

# BRING ME THE WIND

Final Version



A Personal Essay  
By  
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## ‘BRING ME THE WIND’

Desperation, although unbeckoned and unwanted, often comes to those who are powerless in their circumstances. I knew of such things; I had been powerless in my own. We lived in abject poverty on a bootlegger’s property on the edge of a nameless town. Food, clothing, and shelter, so taken for granted by most, were not guaranteed in our austere circumstances. My mother and I were desolate in our isolation; no one present to bear witness to the sacrifice of the innocent, so we suffered alone. The sheds and shadows that haunted my dreams became all too real during my waking hours. In my eleventh year, I had become a child of dark places and even darker secrets.

Comfort and consolation often comes in sordid pairings and my mother’s latest companion became her rescuer in ways that a child could never hope to be. I had resigned myself to being her silent second. Not second born per se, but second in priority certainly. Her solace was found in her lover’s arms and in the enabling dependency of alcohol that was always within reach. That beckoning brown bottle called the shots and determined her fate...and mine. She was powerless, my mother, and a dangerous combination of depression and destitution had settled into her heart and rendered her ineffective in saving me, her youngest daughter. She leaned on that man against all counsel. I do not know if he lifted her up or propped her up but, either way, he was a stranger to me. He should have remained that way but soon enough the sour stench of whiskey and his disembodied voice in the darkness became all too familiar and it was terrifying.

Never mind, child, there was nothing to be done. My silence was expected and I surrendered it. I tiptoed through that time and place, desperate to remain invisible so as to not bring the tempest of my mother’s wrath upon my head or even worse, the creation of opportunity and his accompanying lascivious smile. Fleeing that hellish atmosphere, I sought refuge amongst

the abandoned cars and feral cats on the neighbouring property and beyond. When even that couldn't be far enough from that ugly reality, although treacherous, I ventured across the perilous highway to the abandoned drive-in whose cracked asphalt and weathered and torn white canvas, still flapping against the rusted steel frame, beckoned me as it would any child needing to escape their cheerless reality.

The juxtapositions of past, present and future continually played out in my life. As all must do, we pass through each of Father Time's phases as surely as we breathe but it seemed to me that my present was stretching far beyond my capacity for tolerance. Whether I was living or merely existing, I was undeniably trapped. The forgotten child in me silently begged and pleaded for deliverance from that time and place as so many other forgotten children do. The words of Anna Freud, youngest daughter of Sigmund Freud, resonate with a hauntingly familiar refrain among those of us that pray for salvation against the darkness: "We live trapped, between the churned-up and examined past and a future that waits for our work. As we crawl gropingly through a dark piece of the present, our eyes are blinded to the brightness of the timeless world above." Upon first reading of this passage, the imagery of an earthly grave trapping a yet-breathing life within pervades the mind. But read again. The dark present is not all that exists. The notion that the future waits for our work is truly remarkable in itself and there is no denying that hope lives. Even the hissing, spitting wild cats, so intent, like me, on survival, were a testament to that. Survive. Survive until a new reality could take shape. The present was neither derivative nor dependent but existed wholly to prepare me for a future that waits for my *own* work. Crawling as I was through the dark, did not mean I was destined to remain there. I could not fathom what my future would hold and yet I knew it would hold *me*. I would not be buried by those dark and destructive forces that would see my end. Even that which has been discarded,

like the forgotten drive-in across the highway, can stand defiantly against emptiness. The wide expanse of useless space unknowingly gave life and liberty to the wind.

As I sat, surrounded by glittering, broken glass that had yet to give itself over to the wind's purpose, I silently pleaded with the wind to take me too. At the very least, let it scour my desperate heart clean. It sighed a response and beckoned me to follow its path. In my world of smallness and invisibility, only the wind could bring strength and power, and in the words of Arthur Golden, "tear away from us all but things that cannot be torn, so that we see ourselves as we really are." The endless blue sky held limitless possibility and I surrendered to that which held hope in its grasp. All I needed was the gift of change.

The minutes ticked by as I waited impatiently for the school bus to deliver me to a new school, new friends, and a new beginning. Across the fields of tall, diamond-dewed grass I watched the yellow bus approach, spewing clouds of noxious exhaust into the newness of that day. I darted back to the reality side of the highway, with my yellow lunchbox gripped tightly in my determined fist, to board the bus that, like the wind, had the power to lift me up and carry me away; away to a place above the world I knew, above the stygian darkness of sin and squalor.

The introductions and lessons of the morning were dizzyingly overwhelming but I persevered as all newly transferred students must. My classmates chattered excitedly about the new playground equipment installed over the summer and I was soon caught up in the exhilaration of hopeful camaraderie. When the lunch bell finally rang, hundreds of lithe little bodies crowded the blacktop and I was squeezed and squished in the melee of eager children. Not being of their world of entitlement and life-long friendship, I resignedly relinquished a turn on the swings to explore the emerald expanse of the outer schoolyard, the green and glorious refuge calling to me, not unlike the one across from my mother's house. My yellow lunchbox

became a collection vessel for the bright buttercups and wondrously tiny green frogs that populated the long grass on the edge of that hushed and gentle world.

Caught up in the intensity of exploration, I did not notice the girls who, away from the unwatchful eyes of the schoolyard supervisor, sought to locate the strange newcomer who upset their social hierarchy. I will tell you that pre-pubescent girls with evil in their intent are unmatched in cruelty towards the tender-hearted. I could not comprehend what unimaginable thing I had done to deserve their merciless attention but after witnessing their petty violations of the uninitiated that morning, I knew enough to run. And so I ran, with my yellow lunchbox full of treasures clutched protectively to my chest, along the fence towards the uncivilized noise of excited children. To return to the fleeting warmth of youthful humanity was surely where I would find refuge from those vile girls.

As I approached the creek-bed that intercepted the school property, I saw a fox whose foot had been caught in the fence in his own attempt to flee some time ago. With no escape, his spirit had evaporated in that dry creek-bed leaving behind a husk of desiccation and decay. Tufts of his red-brown fur were blowing freely about the sun-baked depression in the earth but never very far from their tragic origin. The fox's mouth was frozen in an angry snarl but his formidable teeth were hopelessly ineffective against the onslaught of death.

In that moment of slight hesitation and morbid fascination, I was caught. I turned to find the human pack leader bearing down on me with unwavering intensity and hatred. With limited options remaining, I brought myself up to full stature, such as it was. I was but one small girl cradling precious, but no less significant, life in her arms. I stood my ground against those girls, fully prepared to shoulder the weighty responsibility of protecting the innocent as no one had done for me. But just as I had tried to save myself in the shadows of my mother's house, it

mattered not against strength and numbers greater than my own. We were overpowered, the tiny frogs and I, and for all my bravado and boldness, I was ineffective against their death, just as the fox's teeth were ineffective against his own. Those vicious girls conspired to rip the yellow lunchbox from my quivering hands and deftly sprung the latches. I watched, helplessly, as the unsuspecting baby frogs were scattered in the soft grass, jubilant over the return to their intended home, only to be stomped in a senseless act of purposeful cruelty.

Horror rose in my chest and settled in my throat like a great seething mass of oily blackness. Something, or someone, new and unrecognizable took control of my body. My pounding heart darkened with rage and vengeful thoughts of retribution for the loss of innocence and loss of life, both the frogs' and my own. Hatred rose and roiled within the now hollow cavity of my chest where a pure heart used to be and I understood that more than innocence would be sacrificed that day. George R.R. Martin's words, "she wanted a storm to match her rage" were never truer than in that moment when I stared down the barrel of my own dark nature. Death or deliverance was at hand and a choice was commanded. I could remain a silent victim of neglect and depravity or I could wage an all-out war upon all those that thieved my future.

There was a moment of hesitation as my blood boiled and rushed to my extended fists. My breath came in ragged gasps as my mind processed what was about to occur. I looked to the lifeless fox for counsel but he could offer none. I understood the ferocity of his losing battle against fate; within moments he would be a silent witness to mine.

Fully armed with vengeance and hatred, I returned attention to my tormentors. Death or deliverance, I was ready. But it was not to be. Soft and insistent the wind took up my cause and the verdant grass began to herald its arrival. The swirling brown tufts of the dead fox's fur were set in motion by that cosmic exhale, drawing attention to the macabre scene that played out days

or weeks ago. And as the proximity of death dawned on those unenlightened ones, the serendipitous wind began its most earnest work. I closed my eyes and let it come. To my embattled heart, it whispered of Max Ehrmann's "Desiderata,"

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul.

The corner, the school yard, the world, became silent as a moment of universal grace was granted and I was metamorphosed from the young girl I once was into the woman I would become. That woman was not meant to surrender to darkness. That woman was not meant to perpetuate the cycle of depravity. That woman was not meant to be like those that were modeled in her own life. And with all of those 'not meant's', the evil spell was broken. That woman, still concealed in the body of a child, crawled out of the suffocating darkness into light.

My tormentors were gone. The wind, the fox, and Desiderata united in strength to set my reclaimed heart free – the wind through opportunity, the fox through distraction, and Desiderata through purpose. In unison, they lifted and carried me like a great muscled beast and together we pierced the horizon of possibility. With deepest gratitude for his diversion and rendering, I left the fox to continue his journey alone. With once-wistful eyes he looked upon freedom without escape, until freedom came for him.

Do not mourn his passing. Learn from him. He will forever be a child of the universe just as you and I are. Peace is found through acceptance, not of that which binds us but that of which

sets us free. With peace in our hearts, we can move on to that which we are destined to do; the work that awaits us.

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