

Yeats William Butler

# The Wind Among the Reeds



William Butler Yeats

**The Wind Among the Reeds**

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## The Wind Among the Reeds

### THE HOSTING OF THE SIDHE

The host is riding from Knocknarea  
And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare;  
Caolte tossing his burning hair  
And Niamh calling *Away, come away:*  
*Empty your heart of its mortal dream.*  
*The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,*  
*Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,*  
*Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are a-gleam,*  
*Our arms are waving, our lips are apart;*  
*And if any gaze on our rushing band,*  
*We come between him and the deed of his hand,*  
*We come between him and the hope of his heart.*  
The host is rushing 'twixt night and day,  
And where is there hope or deed as fair?  
Caolte tossing his burning hair,  
And Niamh calling *Away, come away.*

## THE EVERLASTING VOICES

O sweet everlasting Voices be still;  
Go to the guards of the heavenly fold  
And bid them wander obeying your will  
Flame under flame, till Time be no more;  
Have you not heard that our hearts are old,  
That you call in birds, in wind on the hill,  
In shaken boughs, in tide on the shore?  
O sweet everlasting Voices be still.

## THE MOODS

Time drops in decay,  
Like a candle burnt out,  
And the mountains and woods  
Have their day, have their day;  
What one in the rout  
Of the fire-born moods,  
Has fallen away?

## **AEDH TELLS OF THE ROSE IN HIS HEART**

All things uncomely and broken, all things worn out and old,  
The cry of a child by the roadway, the creak of a lumbering cart,  
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splashing the wintry mould,  
Are wronging your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told;  
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart,  
With the earth and the sky and the water, remade, like a casket of gold  
For my dreams of your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my  
heart.

## THE HOST OF THE AIR

O'Driscoll drove with a song,  
The wild duck and the drake,  
From the tall and the tufted reeds  
Of the drear Hart Lake.

And he saw how the reeds grew dark  
At the coming of night tide,  
And dreamed of the long dim hair  
Of Bridget his bride.

He heard while he sang and dreamed  
A piper piping away,  
And never was piping so sad,  
And never was piping so gay.

And he saw young men and young girls  
Who danced on a level place  
And Bridget his bride among them,  
With a sad and a gay face.

The dancers crowded about him,  
And many a sweet thing said,  
And a young man brought him red wine  
And a young girl white bread.

But Bridget drew him by the sleeve,  
Away from the merry bands,  
To old men playing at cards  
With a twinkling of ancient hands.

The bread and the wine had a doom,  
For these were the host of the air;  
He sat and played in a dream  
Of her long dim hair.

He played with the merry old men  
And thought not of evil chance,  
Until one bore Bridget his bride  
Away from the merry dance.

He bore her away in his arms,  
The handsomest young man there,  
And his neck and his breast and his arms  
Were drowned in her long dim hair.

O'Driscoll scattered the cards  
And out of his dream awoke:  
Old men and young men and young girls  
Were gone like a drifting smoke;

But he heard high up in the air  
A piper piping away,  
And never was piping so sad,  
And never was piping so gay.

## **BREASAL THE FISHERMAN**

Although you hide in the ebb and flow  
Of the pale tide when the moon has set,  
The people of coming days will know  
About the casting out of my net,  
And how you have leaped times out of mind  
Over the little silver cords,  
And think that you were hard and unkind,  
And blame you with many bitter words.

## A CRADLE SONG

The Danann children laugh, in cradles of wrought gold,  
And clap their hands together, and half close their eyes,  
For they will ride the North when the ger-eagle flies,  
With heavy whitening wings, and a heart fallen cold:  
I kiss my wailing child and press it to my breast,  
And hear the narrow graves calling my child and me.  
Desolate winds that cry over the wandering sea;  
Desolate winds that hover in the flaming West;  
Desolate winds that beat the doors of Heaven, and beat  
The doors of Hell and blow there many a whimpering ghost;  
O heart the winds have shaken; the unappeasable host  
Is comelier than candles before Maurya's feet.

## INTO THE TWILIGHT

Out-worn heart, in a time out-worn,  
Come clear of the nets of wrong and right;  
Laugh heart again in the gray twilight,  
Sigh, heart, again in the dew of the morn.

Your mother Eire is always young,  
Dew ever shining and twilight gray;  
Though hope fall from you and love decay,  
Burning in fires of a slanderous tongue.

Come, heart, where hill is heaped upon hill:  
For there the mystical brotherhood  
Of sun and moon and hollow and wood  
And river and stream work out their will;  
And God stands winding His lonely horn,  
And time and the world are ever in flight;  
And love is less kind than the gray twilight,  
And hope is less dear than the dew of the morn.

## THE SONG OF WANDERING AENGUS

I went out to the hazel wood,  
Because a fire was in my head,  
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,  
And hooked a berry to a thread;  
And when white moths were on the wing,  
And moth-like stars were flickering out,  
I dropped the berry in a stream  
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor  
I went to blow the fire a-flame,  
But something rustled on the floor,  
And someone called me by my name:  
It had become a glimmering girl  
With apple blossom in her hair  
Who called me by my name and ran  
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering  
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,  
I will find out where she has gone,  
And kiss her lips and take her hands;  
And walk among long dappled grass,  
And pluck till time and times are done,  
The silver apples of the moon,  
The golden apples of the sun.

## THE SONG OF THE OLD MOTHER

I rise in the dawn, and I kneel and blow  
Till the seed of the fire flicker and glow;  
And then I must scrub and bake and sweep  
Till stars are beginning to blink and peep;  
And the young lie long and dream in their bed  
Of the matching of ribbons for bosom and head,  
And their day goes over in idleness,  
And they sigh if the wind but lift a tress:  
While I must work because I am old,  
And the seed of the fire gets feeble and cold.

## THE FIDDLER OF DOONEY

When I play on my fiddle in Dooney,  
Folk dance like a wave of the sea;  
My cousin is priest in Kilvarnet,  
My brother in Moharabuiee.

I passed my brother and cousin:  
They read in their books of prayer;  
I read in my book of songs  
I bought at the Sligo fair.

When we come at the end of time,  
To Peter sitting in state,  
He will smile on the three old spirits,  
But call me first through the gate;

For the good are always the merry,  
Save by an evil chance,  
And the merry love the fiddle  
And the merry love to dance:

And when the folk there spy me,  
They will all come up to me,  
With 'Here is the fiddler of Dooney!'  
And dance like a wave of the sea.

## THE HEART OF THE WOMAN

O what to me the little room  
That was brimmed up with prayer and rest;  
He bade me out into the gloom,  
And my breast lies upon his breast.

O what to me my mother's care,  
The house where I was safe and warm;  
The shadowy blossom of my hair  
Will hide us from the bitter storm.

O hiding hair and dewy eyes,  
I am no more with life and death,  
My heart upon his warm heart lies,  
My breath is mixed into his breath.

## **AEDH LAMENTS THE LOSS OF LOVE**

Pale brows, still hands and dim hair,  
I had a beautiful friend  
And dreamed that the old despair  
Would end in love in the end:  
She looked in my heart one day  
And saw your image was there;  
She has gone weeping away.

## **MONGAN LAMENTS THE CHANGE THAT HAS COME UPON HIM AND HIS BELOVED**

Do you not hear me calling, white deer with no horns!  
I have been changed to a hound with one red ear;  
I have been in the Path of Stones and the Wood of Thorns,  
For somebody hid hatred and hope and desire and fear  
Under my feet that they follow you night and day.  
A man with a hazel wand came without sound;  
He changed me suddenly; I was looking another way;  
And now my calling is but the calling of a hound;  
And Time and Birth and Change are hurrying by.  
I would that the boar without bristles had come from the West  
And had rooted the sun and moon and stars out of the sky  
And lay in the darkness, grunting, and turning to his rest.

## **MICHAEL ROBARTES BIDS HIS BELOVED BE AT PEACE**

I hear the Shadowy Horses, their long manes a-shake,  
Their hoofs heavy with tumult, their eyes glimmering white;  
The North unfolds above them clinging, creeping night,  
The East her hidden joy before the morning break,  
The West weeps in pale dew and sighs passing away,  
The South is pouring down roses of crimson fire:  
O vanity of Sleep, Hope, Dream, endless Desire,  
The Horses of Disaster plunge in the heavy clay:  
Beloved, let your eyes half close, and your heart beat  
Over my heart, and your hair fall over my breast,  
Drowning love's lonely hour in deep twilight of rest,  
And hiding their tossing manes and their tumultuous feet.

## **HANRAHAN REPROVES THE CURLEW**

O, curlew, cry no more in the air,  
Or only to the waters in the West;  
Because your crying brings to my mind  
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair  
That was shaken out over my breast:  
There is enough evil in the crying of wind.

## MICHAEL ROBARTES REMEMBERS FORGOTTEN BEAUTY

When my arms wrap you round I press  
My heart upon the loveliness  
That has long faded from the world;  
The jewelled crowns that kings have hurled  
In shadowy pools, when armies fled;  
The love-tales wove with silken thread  
By dreaming ladies upon cloth  
That has made fat the murderous moth;  
The roses that of old time were  
Woven by ladies in their hair,  
The dew-cold lilies ladies bore  
Through many a sacred corridor  
Where such gray clouds of incense rose  
That only the gods' eyes did not close:  
For that pale breast and lingering hand  
Come from a more dream-heavy land,  
A more dream-heavy hour than this;  
And when you sigh from kiss to kiss  
I hear white Beauty sighing, too,  
For hours when all must fade like dew  
But flame on flame, deep under deep,  
Throne over throne, where in half sleep  
Their swords upon their iron knees  
Brood her high lonely mysteries.

## A POET TO HIS BELOVED

I bring you with reverent hands  
The books of my numberless dreams;  
White woman that passion has worn  
As the tide wears the dove-gray sands,  
And with heart more old than the horn  
That is brimmed from the pale fire of time:  
White woman with numberless dreams  
I bring you my passionate rhyme.

## **AEDH GIVES HIS BELOVED CERTAIN RHYMES**

Fasten your hair with a golden pin,  
And bind up every wandering tress;  
I bade my heart build these poor rhymes:  
It worked at them, day out, day in,  
Building a sorrowful loveliness  
Out of the battles of old times.

You need but lift a pearl-pale hand,  
And bind up your long hair and sigh;  
And all men's hearts must burn and beat;  
And candle-like foam on the dim sand,  
And stars climbing the dew-dropping sky,  
Live but to light your passing feet.

## TO MY HEART, BIDDING IT HAVE NO FEAR

Be you still, be you still, trembling heart;  
Remember the wisdom out of the old days:  
*Him who trembles before the flame and the flood,  
And the winds that blow through the starry ways,  
Let the starry winds and the flame and the flood  
Cover over and hide, for he has no part  
With the proud, majestic multitude.*

## THE CAP AND BELLS

The jester walked in the garden:  
The garden had fallen still;  
He bade his soul rise upward  
And stand on her window-sill.

It rose in a straight blue garment,  
When owls began to call:  
It had grown wise-tongued by thinking  
Of a quiet and light footfall;

But the young queen would not listen;  
She rose in her pale night gown;  
She drew in the heavy casement  
And pushed the latches down.

He bade his heart go to her,  
When the owls called out no more;  
In a red and quivering garment  
It sang to her through the door.

It had grown sweet-tongued by dreaming,  
Of a flutter of flower-like hair;  
But she took up her fan from the table  
And waved it off on the air.

'I have cap and bells,' he pondered,  
'I will send them to her and die.'  
And when the morning whitened  
He left them where she went by.

She laid them upon her bosom,  
Under a cloud of her hair,  
And her red lips sang them a love song:  
Till stars grew out of the air.

She opened her door and her window,  
And the heart and the soul came through,  
To her right hand came the red one,  
To her left hand came the blue.

They set up a noise like crickets,  
A chattering wise and sweet,  
And her hair was a folded flower  
And the quiet of love in her feet.

## THE VALLEY OF THE BLACK PIG

The dews drop slowly and dreams gather: unknown spears  
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,  
And then the clash of fallen horsemen and the cries  
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.  
We who still labour by the cromlec on the shore,  
The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned in dew,  
Being weary of the world's empires, bow down to you  
Master of the still stars and of the flaming door.

## MICHAEL ROBARTES ASKS FORGIVENESS BECAUSE OF HIS MANY MOODS

If this importunate heart trouble your peace  
With words lighter than air,  
Or hopes that in mere hoping flicker and cease;  
Crumple the rose in your hair;  
And cover your lips with odorous twilight and say,  
'O Hearts of wind-blown flame!  
'O Winds, elder than changing of night and day,  
'That murmuring and longing came,  
'From marble cities loud with tabors of old  
'In dove-gray faery lands;  
'From battle banners fold upon purple fold,  
'Queens wrought with glimmering hands;  
'That saw young Niamh hover with love-lorn face  
'Above the wandering tide;  
'And lingered in the hidden desolate place,  
'Where the last Phoenix died  
'And wrapped the flames above his holy head;  
'And still murmur and long:  
'O Piteous Hearts, changing till change be dead  
'In a tumultuous song:'  
And cover the pale blossoms of your breast  
With your dim heavy hair,  
And trouble with a sigh for all things longing for rest  
The odorous twilight there.

## AEDH TELLS OF A VALLEY FULL OF LOVERS

I dreamed that I stood in a valley, and amid sighs,  
For happy lovers passed two by two where I stood;  
And I dreamed my lost love came stealthily out of the wood  
With her cloud-pale eyelids falling on dream-dimmed eyes:  
I cried in my dream '*O women bid the young men lay  
Their heads on your knees, and drown their eyes with your hair,  
Or remembering hers they will find no other face fair  
Till all the valleys of the world have been withered away.*'

## AEDH TELLS OF THE PERFECT BEAUTY

O cloud-pale eyelids, dream-dimmed eyes  
The poets labouring all their days  
To build a perfect beauty in rhyme  
Are overthrown by a woman's gaze  
And by the unlabouring brood of the skies:  
And therefore my heart will bow, when dew  
Is dropping sleep, until God burn time,  
Before the unlabouring stars and you.

## **AEDH HEARS THE CRY OF THE SEDGE**

I wander by the edge  
Of this desolate lake  
Where wind cries in the sedge  
*Until the axle break*  
*That keeps the stars in their round*

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