

**THE WIND AND THE COLD**

MUSIC: SOMETHING SWIRLING AND SAD

JACQUES: The sky is ready for snow, the clouds full and low, their bellies cut open by the mountain tops. As we leave the plains and begin to climb, the air changes. It's pregnant, dense, waiting for the birth of a blizzard. I know it'll be a big one... the totality of greyness gives it away.

SFX: INTERIOR CAR SOUNDS, CLIMBING A HILL, SLOWLY FADE IN.

KATRINA: His hands are tight on the wheel, his eyes fixed on the sky. I'm not used to seeing him this intensely silent. The storm is still miles off, we're hardly even in the foothills. Besides, he loves snow. I'm the summer person.

SFX: CAR NOISE FULL UP NOW

KATRINA: Jacques? What's wrong?

JACQUES: Nothing.

KATRINA: You're so quiet.

JACQUES: Nothing's wrong. I'm just excited to get there.

KATRINA: I can't wait to see the cabin.

JACQUES: You'll love it. It's beautiful, especially in the snow.

KATRINA: Will there be a lot?

JACQUES: I don't know.

KATRINA: As long as I don't have to touch it, I'll be happy. It's wonderful to look at, but...

JACQUES: How did I get hooked up with a Florida girl?

KATRINA: Just lucky, I guess. There is heat in this cabin, right?

JACQUES: A very nice cast-iron woodstove.

KATRINA: Oh, look... It's starting already.

JACQUES: Yes.

MUSIC: INTERLUDE... THE STORM RISING.

SFX: CAR ENGINE STRAINING.

SFX: WINDSHIELD WIPERS.

SFX: FAN BLOWING.

KATRINA: How can you see the road?

JACQUES: Katrina. Please be quiet.

SFX: SILENCE FILLED WITH SOUND OF WIPERS, ENGINE, AND FAN.

KATRINA: We're not lost, are we?

JACQUES: No. We're almost there.

KATRINA: How can you tell?

JACQUES: I know my way. See that corner? After that corner, we should see the cabin.

KATRINA: I didn't know it could snow like this.

JACQUES: It should end by tomorrow.

KATRINA: I hope so. Otherwise we'd better leave after lunch, just so we can be back by Monday.

JACQUES: Don't worry. This Jeep can--

KATRINA: Jacques. Jacques! We're skidding. We're skidding!

SFX: THUMP OF THE JEEP INTO A SNOW BANK.

KATRINA: We're dead. We're dead. We're trapped in a snowbank in the middle of a blizzard on a road no one's ever heard of. We're miles from the cabin. We'll freeze to death. They'll find our decomposed bodies when the snow finally melts, in July.

SFX: TIRES SPIN BRIEFLY IN THE SNOW, THEN NORMAL ENGINE SOUNDS.

KATRINA: We're out. How did you do that?

JACQUES: I'll teach you tomorrow. There's the cabin.

KATRINA: We made it!

JACQUES: Of course. You didn't think I could find it?

KATRINA: No, but I... Good job, Jacques.

SFX: CAR NOISES STOP. SILENCE.

JACQUES: Every muscle in my body is tired. My hands hurt from gripping the wheel. But I feel light now... The cabin is still there, we're safe. Everything in a blizzard is reduced to shades of grey, a black and white photograph. The snow adds an extra

layer of sound insulation, muffling the noises that have followed us from the city, circulating in our heads. As long as we can avoid the wind.

KATRINA: One second it looks smaller than I expected, the next instant it seems bigger. I had no idea what to expect. But I hope to God that the roof is solid, because there's already a couple feet of snow on it, and it seems to be getting worse. I touched snow once in my life, driving from Tampa to Nashville. But it was just tiny spits of ice, inconsequential, not even enough to make a snowball. Here the air is filled with frozen feathers, a down-filled world.

SFX: CAR DOORS CLOSE.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS IN SNOW

SFX: KEY IN A LOCK.

SFX: DOOR OPENS

JACQUES: Here it is. My favorite spot in the whole world.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON A BARE WOOD FLOOR.

KATRINA: It's just right.

JACQUES: It's actually an old homesteader's cabin. I found it abandoned, roof blown off. I remodeled it myself.

KATRINA: You did all this? It's very cozy. And very cold.

JACQUES: Let's get a fire going.

KATRINA: Where's the wood?

JACQUES: Good question. I usually keep a stack inside, but last time I was in such a rush to get back to town, I guess I forgot. There's a pile outside.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS OUT OF THE CABIN.

JACQUES: (from outside) I can't find it.

KATRINA: What?

JACQUES: The wood pile. I can't find it. Sometimes campers come and take a couple logs. I can't believe they took the whole pile.

KATRINA: We don't have any wood.

JACQUES: Not exactly.

KATRINA: We don't have any wood.

JACQUES: Don't panic, Katrina.

KATRINA: Fine. I will not panic. I will not get hysterical. I will not lose my mind with the fear of freezing to death. Women from Florida do not appreciate freezing to death, Jacques. I am not used to this, Jacques. My life is in your hands. I have put my life in your hands. I know that's a big responsibility, and I know you can handle it, so I don't need to remind you that this is not my territory. If we were in the Everglades, I could show you how to make sure you don't get bitten by a rattlesnake. I could show you how to fry up an eel.

JACQUES: Katrina. We have plenty of firewood, if I can just find.... ah-ha! Instant firewood maker.

KATRINA: An axe?

JACQUES: We'll take this tree right here.

KATRINA: It's awfully close to the cabin.

SFX: THUNK OF AN AXE INTO DRY WOOD. CONTINUES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING.

JACQUES: I don't want to lug wood through three feet of snow.

KATRINA: What if it hits the cabin?

JACQUES: Don't worry. My Grandfather was a lumberjack. It runs in the family. He could lay a tree down to crack open a walnut. Ultimate precision.

KATRINA: You're a computer programmer, not a logger.

JACQUES: I've cut my fair share of trees.

KATRINA: Can I help?

JACQUES: Nope. Why don't you grab our gear out of the car.

SFX: REAR OF JEEP OPENED AND CLOSED.

SFX: AXE THUNKS GET FARTHER APART AS JACQUES TIRES.

JACQUES: (breathing hard) Okay. Almost ready... Stand back. Just two more whacks and we've got ourselves a toasty cabin.

SFX: SEVERAL STRIKES OF THE AXE.

SFX: CRACKING OF THE TREE AS IT FALLS.

JACQUES: Timberrrr.

KATRINA: Jacques!!!

JACQUES: Oh, No!

SFX: SMASHING GLASS AND METAL AND BREAKING WOOD.

KATRINA: The car!

JACQUES: My Jeep!

MUSIC: INTERLUDE. PEPPY.

JACQUES: The top of the Jeep is now an interesting tangle of metal, glass, and sticks. A violent work of modern art. I can't blame Katrina for not appreciating the collage of disaster. I'm not a fan of hysteria, but somehow the silence is worse.

KATRINA: I'm afraid to open my mouth. The instant my lips part, first there will be a scream, which is always unpleasant. Then hurtful words. This trip was a mistake from the start. I know he wants me to see everything he sees. Every nuance, every graceful stroke of nature. But I can't see. I can't hear. My brain is pounding. Is this the man I want to spend the rest of my life with? Is this the man? Is this the man who just toppled a tree on our only escape from the wilderness?

SFX: A FIRE CRACKLING.

JACQUES: Are you warm enough? (silence) I could get more wood. (laughs nervously) I could chop down another tree. Far from the cabin, I promise. I'm sorry I wrecked the car. You know how much I loved that Jeep. But we'll get out of here fine. As soon as the blizzard is over we'll get it cleaned up. It'll still drive, I'm sure of it. (silence) Are you hungry? Let me cook us some dinner. How about some soup? There's plenty of water.

SFX: RUSTLING THROUGH THE BACKPACK.

JACQUES: At least we didn't forget the food.

SFX: A LOW WHISTLE, AS THE WIND BEGINS TO RISE

JACQUES: (sighs) Here it is.

SFX: THE WIND GETS LOUDER.

SFX: A LOUD CREAK, AS THE CABIN SHIFTS IN THE WIND.

KATRINA: What was that?

JACQUES: The Wind. I was hoping it wouldn't come.

SFX: LOUD CRACK OF WOOD AS THE CABIN SHIFTS AGAIN.

KATRINA: The cabin's going to break apart. It's going to break apart and we'll be buried and freeze to death.

JACQUES: This cabin has been through worse. It just creaks a little, that's all.

KATRINA: The sound gives me the creeps.

JACQUES: Do you forgive me for wrecking the car?

KATRINA: I'm trying.

JACQUES: We'll be fine.

KATRINA: I'm trying to believe that.

JACQUES: Just trust me.

KATRINA: (softly) I can't.

JACQUES: Katrina.

KATRINA: I'm scared. Of the snow, of the woods, of being stranded in the middle of nowhere. I know you're trying to make me feel better, but it's not working.

JACQUES: You won't trust me.

KATRINA: Maybe I don't trust anyone that much.

JACQUES: How can we get married if you don't trust me?

KATRINA: I'm here. I came up here with you, obviously I trust you, in some sense. But if you want me to feel completely safe, just because you're you and because you're here with me, it's not working. It's not going to happen.

JACQUES: I can't believe you don't trust me.

KATRINA: That's not it. You don't understand.

JACQUES: What? What don't I understand? Love and trust go together, Katrina. They are not separable. Of course you're frightened. How do you think I feel? I know this hasn't been easy for you. It hasn't been fun. But I've been trying. Trying to keep us alive and maybe even allow us to have a good time, but you have to let it happen. Why won't you?

KATRINA: I'm scared. Pay attention, Jacques.

JACQUES: Just relax, for God's sake.

KATRINA: Fine. I'll relax. I will relax. I won't be frightened of anything. I will do my part and make you happy.

SFX: PARKA THROWN ON.

JACQUES: What are you doing?

KATRINA: I'm not allowed to be afraid of the snow or the wind or dying. So I won't be. If you will excuse me, I'm going for a walk. To think. Thank you very much.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON WOODEN FLOOR.

SFX: DOOR OPENS

SFX: WIND HOWLS

SFX: DOOR SLAMS

SFX: FOOTSTEPS THROUGH SNOW.

SFX: DOOR OPENS

JACQUES: (faint, shouting into the wind) Katrina? Katrina!?  
Come back. Come back.

SFX: WIND UP FULL.

MUSIC: FRENZIED, UNDER THE WIND.

KATRINA: I have asserted my fundamental rights of independence and panic. I do not need to be told to relax. I do not need to be told to relax. It's getting so dark. I'm not afraid of the dark. Not the dark. Maybe of the cold, the emptiness, and whatever creatures out here make it not quite completely empty. And the wind. I wait for the trees to give in and relinquish their hold on the earth, their exhausted roots finally no longer have the strength to grasp. It screams and screams and screams. HELLO WIND!

SFX: WIND NOISES LOUDER.

JACQUES: Damn flashlight. Come on, just give me fifteen more minutes. Katrina! Katrina! Come back! Come back! It's so cold. I've never seen it snow like this. I can barely see the tracks I made thirty seconds ago. The light of the cabin blinks like a demented Christmas light, obstructed by the snow and branches. Another twenty feet and it will vanish, and I will be lost, too. What was she thinking? We're not in the Mall. You can't just stomp off in a huff in the middle of a Rocky Mountain blizzard. We can't... Stay calm. Try to keep your mind working, Jacques. If you both panic, you're both dead. There won't be much of a wedding come May if I don't find her. Did she put on her gloves? She must be so cold. KATRINA! We have a future plotted, planned. If we're actually ready. If I can find her, if

she's... Wait. Where's the cabin!? Where... (relieved) Oh... I have to go back. I can't feel my face, nothing. KATRINA!

SFX: THE WIND RISES, WITH JACQUES WORDS STILL ECHOING, TWISTED AND DISTORTED.

KATRINA: Jacques!

SFX: THE WIND TAKES HER VOICE, TWISTS IT. THE SOUNDS OF WIND AND KATRINA AND JACQUES ALL COMBINE AND FADE AGAIN, LEAVING ONLY THE SOUND OF THE WIND.

KATRINA: I'm so cold. I'm so... I hate this noise, this never-ending... QUIET WIND!

SFX: HER WORDS ARE SUCKED INTO THE SOUND OF THE WIND. THE WORD "WIND" TWISTS, DIES, AND COMES SCREAMING BACK, THUNDEROUS.

KATRINA: Stop, stop, stop.

WIND: I AM THE WIND.

KATRINA: Oh, God. I'm hallucinating. This must be a sign of hypothermia. Jacques! Jacques! Help me! Help me, someone!

WIND: I AM THE WIND.

KATRINA: Who's there? Is someone there? I can't hear you. This damn wind. Hello? Hello?

WIND: (whispering) Hush. Hush, child.

KATRINA: Who are you? Where are you?

SFX: THE WIND SOUNDS RISE AND SCREAM.

WIND: I AM THE WIND. I am everywhere.

KATRINA: I'm so cold.

SFX: THE WIND NOISE SUBSIDES TO A GENTLE BREEZE.

WIND: Come with me.

KATRINA: I'm talking to the wind.

WIND: Come with me. Escape the cold. Come to safety.

KATRINA: You're pushing me.

WIND: To safety. Away from the cold.

KATRINA: You have a very gentle touch, like a cat's tail brushing my cheek. Where are you taking me?

WIND: Don't be afraid.

KATRINA: Fear is my specialty. But now that you've stopped screaming... I'm out of my mind, but I'm not afraid.

MUSIC: HAUNTING MELODY.

SFX: THE WIND, FEROCIOUS.

SFX: DOOR OPENS/CLOSES.

SFX: WIND SOUNDS MUFFLED NOW, INSIDE THE CABIN.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON WOODEN FLOOR.

JACQUES: Damn. The fire's out. It's freezing in here. Not much better than being outside. Except for the wind.

COLD: Indeed.

JACQUES: Hello? What? Who's there?

COLD: Only the cold.

JACQUES: God, it's cold in here. Where are the matches?

SFX: RUSTLING SEARCHING SOUNDS.

COLD: So nice to be away from the wind.

JACQUES: Matches, matches, matches. Where are you?

COLD: Finally, a little peace.

SFX: THE WIND HOWLS OUTSIDE.

COLD: Though she's still blustering.

JACQUES: I do not hear voices. I do not hear voices. Matches, matches, matches. I need a fire.

COLD: A single voice. The single voice of the cold.

JACQUES: A spirit.

COLD: With a soul of the clearest ice.

JACQUES: Ah-ha! Matches. If you'll excuse me, whatever, wherever, whoever... I need to start a fire.

SFX: THE SOUND OF A THOUSAND ICICLES BURSTING.

COLD: STOP!

JACQUES: Ow. No need to shout.

COLD: Please don't light the match. Please.

JACQUES: I'm cold.

COLD: And so I'm here.

JACQUES: Sorry you have to go, but--

COLD: You're all alone. Surely you would like someone to talk to.

JACQUES: Sure, but--

COLD: Someone who understands the fickle ways of women.

SFX: THE WIND ROARS OUTSIDE.

COLD: The voice of my other half. Note, I don't say better. You're not the only ones fighting this evening.

JACQUES: I really wasn't asking for much.

COLD: A little trust.

JACQUES: Exactly. And clarity of mind. She gets so clouded with panic, her mind jumping, racing. It becomes impossible for us to connect.

COLD: Of course. Is it so awful to ask for a little calm, a private eddy, mingling together to become a frigid breeze? Even a cool breath.

JACQUES: I don't think it's asking for so much.

COLD: Of course not. It makes you wonder.

JACQUES: Are we really meant to be together?

COLD: At least you have a choice. And you do have a choice.

JACQUES: True. That's very true. I do have the power to choose. There is an actual decision to be made.

COLD: Is it worth it?

JACQUES: Really, she's wonderful.

COLD: Most of the time.

JACQUES: Nobody's perfect.

COLD: Commitments. Promises. Are meant to last forever. Or at least as long as you have.

JACQUES: Which might be a long time.

COLD: Or not. But to be so full of imperfection...

JACQUES: Fear. That's really it. Every fear she has multiplies, expands, filling the spaces in the world around her, insulation between her and actual reality.

COLD: Fear is not so easily left behind. A powerful wedge it could be.

JACQUES: The funny thing is that she doesn't need to be afraid, not very often. She's capable, tough, smart. She can handle the world--it's obvious to me, just not to her.

COLD: How very generous.

JACQUES: You don't know her.

COLD: Well enough. Full of impulses.

JACQUES: I guess so. Look, I'm freezing. It's been nice talking with you, but...

COLD: Please don't.

JACQUES: I can barely move my fingers, if I wait...

COLD: Wait, wait, wait.

JACQUES: Sorry.

SFX: SOUND OF A MATCH BEING STRUCK.

COLD: (fading) Oh, you're tough aren't you so tough just put it out just a little puff and there will be peace and cold peace and cold don't put me back out to face her fury just a brief respite briefly you seemed so kind. (louder) I KNOW WHERE KATRINA IS.

JACQUES: What?

COLD: The match.

SFX: JACQUES BLOWS OUT THE MATCH.

MUSIC: INTERLUDE, SINISTER

SFX: FOOTSTEPS TRUDGING THROUGH SNOW

SFX: LIGHT WIND

KATRINA: I'm so tired.

WIND: A little further.

KATRINA: The snow is so deep. I'm so cold. I need to stop.

WIND: A little further.

KATRINA: I can't.

WIND: You must.

KATRINA: Where's the cabin?

WIND: Too far. But you are almost safe.

KATRINA: I don't feel safe. I'm too tired to move. I'm too tired to be scared. I would like to be scared again, wind. It's so dark. But I'm too...

WIND: Move ahead.

KATRINA: I can't.

SFX: HOWLING, FURIOUS WIND. STRAINING, ENORMOUS SOUND.

KATRINA: Put me down. Aaaugh! Help! Help!

SFX: BREAKING SMALL BRANCHES

SFX: THUD OF KATRINA DOWN INTO SNOW.

KATRINA: You lifted me.

WIND: Now I'm tired. Get inside.

KATRINA: I can't see anything, it's too dark.

WIND: A hollow log. Crawl inside. Away from the cold.

SFX: KATRINA CRAWLS INSIDE A HOLLOW LOG.

SFX: WIND WHISTLES/HUMS LIGHTLY.

KATRINA: Thank you.

WIND: We are not so different. You and I.

KATRINA: That's a nice thought, wind. But I'm not exactly a strong, screaming elemental force.

WIND: We both love.

KATRINA: Sometimes I don't even know about that.

WIND: We both doubt.

KATRINA: Doubt is why I'm in this mess.

WIND: When we fight, I tear at the earth. I rend the clouds, topple trees, shatter windows.

KATRINA: I just do and say stupid things.

WIND: But are you linked together for all time? Joined by the core of your very essence?

KATRINA: No. I'm not sure. I don't think so.

WIND: Consider yourself lucky.

KATRINA: But maybe I want to be. Or at least feel like we are. Like we have linked souls, beyond reality. Sometimes I feel like we're not connected at all. Like we're together only out of habit, that we're too different to be compatible.

WIND: You always have a choice.

KATRINA: I do. You're right. You have to understand... he's wonderful. Capable, smart, funny, energetic. And handsome. But sometimes he just plows ahead, no matter what I think or feel. Like this trip. We could have turned around. But he wanted to prove something or test me or him, or I don't know what. Sometimes it's hard to get him to listen to me.

WIND: I know what you mean.

KATRINA: But I overreact.

WIND: As do I.

KATRINA: Like tonight. And here I am. But... Did he follow me out? Do you know what happened to Jacques? Did he follow me into the snow? He didn't get lost did he? I mean, he's safe back in the cabin, isn't he?

WIND: I don't know.

KATRINA: What if he followed me and got stuck out in the cold and the snow? I need him to be all right. We have to make sure that's he's all right.

WIND: Stay where you are.

KATRINA: I need to know.

WIND: Wait here.

SFX: WIND RISES

MUSIC: INTERLUDE

SFX: INSIDE CABIN CREAKING

SFX: WIND RISING OUTSIDE

JACQUES: Where is she?

COLD: Put down the matches, please.

SFX: MATCHES DROPPED ON THE FLOOR.

JACQUES: There. No matches. No fire. Not a single element of warmth in this entire cabin. Are you happy?

COLD: Almost.

JACQUES: Where is Katrina? Is she safe?

COLD: She is in grave danger.

JACQUES: What's happened to her? Where is she?

COLD: My lover has her in her clutches.

SFX: THE WIND ROARS AGAINST THE CABIN.

JACQUES: Damn wind. Where is she?

COLD: Deep in the woods. Floundering in the snow. Beaten by the flying snow.

JACQUES: She must be frantic. Take me to her. Please. We have to help her.

COLD: You will never find her.

JACQUES: You can help me. Talk to me. Lead me to her.

COLD: The Wind has her.

JACQUES: Don't let her freeze.

COLD: Perhaps I can help.

JACQUES: Right. Right. Just don't let her get too cold.

COLD: Then I will need to be colder with you.

JACQUES: That's fine. That's fine. I can take it. She has enough to worry about. Don't let her get too cold.