

NAZAR ESHONQUL'S THE WIND CANNOT BE CAUGHT: AN EXPLORATION OF FORTITUDE AND RECOMPENSE

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Abstract: *Nazar Eshonkul's "The Wind Cannot Be Caught" embodies the complexities of human nature, inner suffering, and philosophical observations about the transience of life. The story seeks answers to deep questions about life and freedom through the inner experiences of the main character. The wind is a symbolic image here, representing man's helplessness to control the flow of fate and life's striving for freedom.*

Key words: *wind, human dignity, Bayna momo, Zamon horseman*

Nazar Eshonkul's *The Wind Cannot Be Caught* is the hallmark of Uzbek literary history in its rekindled promise for the genre of short stories with the masterful development of its narrative. The book stands out because of a tastefully arranged structuring, whereby storylines and actions accumulate and go side by side, where they blend through dramatic logical purpose. At its heart is Bayna Momo, a character in whom the clash between national consciousness and personal tragedy is embodied. Through her, Eshonkul interrogates themes of institutional oppression, the negation of human dignity, and fragility of shared memory, as he also valorizes the intransigence of individual determination.

Wind serves as an overarching metaphor for elusiveness and unstoppable force. Just as a gust of wind churns but never dies—galvanizing from a whisper into a hurricane—so does the suffering of humanity galvanize under tyranny. For Bayna Momo, this "wind" is the metaphor for her protest, an objection to a fate usurping from son and husband. Her moral courage, as contrasted with Zamon the Herdsman's

unadulterated brutality, marks the turn to ethics of the novel and creates an ultimate polarity between honor and savagery.

The heart of the novel is Rayim Polvon's tragedy, a national hero whose opposition to oppression leads him to be shot and his good name besmirched.

The complicit silence of the villagers—seared into the indelible line, "The village stood as empty as a city stripped of its minaret"—is a scathing condemnation of social complacency. Bayna Momo's double tragedy—her son stolen by Zamon's bullet, her people's silence ringing louder than grief—propels a three-decade shift from bereavement to seething revenge. Her voluntary exile, sustained by memory alone and the bony supports of her dwelling, is a poignant metaphor for abandonment and survival.

Zamon's return from a decade and a half away is a challenge, provoking Bayna Momo's suppressed rage. His taunt—"Your husband would've died wherever. When it's your turn, even street dogs will shun your body"—is symbolic of the theme of agency versus fatalism of the novel. But Bayna Momo's response is a form of vengeance on a bigger scale; silence is a tool, patience an act of belief in the fairness of time.

The story gathers momentum when Bayna Momo meets city strangers, whose innocence unknowingly destroys her fantasy. A thoughtless remark by a girl—"Had you a son, I'd have gladly been his bride"—is the trigger that unleashes her pent-up fury, resulting in her mysterious disappearance, a step as defiant and ephemeral as the wind. The subsequent murder of Zamon, his body mutilated and fingers amputated, reveals the hypocrisy of the villagers as they pretend to mourn a man they once feared. Bayna Momo, suspected as she is, is beyond suspicion—her frailty a disguise, her silence a denunciation. In the denouement, the opening of a long-shut chest reveals the materiality of her rebellion: a blood-crusted whip, a sweat-stained skullcap, an untouched bridal bracelet that time has not discolored, and ten severed fingers—a macabre chronicle of her silent war. These artifacts, only found in death, transform her from a pitied victim to an engineer of justice, her legacy written not in words but in gut symbols.

Final Thoughts *The Wind Cannot Be Caught* is as much a song of praise to the underground power of resilience as it is not so much a story about victimhood. Eshonqul constructs a world where structural violence and general complacency combine to erase individuality, but Bayna Momo's trajectory—from grief to quiet resistance—prevents this erasure. Her integrity, which is upheld after decades of isolation, forces readers back to the edges of justice and the price of memory. Its strength is that it does not sentimentalize suffering, but instead meets head-on the uncomfortable truth that revenge, like the wind, cannot be averted or stopped. In *Bayna Momo*, Eshonqul outlines an etching of memory—a rebellion in which human nature, despite being pounded, can never be buried.

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