



Using the Album & Journal

Of course, the easiest way to use the instrumentals on this album is simply to find a time to relax and listen. Listen to one, if you have only a bit of time; make your own playlist or set them on shuffle if you have a bit more time. The journal, on the other hand, invites you into an opportunity to consider just a bit about the origin of each particular piece, and offers you a set of “invitational” questions to pique your reflection or journaling during or after your listening.

These instrumentals were composed over the course of the last 20 years (2000 to 2020) and because of that, you may notice differences in recording approach, quality and stylistic choices. All of those are reflective of my journey as a composer, a musician, as a recording engineer and as an independent producer. They have all been “remastered” to fit together in this particular compilation. Each of these songs meant and still means something special to me. I’m reconnected in a new way with the original, generative experiences and thoughts every time I listen to them. I’m inviting you to make fresh, reflective experiences and personally meaningful connections to them. Come back to them as often as you’d like. If you’re like me, you’ll find that even something that has had a definite and specific meaning and use to you at one particular time will have grown and changed with your new experiences when you revisit it.

My hope is that this can be a helpful model for you in finding and immersing into music as a form of renewal and self-care. This approach is just one model for how that might be done. Find your way with other approaches to this music, and with other music that speaks powerfully to you. Music is one of our most ancient and beloved ways of exploring what it truly means to be human.



01 Starting Out

Starting Out was originally part of the album **No Standing** (2011), a collection of music made for running, hiking or walking the trails of the Black Hills where I live. As you listen, notice how the music begins simply and then builds and shifts in complexity before the layers drop away again toward the end.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Perseverance**

What trail am I traveling now? How has that journey grown or changed as I've progressed? Do I know where this trail is leading... or is this simply an adventure into the unknown? What am I noticing along the way? Are there things I want to hold on to? Are there stretches I'd like to just move on past?





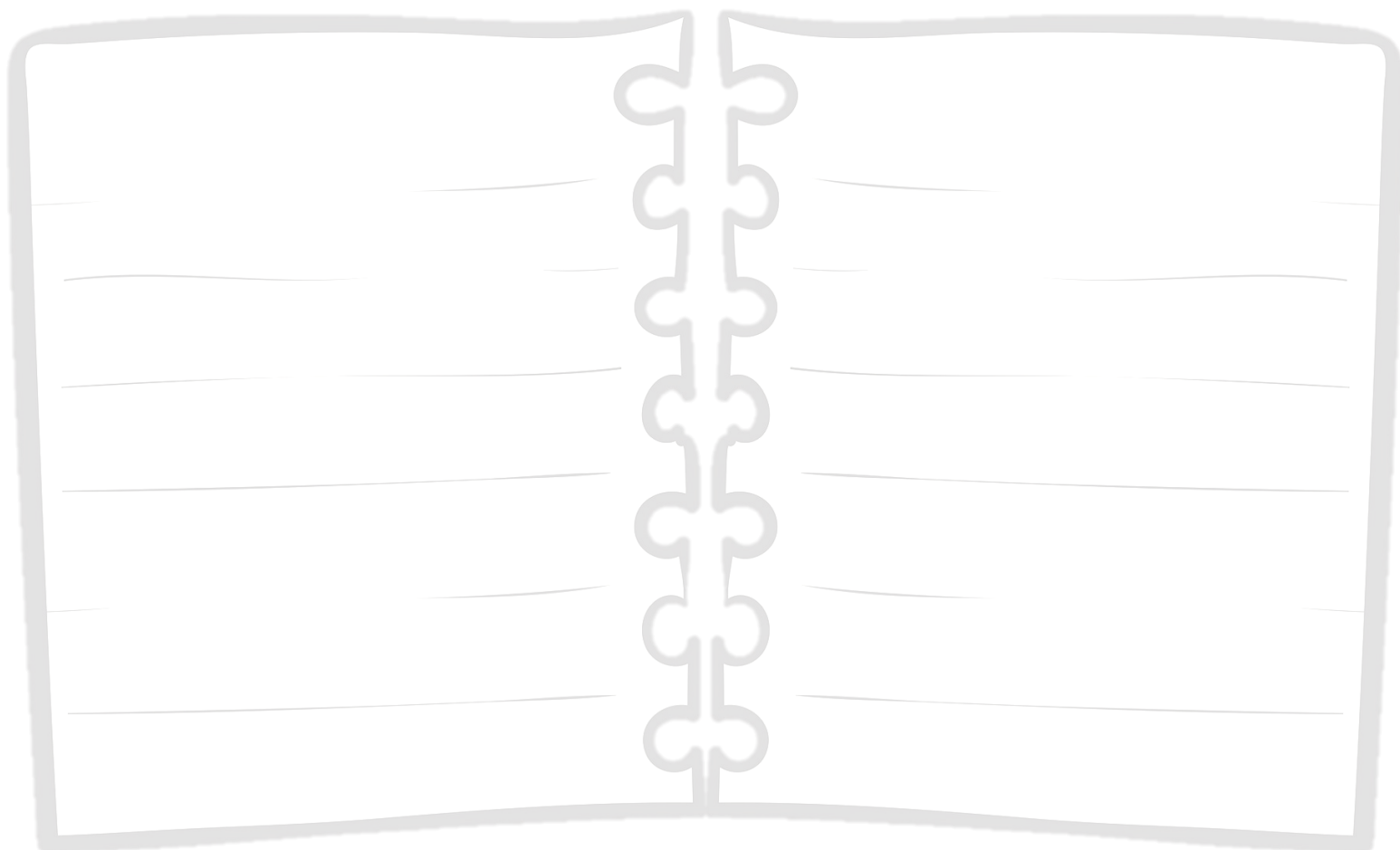
02 Winter Moon

Winter Moon first appeared on **Topo: Acoustic Landscapes** (2001), a set of instrumental compositions exploring the landscapes and history of the western United States. It was originally composed on piano... using only the black keys. Some light is warm; some light is cool. The moon, though often bright—especially when snow is on the ground—gives a very special glow at night, but no physical warmth.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Guidance/Navigation**

What or who is shining a light for my journey now? Is the light sufficient, or is it difficult to see all I need to see? Is this light warm like the sun, or cool like the night moon in winter? Do I trust my guide, or am I questioning my capacity to discern the best direction?





03 Tasunke Witko

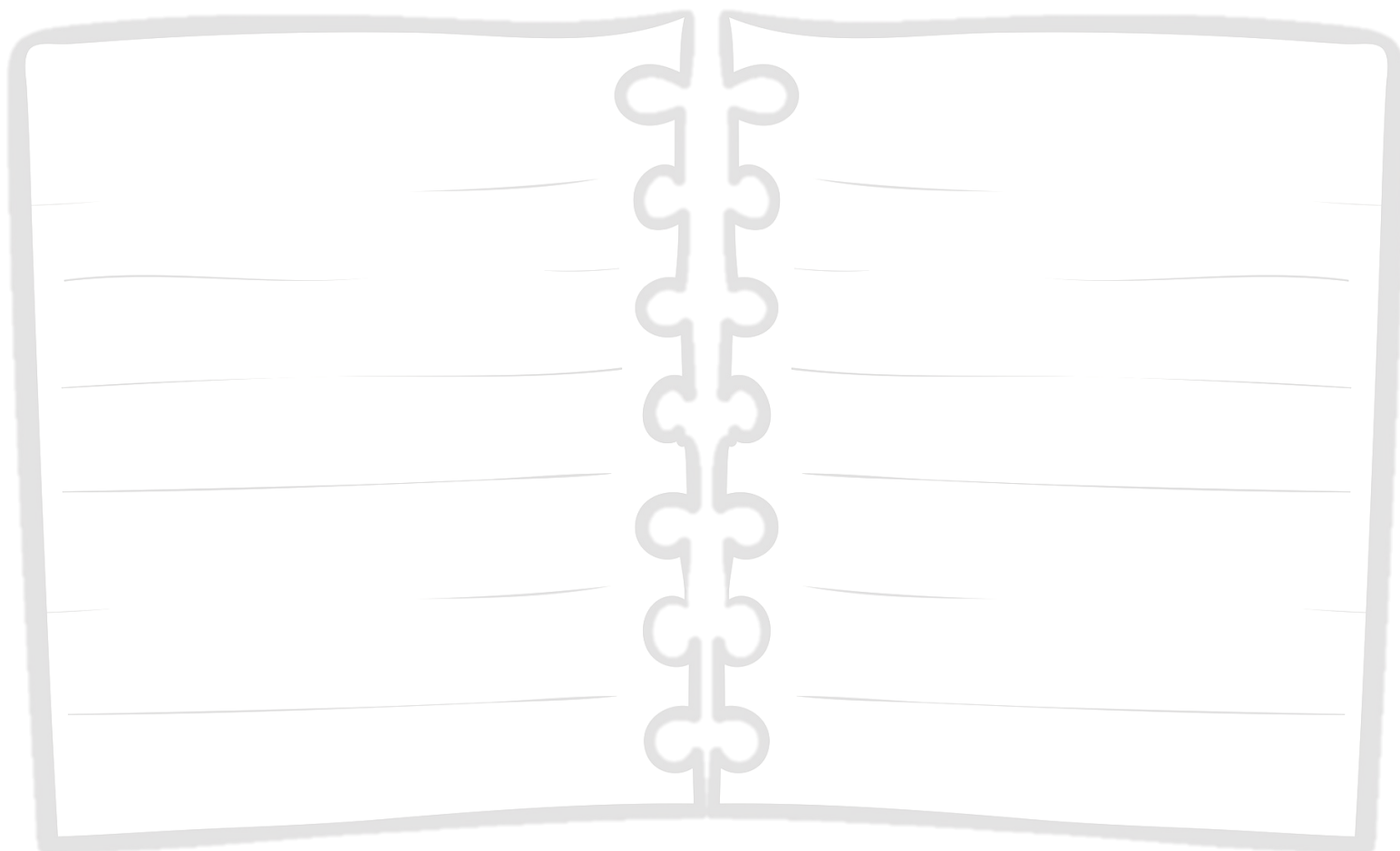
Tasunke Witko is the Lakota name we translate into English as, Crazy Horse. This flute composition was the main theme of the documentary film **Tasunke Witko** about the life of the Lakota warrior and spiritual leader, Crazy Horse. He was known by his people, among other things, for being both very courageous and very humble. It has been said that he wore only a single feather, though he had accomplished enough acts of courage for his people that he could have worn an elaborate head-dress.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Humble Courage**

In what ways or areas in my life do I feel called to step forward with courage? From where or from whom does my courage come? How do I manage these courageous

acts—triumphantly or with humility? What do I do in times when my courage is lacking? What lessons lie in acting with courage? What lessons lie in working through a failure in courage?





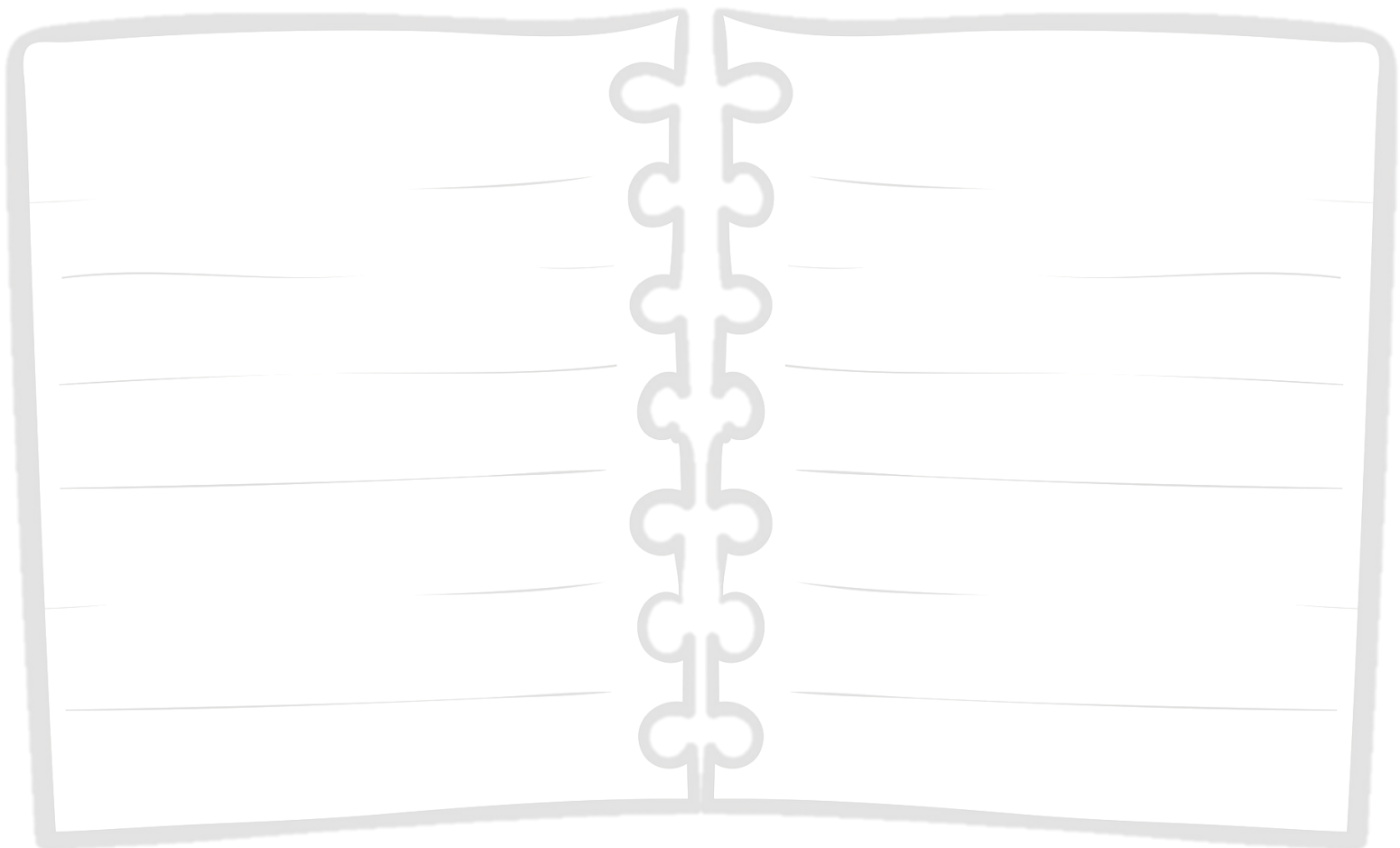
04 In the Hills

In the Hills was written and composed after my wife and I had an argument. I went into the Black Hills in the early evening to try to make sense of our disagreement, and to gain some wisdom from the stars, the wind and the hills themselves. The full song (with lyrics) first appeared on **Circuitous** (2004). The last few lines of the lyric version state, "I don't know how to comfort you, but I'm coming home... I'm gonna try anyway."

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Separation/Reconciliation**

Is there some individual or group with which I am at odds? Where or to whom do I go for comfort? What answers am I finding? How long do I need to remain separated? What might coming back together look like? What might my next steps be, and when might I be ready to make them?





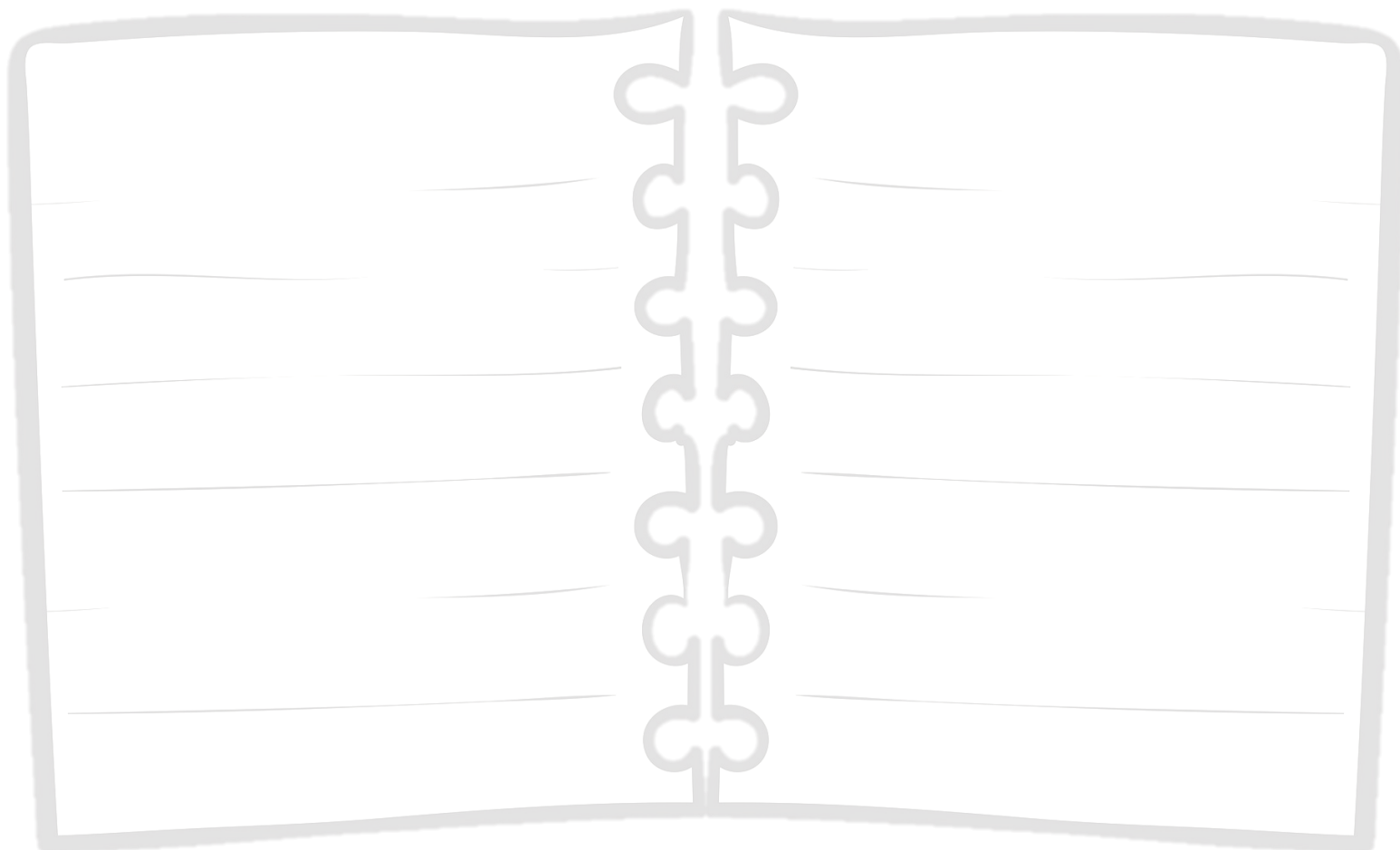
05 Digital Citizenship

This was the opening musical theme for the educational film **Digital Citizenship: Breaking the Culture of Mean.** The film was a guide for teachers to help their students navigate the difficult social environment of the internet. It dealt with issues around cyber bullying and awareness of the digital footprint they leave in the wake of their online activity.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: Kindness

Have I been bullied? Have I bullied? Have I had the opportunity to not be simply a passive bystander while someone else was being bullied? How did I respond to that opportunity? What are some ways I have been shown kindness when I most needed it? How aware and responsive am I when others need to receive kindness that I might be able to give?





06 Grindstone

Grindstone was composed while my family lived in New Mexico working at a summer youth camp. “Grindstone Springs” was the name of one of the loveliest of trails we enjoyed hiking there in the Sangre De Cristo mountains of the Southern Rockies. I remember the trail being sunny but speckled with shadows from the tall pines and spruce along the way, with beautiful vistas that opened up here and there... convenient places to stop, catch your breath, take a drink, and enjoy the view.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Nature**

Do I have a “go-to” place to reconnect with nature or elements of the natural environment? Where is that place? What makes it appealing to me? Are there experiences I’ve had there that have shaped me in some foundational ways? What are those experiences? How soon am I going back to that place?





07 Across the Canyon

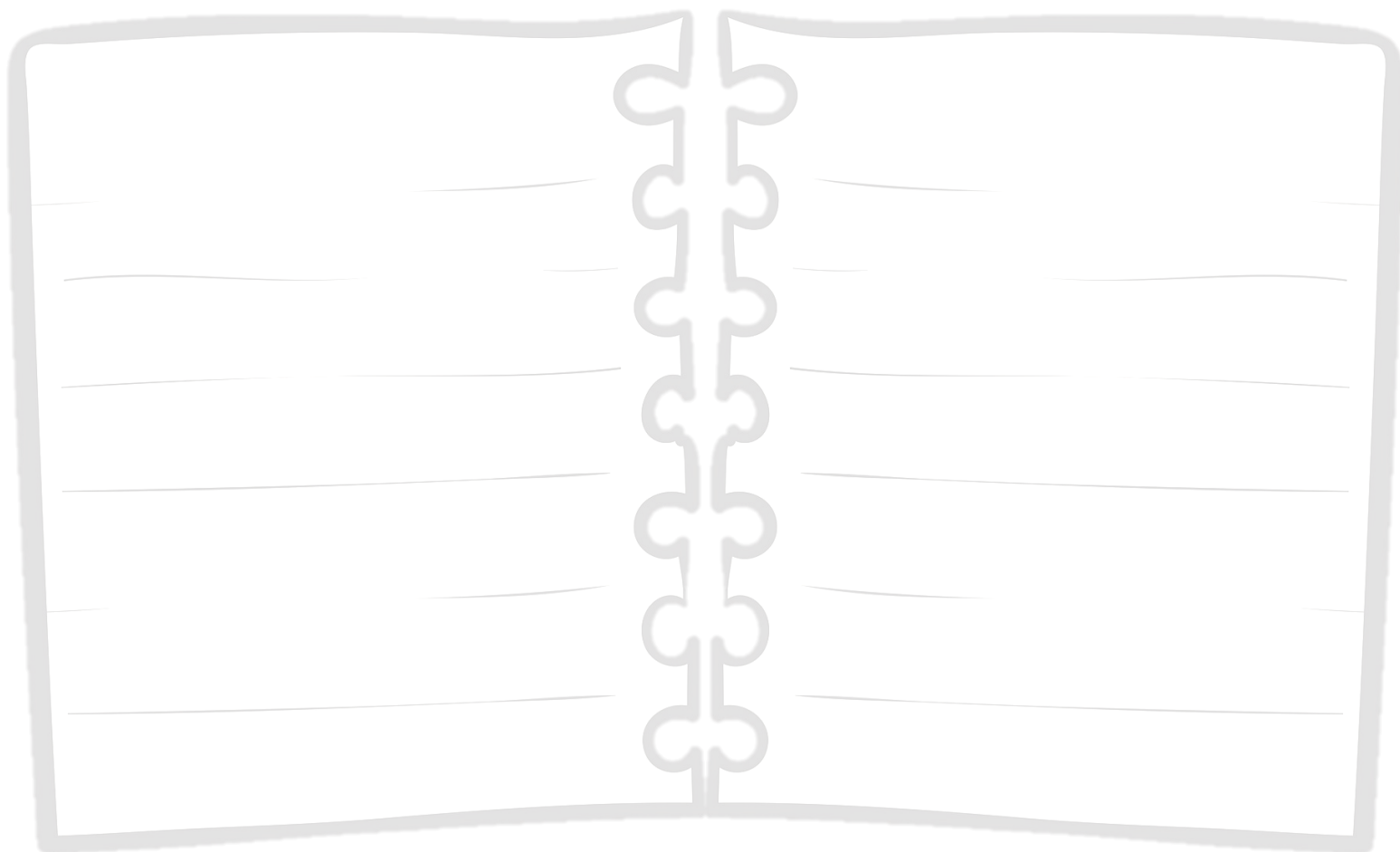
I live in Spearfish Canyon in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Across the Canyon was composed during a time when I quite often hiked the western rim of the canyon on a rutted Forest Service road we called “the fire trail.” At certain points along the road, the canyon dropped off to the east and the distant floor far below would take my breath away. I often watched Bald Eagles circling and careening in the distant blue sky between my little dirt road and the far rim. The wide expanse reminded me how small I was in the grand scheme of the planet... the universe.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: Gaining Perspective

What things, problems or tasks tend to loom large for me in ways that make them difficult to manage? Are

there methods I have or places I go that help me to bring those oversized things back into perspective? What are those methods, or places? When was the last time something “took my breath away” in a good way? When was the last time I felt de-centered from my own life enough to look back at it with some objectivity?





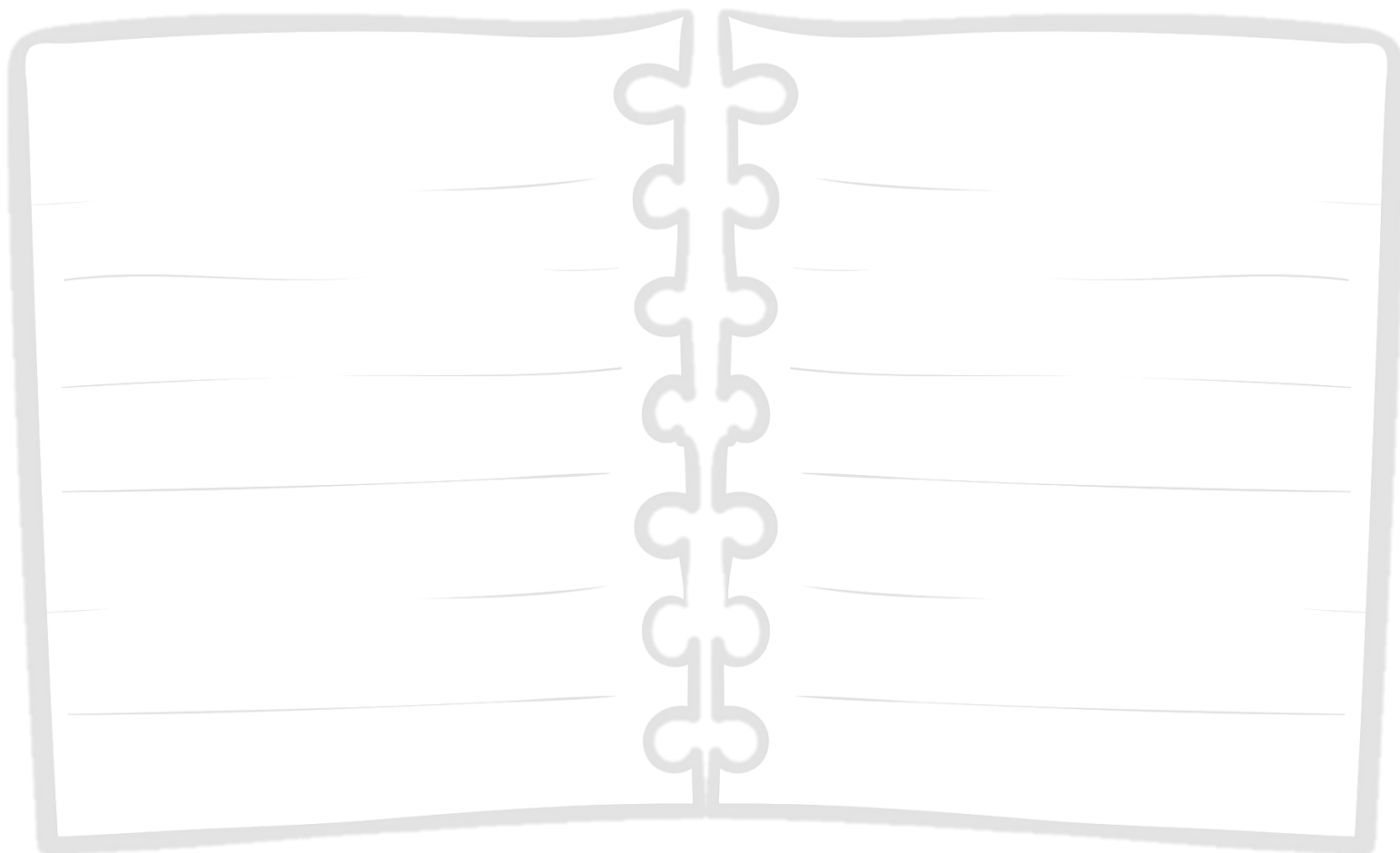
08 Hello Mr. Martin

Hello Mr. Martin is a celebration song. When I got my Martin guitar (the first really nice guitar I ever got) the first thing I wanted to do was to make some music with it! I began playing, added to it, tossed in some harmonica and clapping and tossed a little recording party in my studio! The song ended up on my album, Do Not Rush the Dawn (2014).

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: Celebration

When and what did I celebrate last? What role does celebration play in my life? Who do I celebrate with? What kinds of music, surroundings, items, foods, clothing, etc. do I associate with MY celebratory times? When is my next celebration... and who is invited?





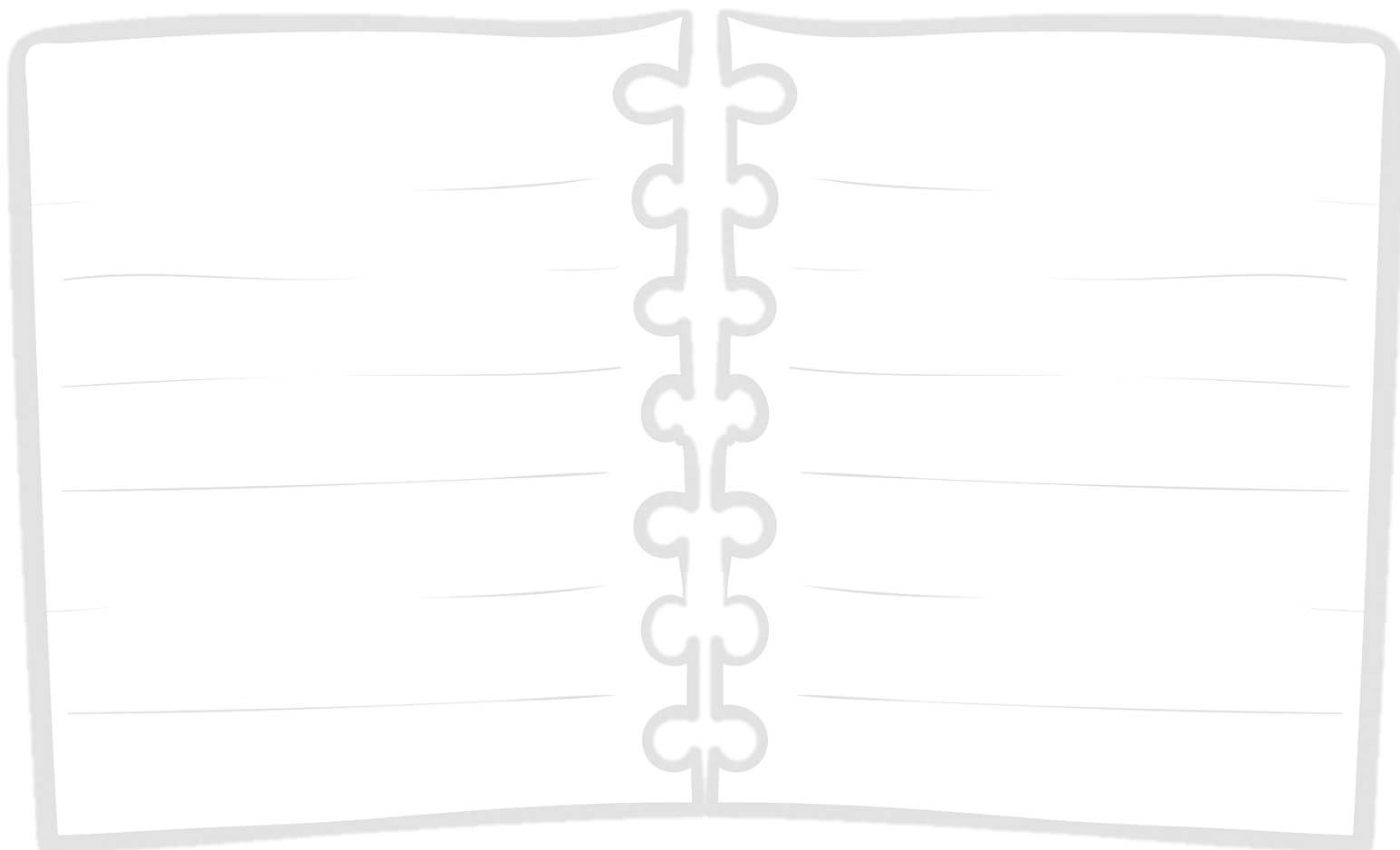
09 Woodsmoke

Woodsmoke is the instrumental version of a song titled “When It’s Cold Outside” that I co-wrote with my wife just after having spent a winter afternoon sitting by our old woodstove and chatting with friends. I’ve always loved fires, woodstoves and fireplaces. They are gathering places full of warmth, family, friends, warm drinks and reflective thoughts and conversations. I’ve stared at flickering flames for hours without ever losing interest. The smell of woodsmoke takes me back to those times.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Reflection**

What settings, situations or activities put me into a reflective mood? What sorts of memories do I tend to gravitate toward when I become reflective? What value does remembering, reliving, and sorting-through past times hold for me? Are there people I tend to share those reflective times with? Who are they?





10 Absalom, Absalom

I worked on a project years ago in which I was composing music inspired by stories from the Bible. Israel's King David had a son named Absalom whom he loved very much. When Absalom grew up, he set himself against his father and tried to steal the kingdom by force. Though David pleaded with his men not to harm Absalom, one of his generals defeated Absalom's army and killed Absalom as well. David had regained his kingdom but lost the son he loved. He cried, "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place!" (NKJV) The overall theme of this piece communicates deep love... but at a point in the center, a harsh dissonance disrupts. The song eventually resolves the dissonance... David moves on, but how could anyone find "resolution" from the betrayal or death of a child?

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Love & Loss**

In what ways have I been hurt by love? Have I lost a loved one? Have I been betrayed by someone I loved? Have I loved deeply someone who simply didn't return that love? What may I have gained through loving so deeply? What may I have gained through the lesson of loss or betrayal?



11 Chant

Chant is part of the soundtrack to an educational documentary titled, **Breaking Shells** that follows two adult men with developmental disabilities who chose to advocate for themselves and for others in similar situations. Chant is an acapella “chant” of the melody of a song also included in the soundtrack titled **The Company You Keep**. The words of its chorus speak well of the strength that these two men found in their alliance and friendship: “Tell me a story, sing me a song/ the sky is dark and the road is long/ what keeps you together when the climb is steep?/ It’s not your destination.../ it’s the company you keep.”

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Friendship**

Who are the people I lean on as friends? In what ways do they lean on me? What challenges have we taken on together? Did we succeed? Did we fail to reach our hoped-for destination? In what ways was our journey together valuable? What stories did we tell? What songs did we sing?





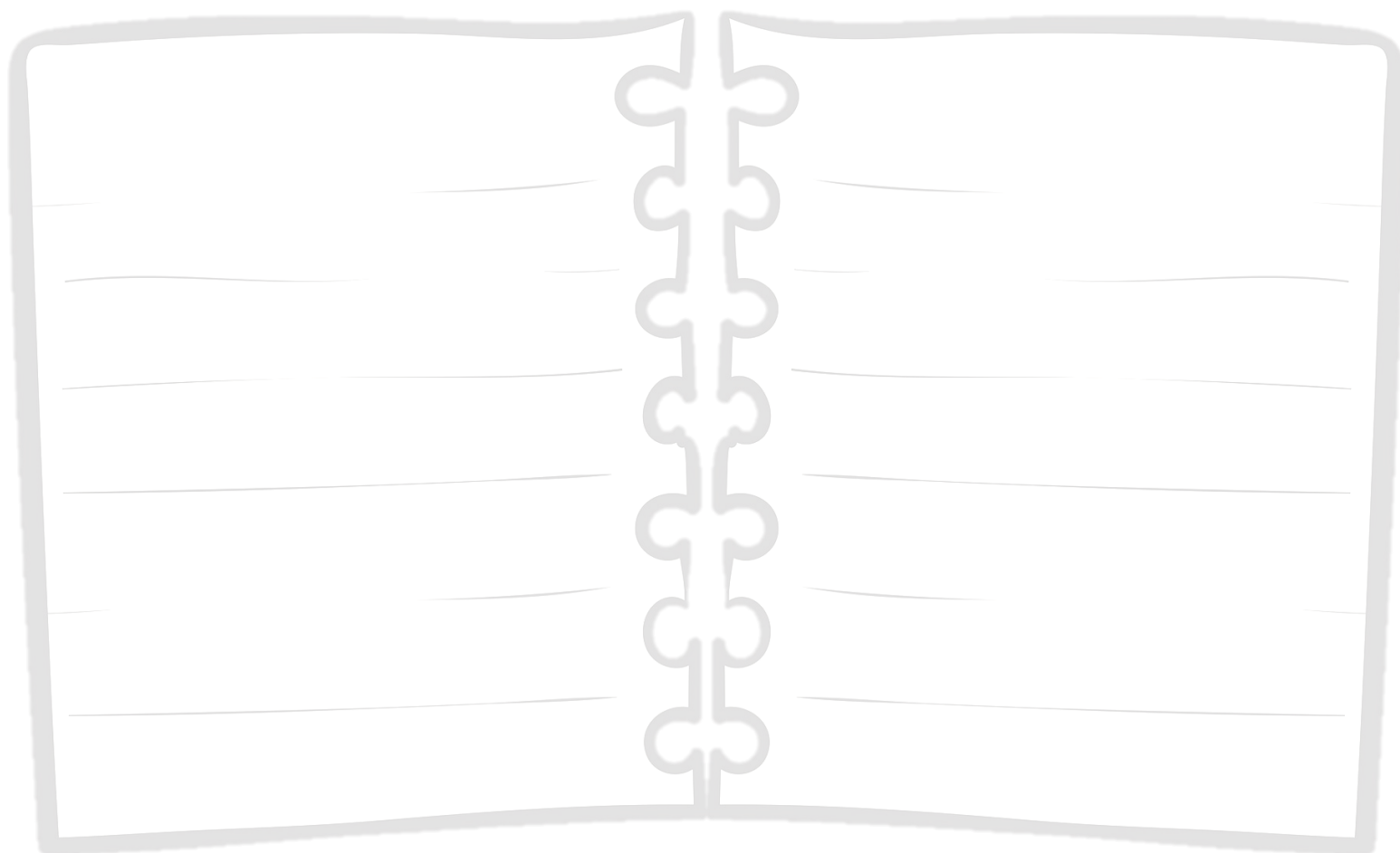
12 Spearfish Canyon

This instrumental, Spearfish Canyon, was composed in 2005 when we were living far away from the Black Hills and missing the beauty of that canyon. I composed and recorded it as an acoustic guitar piece, and then asked my wife to add some piano. The rising and falling of her beautiful piano runs in the piece remind me of the many waterfalls in and around Spearfish Canyon: Bridal Veil Falls, Spearfish Falls and Roughlock Falls, to name a few.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Beauty**

What is beautiful in my life right now? Is it a calm, picturesque beauty? Is it a raucous and active beauty? Is it visual, auditory, tactile, or some other sense? In what ways does this beauty lift me up? How often do I allow myself to simply experience and appreciate it?





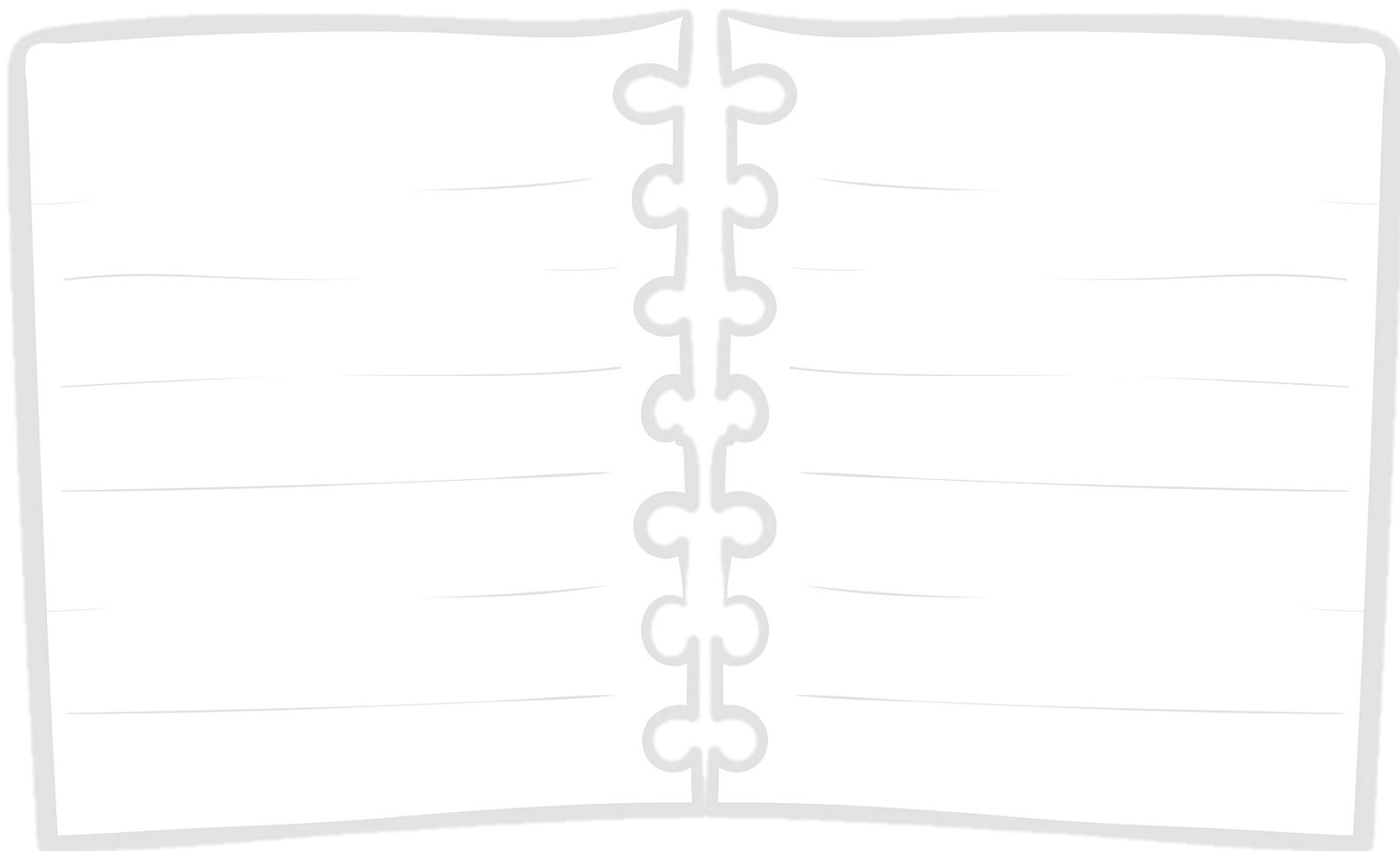
13 After Rain

After Rain is an instrumental that was inspired by a hike my wife and I took in 1990 in northern New Mexico. Sometimes in summer there, sudden afternoon rainstorms drench the mountains for just a few minutes, but with a suddenness and ferocity that is surprising. On our hike, we experienced this right in the middle of an otherwise brilliant, sunny day. It felt like a cleansing of the whole world, a sort of baptism or rebirth. After huddling under an apple tree during the downpour, we set off down the newly washed trail munching the crisp, sour apples we'd picked.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Renewal**

What has brought freshness or a new start to my life recently? Was it sudden or was it expected? What do I do or where do I go to seek renewal? Is there another person or persons I find renewal with?





14 Unmarked Trail

Unmarked Trail depicts the fact that I love finding trails that aren't really trails and seeing where they might lead. Often, they are trails made by deer. Because of that they are often clear and obvious on the ground but tangled with brush just five feet up. I'm 6'4" and so hiking them often results in branch slaps in the face or having to resort to a crawl through a particularly dense stretch.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Barriers**

What barriers stand in my way? Are they barriers that "trip me up" that "slap me in the face" or that simply "stop me in my tracks"? How do I get around these challenges? Do I always take the well-marked, well-groomed path... or do I sometimes take the deer-path? Why?





15 Close to Home

Close to Home was composed as a part of my No Standing (2011) album for walking, hiking or running trails in the Black Hills. It was the last track on that album. I was thinking about that moment when you've been out on an adventure, finding new spots, experiencing new challenges, and you round a corner and see... you're close to home. You're tired and exhilarated, and ready for a big, cold drink of water and a moment to reflect on the hike.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Home**

What or where is "home" for me? What makes it home? Who else is there? How is home helpful to me in reflecting on, recovering from or resting after being "away from home" on adventures or challenges? How does home make me ready for my next hike out into the world?





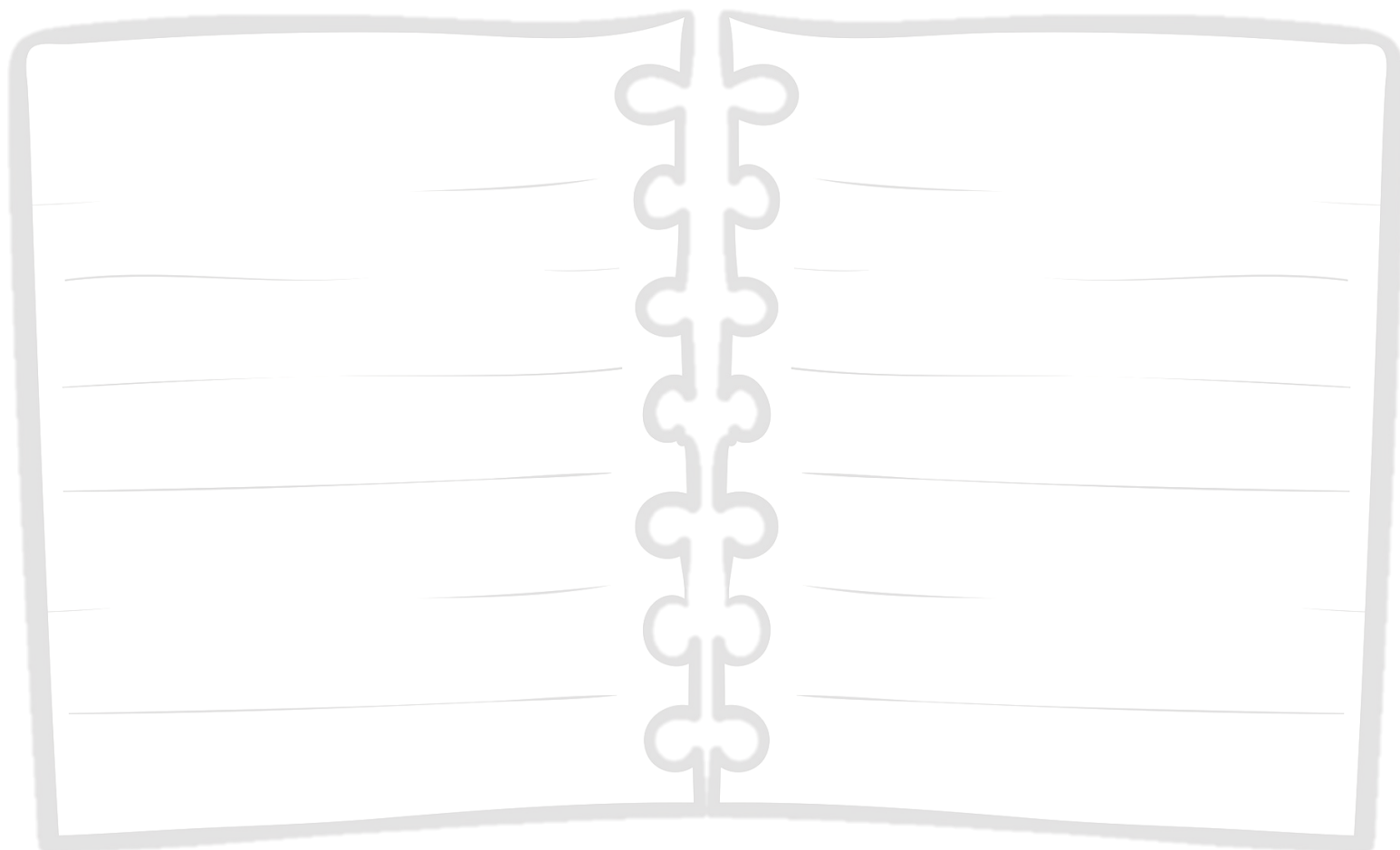
16 8 lb. Test

Years ago, when we first moved to the Black Hills, I used to go fly fishing. I didn't really catch that many, but I loved following a small stream up into the Hills through a canyon giving it a go. Tossing my line in up stream (placing me downstream where the trout aren't looking) and working my way up into unknown nooks and holes. There's a meditational element to the rolling sound of the stream, the flashing glint of the sun on the surface and the rhythmic whip of the line. My fishing line of choice was 8 lb. test.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Rhythm**

What does the "beat" of my days sound like? Is it an ever-changing rhythm, or steady and constant? How about the rate... are things moving quickly? Are they frantic, or just moving smoothly? Are things dragging? Or am I taking things in at a calm, relaxed gait? Have I caught anything recently... or is that even the point?





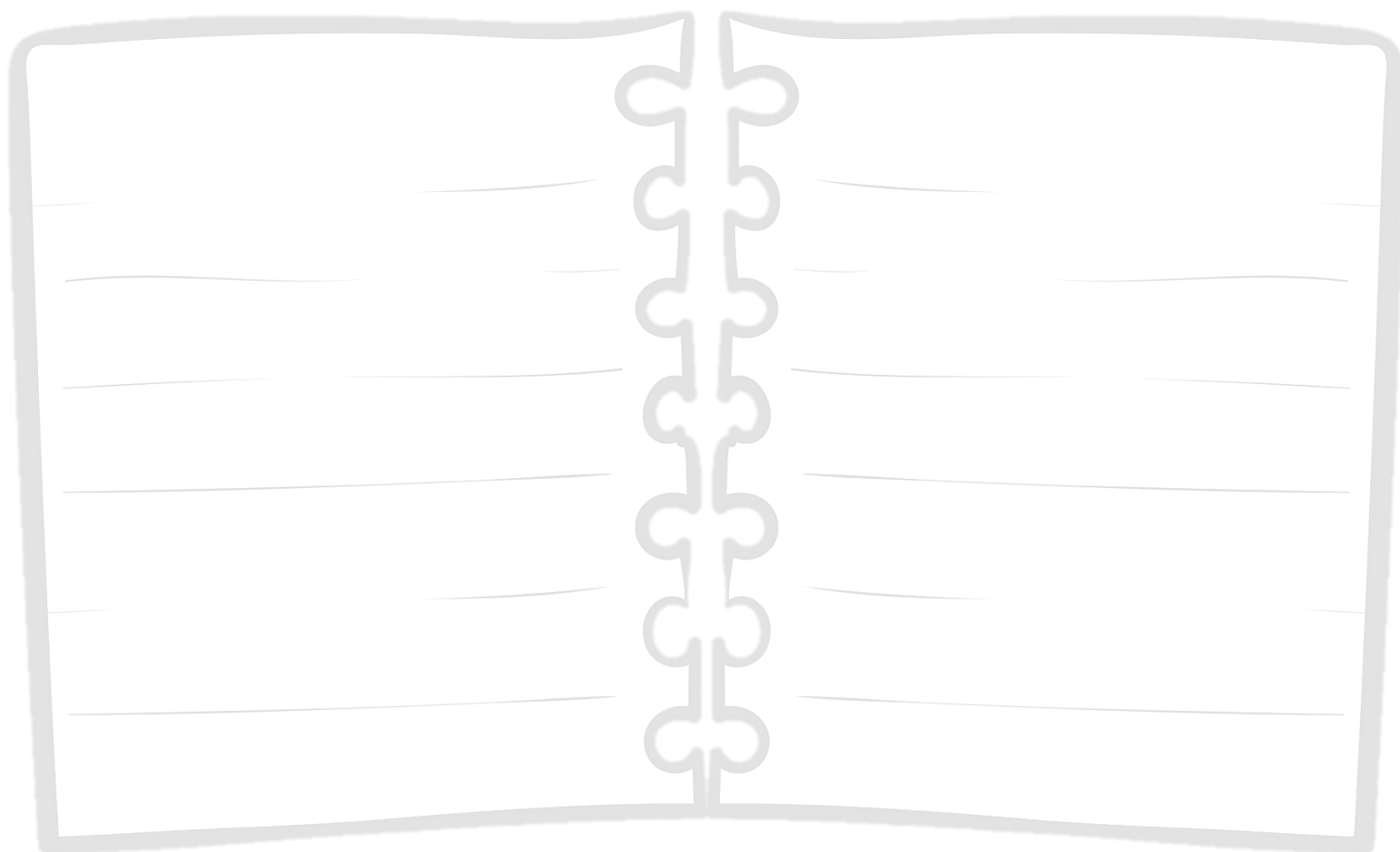
17 Eyeah

I composed Eyeah as the song beneath the credits at the end of the documentary film, Tasunke Witko, about the life of Crazy Horse. The sound “Eyeah” is one I’ve always vocalized for some reason when improvising a vocal melody. In another song, I spelled it “Ejah”. I’m not really sure what it means or where I got it... but I may have stolen it from Sting who used it in a long stretch in his song, Every Little Thing She Does is Magic, with the Police.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Beyond Words**

What experiences in my life have left me “beyond words” with only nonsense left? What did I do... sigh? Moan? Laugh? Groan? Make up some non-sense? What moments call up my voice in a way that is simply beyond sensible sentence construction? How might these sorts of vocalizations be beneficial to me personally... or to a community of my friends or loved ones?





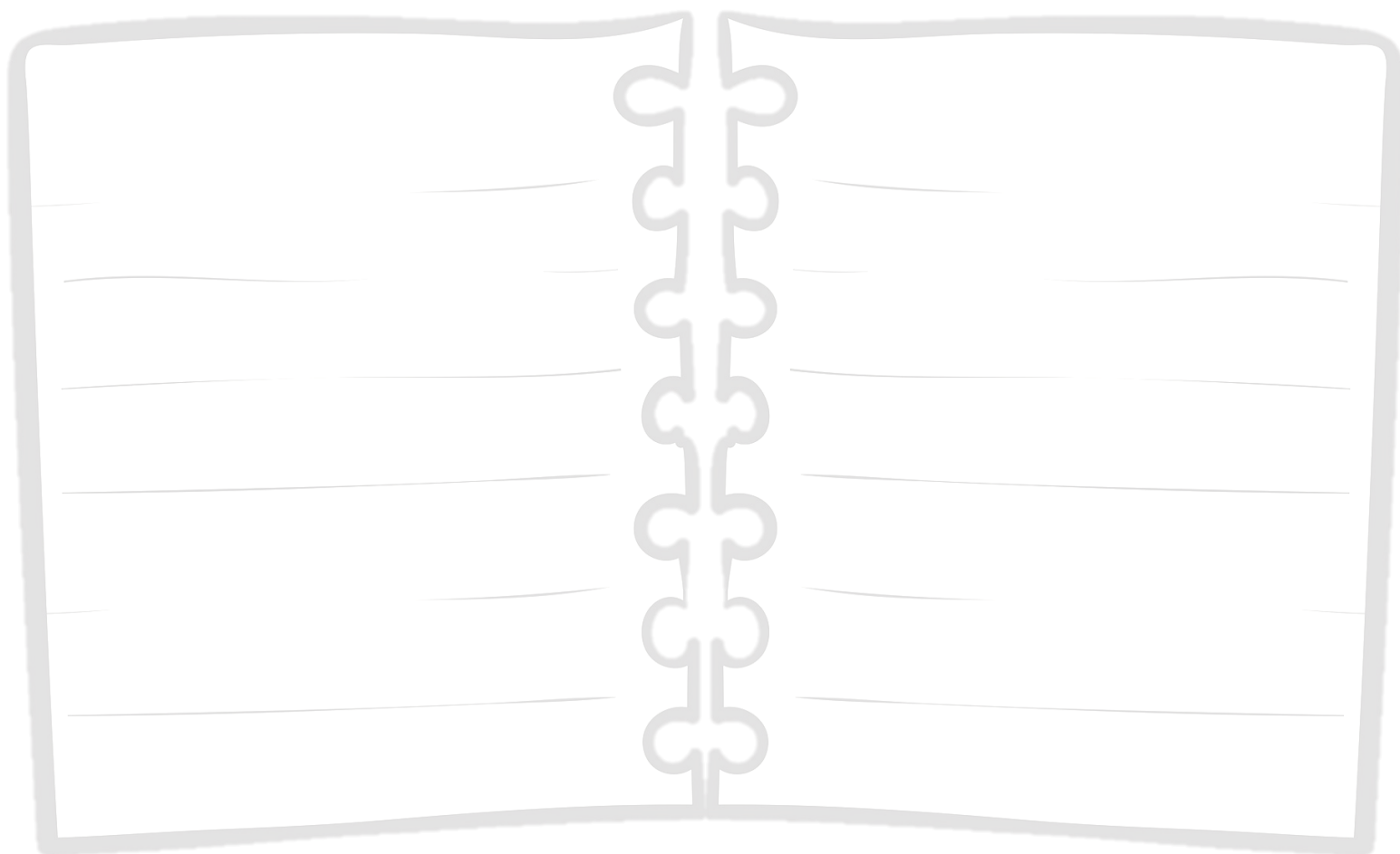
18 Ahead of the Storm

Sometimes the sky gives itself away. Ahead of the Storm is about that feeling you have when you know nasty weather is on its way. It could be the color of the sky or the clouds... it could be the sound of distant thunder, or even an eerie stillness. At that moment, you make your way—calmly or not—to shelter. Hopefully BEFORE it all breaks loose.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Shelter**

How do I know when “rough” stuff is on its way? Where do I sense it? In my stomach? In my head? In my heart? Does it make me desperate or anxious? Or does it make me determined? What shelter do I usually seek? What things or people do I need to have close or around me in order to feel safe no matter how violent the storm becomes?





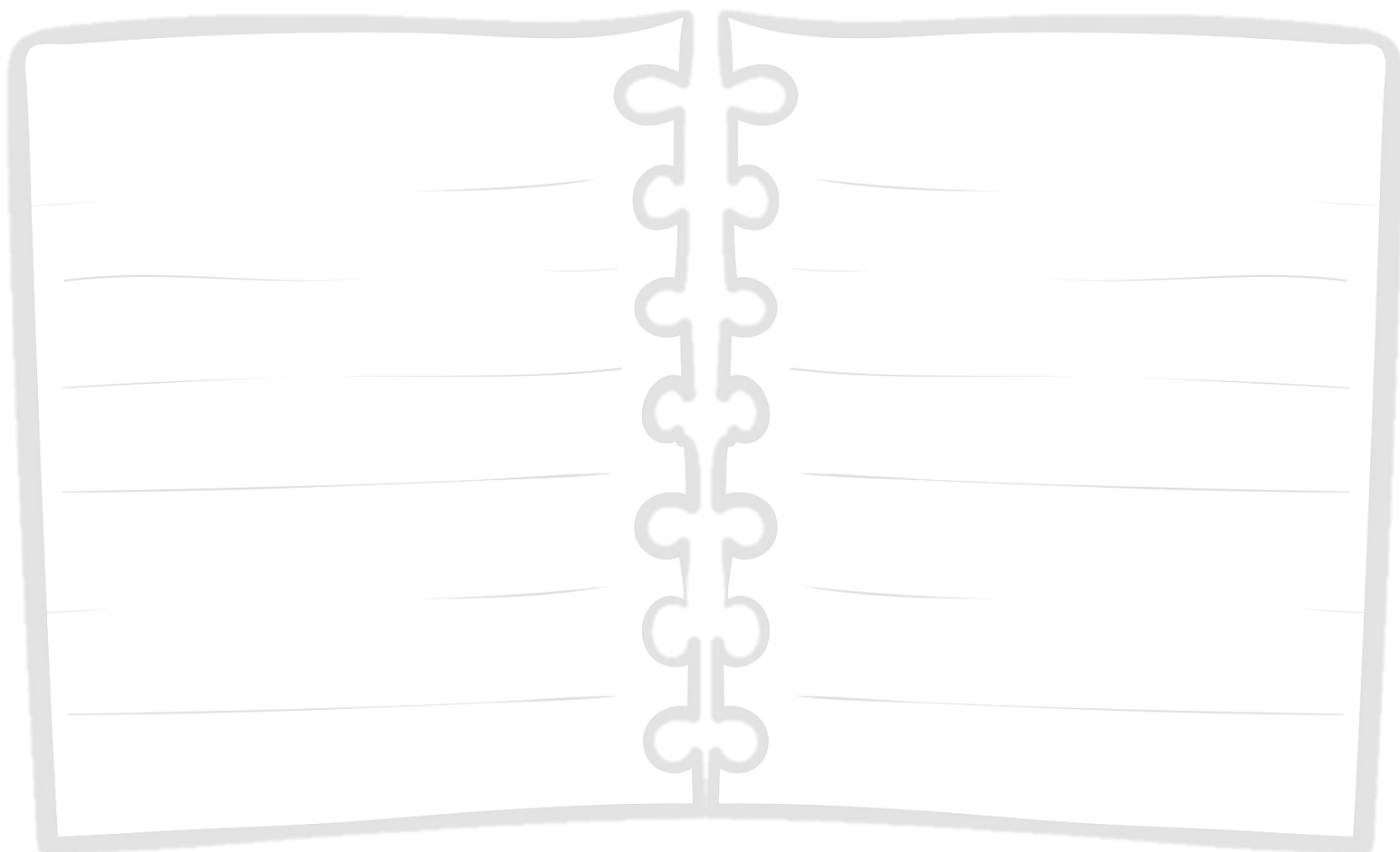
19 Bird at the Water

One April, a couple of years ago, I spent two weeks during the first loveliness of spring in the Black Hills, improvising and recording little instrumentals in and around my house in Spearfish Canyon. These “field recordings” became my **Two Weeks in April** album. Bird at the Water is a flute improvisation made while I was sitting on a rock at the edge of Spearfish Creek on a very sunny spring morning.

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Improvisation**

Do I ever toss out the plans and the script and improvise? When do I do this? How comfortable am I with not knowing exactly what I’m going to do next? How comfortable are the people around me in doing this. Who inspires me with their capacity to just launch out and do things without a plan? How do I find the right balance between planning and improvising?





20 How to Live in this World

My parents and grandparents always had old wind-up clocks. One of my earliest memories as a child was waking in the middle of the night to a dark house and listening to the tick-tock of pendulum clocks. On the hour, some of those clocks would chime the Westminster Chimes, which is the melody that this instrumental, How to Live in this World, is a variation on. Sometimes in the night, time seems to move so slow. Sometimes it moves too quickly. I love the fact that someone thought to make music out of the marking of time. Maybe that's all the passage of time is... as the ancients called it: "The Music of the Spheres".

Choose a question or even a single word below to guide your meditation or journaling as you listen.

Theme: **Time**

What is the melody of my life? Has it come to a crescendo yet? How many more movements are yet to come? What is my expectation concerning this symphony or this song? Am I just looking at how much of this track has yet to play... or am I living into, dancing through, harmonizing with this very note that is striking now... and now... and now?

