

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode, or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at [hiddenforces.io](http://hiddenforces.io) and subscribe to our free email list. If you listen to the show on your Apple Podcast app, remember, you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community, and with that, please enjoy this week's episode.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48 What's up everybody? My guest today is Eugenia Zukerman, an internationally renowned flutist, writer and former television correspondent. She was the artistic director of the Bravo Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado for 13 years and the arts correspondent on CBS Sunday Morning for more than 25. She is the author of two novels, two works of nonfiction and numerous screenplays, articles and book reviews.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:23 Three years ago, Eugenia's family began to notice changes in her cognition. She was unusually forgetful, and at times confused in ways that seemed unlike her. Pushed by her family to undergo testing, it was determined that she was suffering symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's. It was around this time that Eugenia took pen to paper and began writing what turned into a lyrical memoir of her experience--in real-time--coping with the forgetfulness and confusion that come with such a difficult diagnosis.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 02:06 I was unsure how I wanted to approach this conversation. Not knowing Eugenia personally, I wasn't sure how her symptoms would impact her ability to have the type of discussion that I'm used to having and that you're all used to hearing on this program.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 02:25 On that front, I will say that I was impressed at how well Eugenia seemed to remember dates and recount stories when prodded. In fact, there were multiple moments during our conversation that I'd wished I'd been better prepared to discuss instances or anecdotes from her life and career, which is so rich and offers so much in terms of inspiration, wisdom, and just good old-fashioned storytelling. In any case, I didn't want put her on the spot or forget that I was speaking with someone who was exposing herself to me in the most vulnerable circumstances possible. I wanted to be present and open to what and who she was in the moment, and less concerned with plumbing her brain for answers or fishing for stories, that though interesting, would have caused me to miss the larger opportunity to take in the tenderness of the moment.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 03:30 What Eugenia is going through is a variation of what we will all face at some point in our lives. It's something that is particularly hard to accept for those of us who have been blessed with bountiful lives and the capacities to shape them. We're used to getting our way, but when it comes to our mortality, we're all in the same boat. We all have a common faith to share, and in some odd way, I find this comforting. Maybe it's just me looking for a silver lining, but I don't think so. I'm moved by our humanity. It moves me. As we move into this new decade full of life, love relationships and opportunities, I want us all to focus a little bit more on the things that bring us together and less on the things that set us apart. With that, I'm honored to bring you my conversation with flutist, writer and author of "Like Falling Through a Cloud," Eugenia Zukerman.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 04:51 Eugenia Zukerman, welcome to Hidden Forces.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 04:55 It's a pleasure.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 04:55 It's my pleasure having you on. I spent the morning listening to your music. I downloaded a bunch of albums on iTunes and started on YouTube listening to music of yours. I love classical music, but I don't know the names and stuff, but there was one that was like some concerto, flute, major thing and it was beautiful.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 05:18 Well, I'm glad. Thank you.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 05:19 Yeah. How did you come to play the flute? How did that happen?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 05:24 When I was a child, my father was an inventor and he loved to make music. He played the piano. My mother was a dancer, danced with Martha Graham, and it was a very musical household. I have to say that when I was in grammar school, there were teachers who taught the kids how to play music on instruments that were donated to the school. They also had members of an orchestra come to the school and play their instruments and I heard the flute for the first time, and I was absolutely bowled over. I ran home and I said, "I've just heard the flute and I want to play the flute. Can I please, can I please?"

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 06:11 And my parents were delighted about that. As I said, in those days there were instruments that you could take out from the school and they were teachers who loved to teach. I was very lucky because at the age of 10 I was already starting to play and play well. All through my teenage years I played and I had wonderful teachers. So, by the time I was, I would say 10 to 15, those were the formative years for me because that's the time when you learn the quickest and you retain the best. I just loved playing the flute. For me, it was what I would say my other. I could come home from school and I was never lonely because I would go up to my room and take out my flute and it was my best friend. It remained my best friend and it still is my best friend. I feel that I am very lucky that I had the kind of training that I had and that I had the parents who really helped me keep going when I would say this is too hard, etc. It was parental help that really was the key.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 07:34 I'm not an expert in music in any way, so this is a layman's opinion, but the flute seems to be uniquely like ethereal, it's sort of magical. It's ancient also. It's been around forever. It's also a light companion. You can take it with you, like you said. Were there any other instruments that you were drawn to?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 07:55 Not at all.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 07:56 That's so interesting.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 07:57 No. My parents played the piano and my older sister played the piano and it was just too ... I didn't like hitting things.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 08:05 That's so interesting.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 08:06 You don't just depress the key. You hit the key sometimes when you're playing the piano. The thing I think that was most of interest to me is that, through my own breath and by having my breath go into the flute, I could make sounds of

my own. For me, it was like coloring and it became more like coloring. You color the sound and you have to find your own way of how to do that. Again, I think for me, it was the fact that the flute became my best friend.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 08:44 Well, there's a poem in the book, I don't have it off hand, but you talk about shaping the air?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 08:51 Shaping the sound.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 08:52 Shaping the sound.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 08:53 You can shape the sound by how much energy you put into your blowing across the embouchure. The embouchure means the place where you make the sound. For me, that was just what I've always tried to do is to make sounds that carry meaning.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 09:15 How much of your training came from being taught and how much of it was improvisational, just playing around with the instrument on your own?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 09:24 Both, I would say. I played around on the instrument and I had a rigorous training with a private teacher, but also a rigorous training at the schools that I went to. I went to public schools. Then, by the time I went to college, I went to Barnard College, I had to teach her in New York who was one of the greats and he was very encouraging to me. His name was Julius Baker and he was amazing and some of the greatest flutists have come from his studio.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 09:56 I do want to talk more about this and I think we will, but I want you to take us back, if you can, to the beginning of this journey that led to the book that you've written. I assume that would be around the time of your diagnosis?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 10:10 Well, I was forced into a diagnosis because my daughters kept saying to me, "What's the matter with you? You're speaking strangely, you're repeating yourself." I kept saying I'm perfectly fine. Then they finally said, "Okay, it's time. You are going to go to the hospital and get tested." My younger daughter came with me and I went and everyone seemed so much older than I was, but it was a very nice and easy way to sit in a room and then be called in. My daughter came with me. The doctor who talked to me was very nice and very bright and we talked about many things and she decided that it would be the thing to do to be tested. The first testing that I was taken to was CAT scan. They decided that they needed to have a CAT scan.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 11:07 When, at the end of my meeting with this woman, I went down for my CAT scan, I wasn't scared at all. I was kind of excited. I must've been one of the very few people who got into the CAT scan and loved it because I loved hearing sounds that I had never heard in my life. I think most people are pretty frightened of a CAT scan, but I-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 11:33 Or MRI, maybe.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 11:35 Yeah, I think it was an MRI.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 11:36 MRI. Yeah, trust me. I know.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 11:39 Right.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 11:39 You said it in the book, but I also, I've been in the same situation. I remember in one of your poems you were writing about this when you went to the doctor, and before you went down to get the MRI, she administered a test. She tested your cognition in the room.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 11:54 That was the other way around.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 11:56 Oh, is the other around. Okay.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 11:56 I went to the cognitive place the second time I came to the hospital. The first time ...

**Demetri Kofinas:** 12:01 The College for Physicians and Surgeons up in Columbia.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 12:05 Up in Columbia, right. The first time that I was tested, it was for an MRI and then I was told that I had to come back to do some cognitive learning.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 12:19 I've taken those tests too. We've talked about this. My audience does this ... brought this up many times now in different interviews for different reasons, but I had dementia and it was very hard taking those tests. What you described, your feelings were the feelings I had. Frustration, fear and just a desire to just stop. There's something else that comes across in your work, which is interesting. You're very successful and maybe that ... I think there's a correlation between being successful and maybe sometimes being hard on yourself.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 12:50 Well, I think that someone who's driven, who has a goal, a constant goal, you never really reach your goal. It's constant. I think that I am hard on myself. I've always been hard on myself. As a kid, I remember hitting myself on the head when I couldn't do something and I just wanted to be able to do something instantly.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 13:16 Give the right answers on that test.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 13:18 Yeah, all the time.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 13:22 When the day was over, when the tests were over, this was when, what year was this? How far back?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 13:27 This is about three years.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 13:30 Three and a half years ago.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 13:30 Three and a half years ago.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 13:32 Then, at that point you went home and they didn't give you a diagnosis yet. You were going to find out the results of the tests and everything else. You talked about actually being relieved that you didn't have to think about it, but you began writing after you came back from the doctor, was that when you started writing?

- Eugenia Zukerman:** 13:46 After the very first time I went to the hospital and my daughter was with me, we took the subway downtown to where I lived and I went up to my apartment and I sat down at my desk and I stared at the wall for a while. For some reason, I picked up a pen and pencil and simply started writing. I didn't have any goal. I just wrote and it all came out in poetry. I don't really know why. I have written a lot of poetry, but I had not tried to write a sort of story, but this just all flowed. I didn't tell anyone about it for about, I would say a month, and I asked my younger daughter if I could send it to her because I seem to be writing something and I'm not sure it's worth it.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 14:40 She came back to me almost instantly and she said, "Mom, this is really very special. Just keep going." That helped me. I realized, hmm, maybe this is something. Even at that point, I hadn't realized this is poetry, this is something that is unusual for me to do, especially in the long version to keep going. I found that every day it made me feel stronger, better. There's a certain clarification that happens and you must find this too when you're writing, that by the very action of writing, because it's a movement forward, I think that that helps you figuring out at the same time that you're writing.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 15:28 Well, I think you're very courageous for having done this because to be honest with you, I did write about my experience, but only after, long after it was over.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 15:36 Well, that makes sense to me. I do not know why I was driven to do this every day. I think I had a humongous amount of fear and I think perhaps by writing daily it made me realize, okay, I am still someone who is able to connect to words and to express myself.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 16:03 What were you afraid of? What are you afraid of?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 16:04 Well, what I was afraid of was that I would lose all cognitive ability and lose my ability to connect to people because we need to be able to express ourselves. I knew that I never wanted to stop making music. By that time, I was the artistic director of the Clarion Concerts in Columbia County. So, I was already in a position of, not only making music, but being someone who was in charge of a musical organization. I had a lot on my mind. I think, by writing, it simply helped me organize myself.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 16:47 You said Clarion County, that's an upstate New York?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 16:50 Yes, Clarion Concerts in Columbia County is the actual name of this organization and it's over 50 years old. Started by someone who went to Europe and brought back a lot of wonderful music. That is how all of it happened. The man who started Clarion Concerts now, 60 years ago who is no longer on the planet, Newell Jenkins started this. It has always been an ongoing situation and I'm very lucky to have met people who wanted me to continue working with them and to have concerts, which we do.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 17:35 You did a segment with CBS Sunday morning and you were actually for, how many years a curator of content there, a producer?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 17:43 No, I was always the artistic correspondent for them. I was the person who got to do the wonderful stuff like interview the famous people like Judy Collins, like Paul McCartney to so many people, and that was wonderful.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 18:02 What was that like?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 18:03 It was great. I found that all the people that I sat across from were interesting, wanted to be there, wanted to be known and ...

**Demetri Kofinas:** 18:15 Wanted to be known. When you say want it to be known generally or they wanted to be known specifically and be there with you on CBS Sunday Morning?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 18:23 I can't speak for how they wanted to feel about me, but I can tell you that I wanted really to find out who is this guy sitting across me. Okay, so he's famous and let's talk.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 18:35 Who were some of the most interesting characters?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 18:38 I have to say every single one of them.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 18:41 Judy Collins seems like she'd be pretty interesting.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 18:43 Judy Collins was a friend of mine even before I was on CBS Sunday Morning. So, I knew her very well. She's one of the most wonderful people. I don't know if it's easiest to talk with someone who you know best or whether it's someone who you don't really know, but I am ...

**Demetri Kofinas:** 19:03 That's interesting. I've had sometimes people on the show that I know rather well. Actually, I feel like it's easier for me to have people that I don't know that well. Maybe I get more excited because there's so much more to learn.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 19:14 Right. I think that that's the case too. I know that Judy Collins was just one of many people and I am sort of embarrassed that I don't remember as many people as names and such, but ...

**Demetri Kofinas:** 19:29 Well, Paul McCartney, for example.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 19:30 Right. Well, I had never met him before and there I was sitting across him ...

**Demetri Kofinas:** 19:33 That had to be so cool.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 19:35 He was very cheeky and very, very adorable. He was there because he had written a serious piece. He was terrific. He talked a lot about his father and his father's interests in music. To be right across from him was fun and thrilling. I think anyone who says yes, I will have an interview, they're not wanting you not to like them. So, I think I got the best of most of the people I talked with.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 20:09 Did you have a certain strategy or way of coming to the interview in order to make it better, or did you have, let's say a way of putting yourself into a certain mindset before you sat down with ... did have a ritual or something like that?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 20:23 I didn't have a ritual. I did my work. I looked up everything I could about the person I was going to talk to. I wrote down questions that I would be asking and I didn't have a piece of paper. It was like meeting you and talking with you and finding out who you are. That's the way I approached it. It helped a great deal that Sunday Morning was all an entity. No, that's not true. Here's the deal, now I remember. I got a phone call quite early, I was still at Barnard. I got a phone call from Shad Northshield, and he said, "My name is Shad Northshield. I have a TV show and you're going to be on it and you're going to say."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 21:08 You're going to be on it.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 21:10 You're going to be on it. No, you didn't tell me who he was or anything. No, he did. He said, "I am Shad Northshield and I have started a program called Sunday Morning, and you're going to be on it and you're going to be talking to people in the arts and you'll have a salary and you're going to say yes."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 21:31 You're going to say yes?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 21:34 Yes. He was one of the great people. He was just so charismatic. When he was mad, I learned what mad was.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 21:43 Really?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 21:44 He really could tell you off, but he also really would tell you this was terrific. I have to say that Sunday Morning is still ongoing as you know, because I was very thrilled that they wanted to do a piece about me and what has gone on.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 22:00 So you were there from the beginning. So, CBS Sunday Morning, I think began in 1979. I think their first episode was in '79. You were there around that time.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 22:09 Yes, I was maybe there for the second or third time and I had no idea what I was doing.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 22:16 That was an amazing time still to be on television. I think television used to be more magical than it is now. Now it doesn't have that sense of inaccessibility. It used to be really, if you saw someone from television, it was like you were seeing a god or something.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 22:33 Right. Well I have to say that Charles Kuralt, who was the executive producer and he was the person who had all of the ideas and the person who was sort of the face of CBS Sunday Morning. It was just wonderful to be able to do what I had, not even in my mind thought I wanted to do, and that was to be able to, not only sit and talk to people, but fly out to Minnesota to find out about such and such an artist. It was a great privilege to be on that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 23:09 What is the instrument that they begin the show with? It sounds like ...

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 23:16 It's a trumpet.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 23:17 It's a trumpet.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 23:18 Yeah.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 23:18 Did you ever meet Don Hewitt?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 23:19 Yes.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 23:20 What was he like?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 23:21 I don't have much of a recollection. I know I met him but not as well as some of the others.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 23:27 That was amazing that a program like that could have been as successful as it was, both 60 Minutes and Sunday Morning. I think television has changed a lot, not necessarily for the better, and it's wonderful that there are still programs like that that endure. I know so many people that CBS Sunday Morning because they like watching something that's pleasant and shows the brighter side of humanity.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 23:51 Well, I remember that they had the brighter side of humanity, but they also had pieces on things that were frightening and not so happy. That's one of the things I really appreciated about it. It was real life, real people, real things happening. I felt that, as I traveled around, I can remember going to a holiday in out somewhere and a man who was sweeping the floor came over to me and he said, "Aren't you Eugenia Zukerman?" I said, "Yes I am." And he said, "I loved that piece that you did about Tchaikovsky." And I'm watching this guy who is sweeping the floor and Sunday Morning had made inroads.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 24:33 How does that make you feel?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 24:35 That makes me feel that music and art is so important. I also remember being somewhere in Europe and having an outdoor meal somewhere, and someone popped his head up and said, "Are you Eugenia Zukerman?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "I listen to you every Sunday." And there we were in the middle of somewhere.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 24:56 That's so nice.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 24:58 I do think that it's changed and it has changed because everyone wants something faster and quicker. We used to have 12-minute segments, and by the time I left it was down to six. Also, one of the things for me was real learning experience was going with a group of people, sound man, the photographer, others etc., and we would be together with people who didn't really know each other, but we got to know each other and to make something together.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 25:32 So, you had like a regular crew that you worked with?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 25:34 It wasn't always regular. We all mixed around. It depended on who needed what, etc. I was astounded to find out that I'd had been there for more than 25 years. Then I was told that people no longer wanted classical music.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 25:52 Well, I love classical music, I must say. Again, I'm embarrassed at how little I know about music. It's interesting, when I was growing up, it was even more the

case, I was more into movies. In the last few years, it's like my ears have opened up like a car engine. It took some miles through the engine open and it's like now I can hear things and I really just loved listening to your music, to you playing the flute this morning.

- Eugenia Zukerman:** 26:15 Oh, thank you.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 26:17 That prods me. I want to ask you about this. I might as well ask about it now. Your husband, how did the two of you meet? I think I had this idea in my head that you met at one of your concerts, but how important was music to how you came together?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 26:30 Very important. I had already had two husbands before. The first one who was a famous musician, the second one who is a screenwriter and movie maker, so that area felt very comfortable for me. I met my husband, Dick Novick, through a friend, having decided that I wanted to spend time by myself in the woods up near Tanglewood for a summer just by myself. I got there and got a phone call from a friend of mine who said, "I know this wonderful guy. He loves music. He does this, he does that, and he wants to meet you. He's going to call you." And I said, "No, no, no. It's just way too soon." And she said, "Get over it." I went to Tanglewood the next day. I think we spoke first and I had no idea what he looked like, really? But he said, "Meet me at this place," etc.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 27:26 I went at intermission, we met, and I took one look at this, just fabulous looking man, who's ...
- Demetri Kofinas:** 27:34 Swashbuckling.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 27:35 Swashbuckling, yes, with the most beautiful blue eyes and a smile. He said to me, "I've brought a beautiful young woman with me." And I thought, oh my God, this guy is weird. But then he took me to the beautiful young woman who was his beautiful young daughter, one of his beautiful young daughters. That was funny. Then I knew we had to go back in after the first half was over. I saw where he was sitting and I listened to the music, but I watched him. I could see the back of his head and his foot was going exactly where it should have gone at the right moment. I sat there saying to myself, "I'm going to marry this man."
- Demetri Kofinas:** 28:19 Wow. Really?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 28:20 And I forced him into it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 28:24 That reminds me a little bit of a story recounted by Jane Fonda about how she first met Ted Turner. So, Ted Turner had supposedly, according to Jane Fonda, called Jane right after her divorce. She does this impression of like, "Hello, Hello, this is Bill. I heard you're getting divorced or whatever." And she's, "No, no, no, it's too soon. Call me back in six months." And he called her back in six months on the dot and he took her out on a date and she was just ... it was instant attraction from the very beginning. I wanted to ask you again, so you were on CBS Sunday Morning, it filmed you up in this beautiful farm that you live at now full time, but tell me a little bit about this place. How long have you been going there?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 29:08 As soon as I met Dick.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 29:09 That as his house?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 29:10 Yes, it was his house. He introduced me to his house. It was winter time. I think he had two dogs at the time and it was snowy and we walked up an icy hill, and I said, "What's that?" And he said, "What?" I pointed and it was blood all over the snow. And he said, "Take the dogs, go inside."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 29:36 Another bear?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 29:37 No, but he said, take the dogs, get them inside. And I said, "What are you going to do? You're not going to kill this creature?" And he said, "I have to." Here I was, this person from New York, we don't think about guns or anything. And I have just met this man and I have his two dogs and he's going to shoot an animal on the snow. So, it was ...

**Demetri Kofinas:** 29:58 More than you bargained for.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 30:00 More than I bargained for.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 30:01 Was it a bear?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 30:02 No, it was a bobcat.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 30:04 A bobcat.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 30:05 Yes.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 30:05 Because the three of us were discussing in the green room earlier about the presence of bears on the property. I think there's a growing fascination among my generation and younger about the wilderness and hunting and things like this. I think that maybe it's just a cyclical thing. This always happens every so many generations or whatnot. I don't know. Or maybe it's also driven in part by the record level of people living in urban environments.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 30:35 Well, there's that, but I will tell you this was a rabid bobcat, and he knew, my husband knew it was rabid, and I didn't. I thought, oh, poor little thing. It was an eyeopener to the world outside of New York for me.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 30:50 What was the first thing that you wrote when you sat down to write? Which one was the first poem? Was it straight from the beginning?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 30:56 It was absolutely from the beginning.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 31:00 I'd love for you to read Like Falling Through a Cloud because that is beautiful, is that the first thing you wrote?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 31:04 Yes.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 31:05 That's incredible.

- Eugenia Zukerman:** 31:05 Yeah. But I also want to say that I had no idea what I was going to be writing, but I knew the title. I knew Like Falling Through a Cloud. The reason I knew the title was because my mother died at 103 and that was three years ago. I knew that my mother was cloudy and I knew that sometimes she would wake up and be very bright. I always felt that her waking up was like ... her head was an empty coconut. I used to think of it that way. For some reason, the way she was able to wake up was to let the insides drip down into the coconut until something came out. For some reason, I do not remember the exact moment, but I knew I was going to call it Like Falling Through a Cloud.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 32:03 That also resonates. The cloud metaphor, I thought of, when I was going through this and forgetting and it was getting harder and harder to remember things and recognize people and it felt very much like a fog. A fog had descended and it was just growing thicker and thicker and it was hard to see through and I had to make all these different efforts to see more clearly, more coping mechanisms or way of doing it, but this was one of many poems in the book that I found relatable. I'd love if you could read it.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 32:31 "Like Falling Through a Cloud. Sometimes when I wake up it's dark. Where am I? Sometimes I know and sometimes I have no idea. So, I let the night spirits wrap around me and they whisper to me, "Don't think, you will remember. I lie very still and then suddenly like falling through a cloud, I know I am here."
- Demetri Kofinas:** 33:01 What does that capture? What are you describing when you say that?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 33:05 I actually do think of falling through a cloud. I do think of floating and that probably comes from seeing my mother sort of float above her bed. That feeling sometimes when I would go in to see her, it was as if she was somewhere else. But I think perhaps it's something that we all go through and that is, that there's something going around in your brain and you're trying to grasp it and you have to fall through something to wake up, and that's part of what I think I felt when I decided to call it Like Falling Through a Cloud.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 33:42 Also, the part about Knight's spirits wrapping you, I found it resonated with me. Is some of this about learning to let go? Is that part of that process, of not, in this specific case, you're trying to remember something, not trying to force yourself into remembering it, but just letting it be what it is and letting things come to you?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 34:02 Absolutely. This was something I became aware of right in the beginning of writing the book because I know that if you squeeze something too hard, you're going to hurt it and you won't be able to express yourself in the way that you can if you, not make yourself, but help yourself to relax. I think that every time I have tried to make something happen, I have failed because I have tried too hard or have pushed too hard.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 34:38 This also goes back to something we mentioned earlier, which is that, a lot of people that are successful, they tend to be type A personalities. The go getters, they know what they want, they chase it. If they want something, they make it happen. I think also just part of either getting older or confronting illness or challenges sometimes in my experience at least requires learning a new skill of acceptance or surrender to the moment or circumstances. Is that something

that you've found to be true? Have you grown in that sense in terms of your own compassion for yourself and for being more understanding with let's say your shortcomings or whatever it is in the moment that you're dealing with?

- Eugenia Zukerman:** 35:22 I'm not really sure about that, but I can tell you that ... Can I read another poem that is involved in what we're talking about?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 35:31 Absolutely. Yeah.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 35:32 This one is called Marbles. "Maybe mine are lost or maybe they're rolling around in my head looking for a place to land, or maybe not. My daughter's telling me to get tested, "Tested for what?" I ask, even though I know for what, but it's for what I don't want to know. So, I let the marbles roll around in a swirl of distracting colors because I don't want to listen to them, the daughters, because if I hear them I will be very afraid and this mother cannot be that mother, not ever, never." I think that is a poem about my passion for my daughters. I don't think I was a very clingy mother and I adore my daughters and my granddaughters now, but I think that I just forced myself through feelings of inadequacy. I think most mothers feel inadequate from time to time, but I wanted this feeling of marbles, etc. I like the feeling of how marbles roll and how the colors come, etc.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 36:45 For describing the way in which your mind feels and your memories?
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 36:51 No, just I think more of, I don't even remember now. I thought I wanted ...
- Demetri Kofinas:** 36:56 Because it does conjure something that I feel like I understand it. Again, it's just like falling through a cloud, right? It's the marble just rolling around, just like falling through a cloud, it's just sort of almost effortless.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 37:12 I think effortless, but I also think purposeful. I think that when things are rolling around and your trying either to stop it from rolling around or be fascinated with it, I think the whole period of when I was writing this book, I felt that things were in motion. Come to think of it, I think that every time I've written a book I have wanted that sense of keep going, keep going. I have had times when I've been writing a book and I have felt it's not working and it's not working, and once or twice I actually have, after a lot of work on a book, I gave it up. I guess the marbles is something that you want. When you're trying to do something, you have to let things roll until you're able to control it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 38:08 That's also relatable. We did an episode recently, we haven't released it. This will come out first with David Epstein, who's an author who's written some great books. He was a journalist for Sports Illustrated. I believe it was with him that we talked about this, but sometimes you can put an enormous amount of work into something and it just doesn't work out the way that you thought it would or that you wanted it to, but then it turns out that something more beautiful comes out of that.
- Eugenia Zukerman:** 38:36 I think you can get stuck. You can get stuck on something that you really think is going to work. For most of my writing life, I have always told myself, it is not acceptable to give this up, you just have to keep going. Once or twice I really have given up on something that I, at first, was really excited about.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 38:57 That brings up again, something that I mentioned earlier, which I want to see, maybe I can ask it again, which is something that in my own life that I realized as I got older and went through certain experiences is, the difference between quitting or giving up and surrender or acceptance. How have you dealt with this at this stage in your life? What you're dealing with, what you're coping with, how have you navigated this?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 39:24 I think I've navigated it in the best way I have writing anything and that is honesty. Everything I wrote is extremely honest. I didn't make anything up. Might've come from something in my background, etc., but I never gave it up and I think that by being positive, particularly now that I have a diagnosis, it's a diagnosis of death, but we all have diagnosis of death and I don't want to get away from what we're saying, but I remain positive and maybe I remain positive because this is the happiest time of my life.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 40:08 Talk to me about that.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 40:09 It doesn't seem as if it should be, but it is because I have a great love in my life. I have extraordinary children, I have friends and family, I have animals I adore, I have everything I need around me.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 40:27 Do you think you have a deeper appreciation now for those things than did before?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 40:31 Far deeper. Far deeper.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 40:33 Do you think that's why?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 40:35 Maybe, and also maybe because I know I'll have to leave them and that they will have to leave me. I do wake up every morning and think to myself, thank you. It's really good to be here.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 40:48 Sense of gratitude is ...

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 40:49 Huge.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 40:50 Huge.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 40:50 Huge sense of gratitude, except for my dog, Lucy. I absolutely adore her. She comes up to my room when I'm practicing, and if she doesn't like the pace, she puts her paws over her ears and shakes her head and walks off as if I have pooped in the room.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 41:10 Really?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 41:10 Seriously.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 41:11 So there are certain pieces that she likes and certain pieces she doesn't like?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 41:14 Exactly. Yeah.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 41:15 That's so interesting. For anyone that's listening, who either is going through this or more likely who has a family member that they love, a mother, a father, a sister, a brother who is going through this, whether it's Alzheimer's, whether it's the natural process of aging and forgetting, what advice can you give, or what would you hope that your work and your presence here today can convey?

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 41:40 I would just say to everyone, live every day. By live every day, I don't mean wake up and brush your teeth, but it is such a gift to be alive. You as someone who has had similar problems that I have had, I would imagine you have that same feeling. It is just whoa, my eyes are open. I am living. I have that sense every morning.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 42:09 Who was the actress on Saturday Night Live? Greta, no. I think it was Gilda Radner who said, I'm forgetting now who mentioned this on one of our episodes, but she said something like, "Cancer's amazing except for the downside," or something like that. I can't remember exactly how she said it, but it's true. There's so much gratitude and perspective that you gain from that type of experience. I can imagine that there are many beautiful moments with your husband in the farm, surrounded by nature, or when your daughters come, or when you see your grandchildren.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 42:43 Every day I wake up hoping that I will still be here so that I can connect with these people who mean so much to me. I don't think every day about deaths, but I am aware. I am aware every day that I probably, if it's not going to be all that much longer, but I also tell myself every day, you could step off a curb and get hit by a car probably faster than the time you're going to die.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 43:13 There's also something interesting that happens when you're present, which is that your life extends in a sense, because time, there's a yarn, there's a chasm that grows. Again, that's the point of living in the moment. Eugenia, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today.

**Eugenia Zukerman:** 43:28 It was such a pleasure to talk to you?

**Demetri Kofinas:** 43:32 Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Creative Media Design Studio in New York city. For more information about this week's episode, or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at [hiddenforces.io](http://hiddenforces.io) and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page at [patreon.com/hiddenforces](http://patreon.com/hiddenforces). Today's episode was produced by me and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our website at [hiddenforces.io](http://hiddenforces.io). Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at Hidden Forces Pod, or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.