Ben Riley
Bass: Kevin Chown
Electric guitar soundscapes, acoustic guitar: Alex Lifeson
Electric & acoustic guitars, banjo: Chris Herin
Pedal steel guitar: David Barrett
Lead vocals & violin: Matthew Parmenter
Backing vocals: Mark Mikel & Randy McStine
Recorders & cor anglais: Tim Michling
Keyboards: Kevin Chown
Percussion & programming: Terry Brown & Kevin Chown

The Story

One of the darkest brooding compositions is the melancholy "Second Ending." *Alex Lifeson* of *Rush* compliments the song's panoramic arrangement with his trademark soundscapes, textures, and acoustic guitar embellishments – and *Parmenter* delivers an emotionally charged vocal performance (and a touch of violin). Co-written by *Herin* and long-time friend bassist *Kevin Chown*, the song is an ambitious personal statement whose symphonic-like treatment transports the listener into a world turning upside down. A lush array of additional instrumentation with *Michling* on woodwinds, whistles, and recorders; *Chown's* string arrangement and bass counterpoint; and a choir of backing vocals builds and releases tension to support lyrics describing how the Alzheimer's process is like passing away twice: first the mind shuts down, then the body.

"(Herin): As Terry and I were considering what instrument(s) would help convey an uplifting feeling for the "Second Ending" coda, he mentioned his good buddy David Barrett – who has a variety of uncommon (at least in the rock world) guitars. David is practically a household name in Toronto music circles and was thrilled to play on a song that included his buddy Alex Lifeson. The decision was made, and the sweeping pedal steel performance ducks in and out and eventually settles majestically over the recurring acoustic guitar pattern.

I had an eerie experience upon which the "Second Ending" lyrics are based – and can't recall something like this ever happening to me before. My family and I were vacationing in the Outer Banks. My dad was not expected to last much longer, so we were leaving in a couple days. It was a hot afternoon in July with no clouds in the sky. I was paddling around in the ocean when all of a sudden a low bank of wispy white clouds appeared out of nowhere, and a very strong cool breeze swept over the water and circled around me – momentarily filling me with an overwhelming peace and sense of relief. It came and went in a matter of seconds and left me with an afterglow of contentedness. It was quite unlike the typical breezes that briefly come and go along the shoreline, and I immediately wanted it to come back. I really didn't understand what had happened. A little bit later I went to get carry out and upon returning to the cottage received news my dad had passed away a couple hours earlier. Curious, I calculated that my odd experience in the water and his time of passing occurred roughly at the same time. I definitely had to wonder if my dad paid a visit to let me know he was ok."

Second Ending

I watch the storm approaching
Without a sound
The ending was beginning
Hidden in the clouds

A soothing sense of motion
Feeds a restless peace
A thousand inner voices
Crying for relief

I heard the faintest whisper
On a sudden breeze
You came to tell me
You had been set free
(*You are free on the breeze*)

*Leave life behind
For a second time
As the ghosts of yesterday
Finally pass away*

I feel the empty spaces
Never here before
I see the broken pieces
Abandoned on the floor

Your reflection changes
In the setting sun
Colors radiating
Fading then they're gone

*Leave life behind
For a second time
As the ghosts of yesterday
Finally pass away
Hidden memories
Silent dignity
As you're drifting off to sleep
Free to rest in peace*