

## Winds of Unrest

I hate this relentless wind. When did it become so consistently gusty here in Albany, New York? I thought Chicago was the windy city. Is this a global warming byproduct? Is it my imagination that it is windier? Am I overreacting because the coronavirus quarantine has made me crazy?

I find it unsettling – I hear the howling. I see branches waving wildly. Two days ago, April 21<sup>st</sup>, after the rain/sleet/snow showers passed, the sun came out, but the wind remained. I needed to get out of the house, so I took a walk. I kept my eyes open for flying debris. I was worried that a garbage can, it was collection day in our neighborhood, would take flight. I walked quickly, scanning both sides of the street. Garbage cans slid around, a couple tipped over, but none became airborne. I did my walk and made it home without incident. Phew.

I do remember another time I was disturbed by the wind and we weren't even under a quarantine, so maybe I just have a thing about unpredictable weather. We were vacationing on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. We had a tradition of going there during the April school break. We met another family and shared a house for ten consecutive years. One year we splurged and rented a beachfront house. It was huge with three floors. The bottom floor had a play room and a bedroom, the middle floor had a master suite and two more bedrooms, and the top floor had the kitchen, a great room with a fireplace, and another master. It was a fabulous home. Unfortunately, it was stormy week with heavy gray skies and driving rain. The wind screamed through the chimney. I couldn't relax, especially at night. I was thankful we were in the suite on the second floor – at least the wind's moaning wasn't as loud there. In the years that followed we continued to vacation on the Outer Banks, but in a house a few blocks off the beach.

Yesterday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the wind continued to howl. We have several dead trees on our property. Last fall I arranged to have them removed but the person who was going to do it injured his ankle. I didn't find a replacement, so we postponed the project. None of the trees are that close to the house, but they could damage the pool and fence. Unrelated to the recent weather, I started contacting contractors to do the work – I think it is something that can be done despite the nonessential business shutdown. I met with two contractors yesterday in the middle of the windstorm (we maintained appropriate social distancing). We walked to the area where the work needs to be done, all the while I was listening for the sound of wood cracking, anticipating that a tree could fall. Apparently both contractors shared my concern; they looked around quickly and suggested we go around to the front to talk, there are no trees there. I readily agreed. They didn't want to be in the shadow of those dead trees any more than I did. I'm saddened by the loss of life, even if it is tree-life. It's painful but necessary to cut them down. Until they are removed, I have to hope that the wind doesn't do damage.

We also have a giant white pine inside the fence in our backyard. It is very much alive. The trunk splits into three parts and each part has many branches. When I look up it seems like it touches the sky. In summers past I have spent time floating in our pool admiring its green, soft

needles brushing the bright blue sky. That is the tree that, if it came down in the wrong direction, could do major harm to our house. I love that tree. In this crazy wind, I fear it. I don't think it is at risk of falling, it looks vibrant and healthy, but you never know. Right now, I have plenty of time to imagine the worst. I watch it suspiciously, looking for hints it might betray us.

That appears to be my mood right now; unsettled, uneasy as the air outside. Everything is moving, clouds scudding, spring flowers bowing to the stiff breeze, bushes swaying, the wind chime ringing insistently. Everything is shifting, outside of my control, while I sit at my kitchen counter waiting for calm.