

In the Gales I See My Fate

Mack Nigh

In the gales I see my fate, drifting effortlessly alongside me as she always has. I am tiny and helpless compared to her, compared to her compelling forces that guide me from place to place. But in the end I see no flaws with her logic. If she wants me here, flying above acres and acres of rolling fields and bustling human towns, then here I will stay. Here I will thrive.

I have seen my brothers and sisters, under guidance of the breeze, submit and fall to the ground below. They land on sharp blades of grass and glide down to the moist dirt, and the wind does not pull them back up. They remain there as tiny particles of white fuzz and a singular seed, but they call up to me as I continue to fly. “Do not worry!” They beckon. “We will be just fine on this ground! We will bloom into bountiful bouquets; we will turn these dull and lifeless fields into galleries of wonder! Our yellow petals will paint the earth in sunlight, and we will shine as we were always meant to! So go on—do not fret, and land on the ground when you no longer fear the stability beneath you!”

They tell me not to fear. I fear anyway.

The wind never lets me touch the ground. They let me see my siblings drift off, let me see them bloom into tiny dandelion flowers that dance and twirl in performances on the ground. But they never let me join. In truth, I am grateful for the winds that carry me high above the ground. Those muddy puddles and dusted heaps of soil will remain a mystery. But what a bliss it is to live in mystery. I am blessed to only know the wind, to only know endless change and distance from the world. Permanence cannot grasp me; I am free from it all, and I will be forever. I will always be changing, moving, leaping, flying. The ground will never rise to meet me, and I will never fall to its will. Never, never, never, never...

And then the gales guided me to the earth. Even when I pleaded to them, begged them to not let me be swallowed up by the darkness of soil and the shivers of rain, they persisted.

I touched the ground softly and watched the gales fly without me.

There is nothing beyond the looming grass above me. There is nothing hidden in the shadows of greenery. There is nothing above me, hiding in the dark rain clouds. There is nothing here, nothing but stillness.

There was no point in trying to stop the ground from consuming me. The wind

would not change my fate. I could not be lifted into the sunny skies anymore. The rain has already weighed me down. There was no viable choice but to submit to the ground beneath me, and though it was dark and cold and unknown, I let myself go to it and fall under earth's fine crust.

It wasn't so cold after that. There was darkness, yes, but there was warmth too. I could feel the ground warming under the sun's rays. I could feel the rain lifting off and evaporate into the clouds. I could distantly see the roots of grass stretch out to dig into the earth further, I could hear the birds and bugs that they were so blessed to see. And at that moment, in those days, in those eons of nothing but warmth and curiosity, I wanted to see and hear the world around me too.

Roots grew underneath me with quick instinct. They were feeble and stringy, but for now they could hold me. They could give me the courage I needed to lift from the ground.

I was more than a soft seed now. When I lifted from the ground, I felt larger. Different. Made of sturdy walls of cellulose that left me flimsy but strong. The grass over my head was no longer looming, but welcoming. Peaks of sunlight poked through, and I felt those powerful rays bless me with nourishment and love. I was loved here, somehow. I was loved by the grass. I was loved by the bugs. I was loved by the sun. I was even loved by the earth, whom I was so cautious of before. I was loved by them all, wasn't I?

More than anything, I wanted to love them back. I wanted to spread my roots through the ground, I wanted to grow my own leaves, I wanted to reach above and touch the heavens as I once had, but I wanted to bring them all with me. I grew so quickly I could barely recognize what my body had once felt like. Now I was a tangle of scattered leaves, protruding stems, mixed and mangled roots around the earth I once dreaded. Now I was amongst my new kin. I was one of them: a singular plant among a garden of affection. The fear I felt in the skies was gone, and there was nothing in my heart but curiosity and the brightest love.

So, this is what the ground was like.

My first flower bloomed unexpectedly. The blades of grass teased me for it, how I, once so fleeting and frightful, had grown so quickly around my new friends, and became so boisterous and confident that I bloomed a *flower* in this ground. But what a pretty flower it was, the one I grew. And what a treasured earth I fell on that I felt safe enough to bloom a flower.

Soon I grew more flowers, and soon new bugs flew over from the heavens to land on my soft petals. A bumblebee with heaps of pollen on her legs gazed at my petals. She rested her weary body on my body and spoke of distant gardens.

“Is the wind still kind?” I ask her.

She chuckles on my stem. “Even when you’re in the ground, with your roots tangled in the dark crust, you still think of the sky?”

“It is quite hard not to. All the wind has done has led me here.”

“And... do you miss it?” she asks, rubbing her pollen off her legs in idle thought.

“I think of the wind every day,” I answer, “but I do not miss it.”

She spoke of how the wind carried her and her sisters across meadows and gardens, some of which held my brothers and sisters. She carried the messages of flowers abroad and migrating butterflies in the sky. And she corrected me on one thing, only one, before leaving.

“The wind is not kind,” she claims. “That is not to say it is cruel, but rather to say it holds no regard for you. You just like to think the wind was kind because you have spent so long in it, drifting from place to place, event to event, with no rest in between. But now you are here, in the earth that holds you tight, with the grass that cheers you up, with the sun that wakes you every morning.”

“But if the wind is not kind,” I ask her, “why do I still think it is?”

The bee hums and shakes her wings against her body. “Nostalgia keeps us locked like that. You’re no different than any of us.”

Days pass, and more creatures and insects gather around me with their wisdom. The birds tell me of the nests they are building and the children they are preparing for. Insects hide in my petals and bless me for my coverage against their prey. And the blades of grass, who had been watching me grow from a frightened seed into the sunshine of their garden, are always laughing and watching the nights fade into the horizon with me.

And the earth holds us all. Though it is as indifferent as the wind, it holds us in our joys and comforts us in our sorrow. I do not remember why I was so afraid of this.

The end of summer approaches, and my petals shed slowly and meet the ground beneath me. I’m wilting. I’m dying. But it feels good to die here, surrounded by the ones I love. They will take care of me and hold me during my passing.

I have children by the time of my death. They're still growing on me, just reaching the end of their development, when I suddenly feel the last slips of my energy begin to fade. I know what will happen to them, but they are still so young and pure. I do not have the heart to tell them how the wind will tear them from me, will tear them from each other, will frighten some of them and overwhelm the others with joy. I cannot tell them about the ground they will soon find and the creatures they will meet. I will not try to predict which ones will be happy to find stability, and which ones will be so used to the wind that, the second they land on safe ground, they will panic and shriek and plead to not be left there.

But this message, this one final call, is one I will whisper to everyone still near me.

I love you. I, who was once so foolish and afraid, love you, the secureness in my life, with such intensity that I could not imagine my life without this love. I love you, dear blades of grass, whom I have bonded with and aided in our times of droughts and floods. I love you, insects from above, who gifted me with the pollen I needed to create my beautiful children.

And I love you, earth beneath me, the being I did not know I needed. I love you endlessly.

My children, who now fly away in the wind upon my dying breath, know forever that I love you.