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Words Uncaged
(Short Story)

A Tale from the Wind

Setting: Summer of 96, a warm California night with a cool breeze rushing across a miniature golf course with all its animated displays.

Man, I'm tired, Andy thought. An Asian American young man dressing in his usually gangster outfit, white Stanford T-shirt with black Dickies pants, is about to put a golf ball at the 7th hole where the windmill's blades slowly spin. Anna, a petite Asian American young woman, dressing in her usual cute outfit, a sky blue summer dress, tapping her small sandal, couldn't hold it any longer:

Anna: What's on your mind?

Andy: Nothing.

Anna: Don't play, babe. You've been acting like a jerk. I know you, in and out. Something's on your mind.

Andy: I said nothing. Why you always pushing it? Pushing me?

Anna: (Nose flares, eyes narrow) Look, if you have something to say to me, man-up. I didn't fall in love with a p@#%y.

Andy spins around on his heel, looking down at his petite girlfriend. Eyes lock. *How could she says shits like that? To me of all people.* Wanting to give her a piece of his mind, he takes a deep breath to calm himself, and decides against it. After all, she is his heart.

Andy: (Angry) You want to know what's on my mind? I'm tired of you trying to change me to who I am not. When we first dated, you knew who I was, a gangster. I am then, and I am now, so stop trying to make me one of your pet projects that you and your girlfriends giggle about.

Anna: Is that what you think I'm doing? That you're my pet project? Dude, this's not like we first dated. We're gonna have a baby. You gonna be a father, for Christ's sake.

Andy doesn't respond and stands there avoiding Anna's penetration stare as the cool breeze once again sweep across the miniature golf course. Anna's long midnight hair breezes across her cute light Naples Yellow complexion, with a slight of rose on her high cheeks. He avoids her beauty that he has always found himself in awe. Avoids those deep brown pools that drown him every time he looks into them. But, he has to let her knows how he feels.

Anna: Just say it. You're thinking it.

Andy: I love you babe, but maybe I don't want a family.

Anna: (Eyes widen) How could you say that!

Andy: Look, the only family I love is my hood, my gang. They're my family, my brothers.

Anna's eyes become wild and her face flushes. Andy casually backs away to put some distance between them. A moment goes by as Anna contemplates, watching Andy slowly back away. The windmill's blades continue to slowly spin.

Anna: Bullshit, say what you really want to say. Don't give this crap about mi homies, familia bullshit.

Out of reach, and yet still hesitant, as he knows that the climax of all that has been said leads to this very moment. Children walk by with their parents, carrying their putters and golf balls, laughing. One drops from a boy's hand and it rolls to Anna's small sandaled feet.

Andy: Fine, you're abusive.

Anna: What the F#%!

Anna: (head tilts side to side in dramatically) I'm abusive! Little me, abusive to you, big bad gangster? Dude, if you're tired of this, (Her hand gesturing to her petite voluptuous body) and want something fresh, grow some F#\$%ing balls and say it.

Andy: Fine, I want some F#\$%ing fresh – Shit!

She throws the golf ball plunking him in his head, dropping Andy to his knees. The ball rolls into the hole.

Anna: (Rushes to his side.) Oh babe, I'm so sorry, let me see. My poor babe. (Kisses his forehead) I love you so

much.

Andy: I know. I heard it before, and I am tired.

Setting: A moment later, in the miniature golf course parking lot. The cool wind still swirls. It is a new moon, and streetlights are spotty, casting the parking lot in an array of shadow.

Andy and Anna walk toward their car. With her face buried in his arm, sniveling between tears, and tightly holding onto him as if the cool breeze would whisk him away from her. *Why does it always end in me breaking my promises, always breaking his heart a piece at a time.* She cries.

Andy, still upset, not about what has happened, but why he allowed it to happen. *Why does I always fall for those deep brown eyes, and the lies that come from her sweep lips? Why can't I just walk away like everyone wants me to?* These thoughts remind him of this morning of what has happened with his rival from the hood, "Ding Dong."

Setting: That morning, inside the "Nice Café", a dimly lit hangout of the neighborhood gang. Journey blasts "Open Arms" in the background.

As Andy sits in his usual table in the corner, enjoying an ice coffee and smoking a cigarette, he is surrounded by a handful of his most trusted comrades -- all outfitted in their gang colors. Ding Dong, with his greasy slicked back hair, offhandedly says:

Ding Dong: You know what's funny? Here we have second to the Dai Lo (Shot Caller), the infamous Trigger (Andy), feared in the street, fearing no one, and yet cowered in the corner at the sound of his little lady.

Andy gives Ding Dong a slight look, and goes back to his ice coffee. Some of his homeboys snicker at Ding Dong. However, they wonder why he puts up with her. It is not as if he lacks girlfriends.

Ding Dong: (Laughing) What's that Ho have, fucking diamonds between her legs?

Without hesitation, Andy backhands Ding Dong, and follows by slamming the ice coffee glass over Ding Dong's head. As Ding Dong is sitting there on the floor, dazed, Andy storms out of the "Nice Café" as his homies and onlookers stare on in silence. Johnny O's "Fantasy Girls" begins in the background.

Setting: Back in the present at the miniature golf course parking lot, the cool wind begin to pick up velocity and a low howl crosses the lot.

Andy notices a familiar flaming red hook up Honda Accord, low to the ground with shinning rims, bumping Tupac "California Love". Standing beside the Accord are two rival gang members. As they get closer, his enemies recognize him and make their way towards him. Anna immediately senses the tension and looks up, recognizing the situation. She attempts to pull Andy back to the miniature golf.

Anna: Babe, let's go back.

Still steaming, he stubbornly walks straight toward them. Everything seems to slow down. He hears Anna's heavy breathing and each thump of her heartbeat, the life of his heart. As they are about to pass by each other, the gangsters flash their gang rags. He slowly lifts his white Stanford T-shirt, revealing his own rag in return with a slight shinning silver object protruding from his waistline. Annoyed and disgusted, they step to the side, out of his way, mean mugging. However, as they pass by, the heavysset bald gangster states:

Gangster One: Fuck you, and your Ho!

In a flash, Andy draws his gun and points it between the bald gangster's eyes. Time freezes, tension thickens, and his own heartbeat echoes in his mind.

Anna: Babe, no!

Suddenly two miniature apparitions appear on his shoulders. One has two huge pointy horns hooked to each side of his head. Engraved on each is the phrase "Born to Kill." Muscular and in a pitch black rain coat made of human leather, he stands on Andy's left shoulder on two hooves. The other apparition, with her majestic wings and divine beauty, armored in a golden breastplate and chain mail, stands on Andy's right shoulder; a halo radiating from her head.

Devil: DO IT!

God: Son, it doesn't have to be this way.

Devil: HE DISRESPECTED YOU!

God: You can still walk away.

Devil: CALLING YOUR GIRL A HO!

God: If you love her, then think of her.

Devil: IF YOU LOVE HER, YOU SMOKE THIS FOOL, LIKE YOU DID WITH DING DONG!

God: What will she do with you in prison?

Devil: PRISON? YOU AIN'T GOING TO GET CAUGHT. NO TIME TO THINK, JUST DO IT!

God: What about your daughter?

Sweat begins to drip from his forehead, despite the cool wind breeze. All he has to do is pull the trigger. Remember Ding Dong's words "the infamous trigger...fear no one." As he is about to pull the trigger, he glances at Anna for the final time. A bright flash appears before eyes, and in front of him are images of his past, his early teens. Like a dream where every image is segmented, it flickers one image after another, replaying the time he made a promise to his parents as they were having lunch across a men prison. The flickering images goes:

'86' Lancaster,

Looking in through a crisscross of barbwire,
and gun towers.

Men in blue with prison tattoos passing by,
mean mugging.

Promise me you'll never son,
please.

Mouth full of seafood noodles,
on a dinner plate with a silver fork.

Looking back with innocent brown eyes
and jet black hair.

His father's arm around his shoulder,
his youthful nod.

Then, the flickering of images portray an unknown and yet familiar distance future, as his now aged mother visits him in the men prison.

'2016' Lancaster

Looking out through a crisscross of barbwire,
and gun towers.

A mother dress in blue and her son passing by,
looking in.

You promise me you'd never, son
cascaded tears.

Mouth full of hamburger,
on a paper plate with a plastic fork.

Looking back with harden eyes
and gray black hair.

A shadow of his father's arm holding him tight,
his weary stare.

"Sorry, mother. I tried."

"I should have known, but I did not."

As the images fades, he realizes the significance of the prophetic experience, which is missing his own family, his wife and daughter. Continuing to look in Anna's deep brown eyes, there he see his daughter and her mother pleading for his love, to think of them. He tucks the gun, grabs Anna and runs for their car. The two gangsters howl their victory, taunting Andy as he never look back. The gangsters then continue to the miniature

golf course, celebrating their victory not realizing how close to death they came. The parking lot is now dead and dark, and two apparitions reappear.

God: Son, you almost over did it this time.

Devil: Nah, I knew he was better than that. Beside, how would we know how they are if we don't push them to the edge? If they have faith?

God: Yes, true. However, we have to be careful. Sometime this "bad cop and good cop" thing can back fire.

Devil: God, it has worked for millennia. So good that the human use it. Have faith.

God: (Laughs) Hey son, you think I could play the bad cop next time.

Devil: (Laughs) God, you don't have the look! Let us leave the evil to the Devil.

Arms over each other's shoulder and laughing, they walk into the lights, as the now gentle cool wind breezes across the dark quiet parking lot, over the rolling hills of Azusa, making its way towards the Pacific Ocean. During its journey, what other life situations and experiences will it witness? Would they end well? Only the cool wind knows. However, if you give it your time, stop and listen to its gentle whisper, you might hear its thousands of tales of lives in Southern Cal.