



JAN DESAI'S

COMPASS ROSE

A Roadmap to an Authentic Life

Get Your Bearings and Stay on Course to the Life of Your Dreams



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Summer is a Promise Kept

Summer is magic...but there could be no warmth of a midsummer's day without the cold of a midwinter's night. In the dark of a personal winter, a promise is made. The inevitability of summer is that promise kept.

"What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness?"

~John Steinbeck

I listened to my first baseball game as a toddler sitting at the feet of my *beautiful, warm, and loving* Grandma Langer who simply relished the sport. I was happiest as we sat idly for hours in the warm summer afternoons staring across her living room at the large Philips radio which looked unbelievably similar to the shape of our church.

The windows were all opened to catch any cross breezes and I remember *staring at the streams of sunlight breaching the window sill while dust particles appeared to dance in all their glory*. In the brief moments of silence between plays, I could hear the unmistakable song of the orioles that perched just outside, feasting on the oranges she would leave for them.



Grandma Kiefer & Grandma Langer

The game itself was beyond my understanding, but the range of emotion on Grandma's expressive face was *captivating* to me. *I could watch her for hours*.

Unmitigated joy with the sharp crack of the bat as the announcer's voice raised an octave in excitement. The cheers of the crowd encouraged her to **jump up and clap** along with excitement. And the inevitable but short-lived darkness that would furrow her brow when the opposing team got the best of her beloved Minnesota Twins. I heard her talk with such pride about Harmon Killebrew that there was a time when I **honestly believed** he was family, so deep was her reverence for the man and the game.

And then later in early evening, after our meal of ring bologna (freshly made down the street by her cousin, the butcher) and vegetables picked from her bounteous garden, Grandma and my mother would have long conversations in German as the music wafted from that same radio. To this day, *my heart swells with joy* and I am propelled backwards 57 years whenever I hear the melodious intro of the Percy Faith Orchestra playing the theme to *A Summer Place*. That piece of music *empirically embodies* all the beauty and potential that the season of summer holds.

Grandma lived a **long, glorious, and generous life**. And while her presence in my life provided many warm and wonderful memories, nothing can compare to those **foundational summers** spent at her side.

Summer is magic. Real magic. It is a reminder to slow down and live fully in the present moment. Summer is one of the best times to learn how to see the here and now with open eyes. It's where **memories are made** and **connections are formed**. In summer, all of eternity can be held in the palm of your hand and, by doing so, you can clearly comprehend that *nothing else really exists but the potential of today.*

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Summer mornings. The dawn almost seems to start before the night has fully finished its agenda. It's as if the **exuberance of life** simply cannot wait for the sun and pulls the light from the darkness using the *power* of it's great green gravity.

The birds sense this. Gone is the barren silence of winter. Instead, summer mornings are *filled with song*, as every tree and bush rings with an overture *welcoming the day and all of its possibilities.*

The sunshine on a summer morning is like powdered gold, transforming and defining everything it touches. It illuminates with an



almost hallucinatory and synesthetic clarity. Colors can almost be tasted. Contrasts can almost be heard. *This extraordinary morning light reveals the deity at the center of the most humble of objects.* Everything seems fraught with meaning. The right summer morning, experienced at just the right time, can make **anything** seem possible.

Summer afternoons. Are there two words in the English language that are happier? Afternoons in the summer are *languid, lush, and made for lolling.* It's one of the few times of the year that laziness finds respectability. A hammock, a chaise lounge, or a lawn chair invite you to lie back and **do absolutely nothing** but enjoy the warmth of the sun tempered by an occasional refreshing breeze.

Summer afternoons smell of cut grass and suntan lotion. They are like tomatoes on the vine, **stuffed** with sunshine, almost **sinfully** voluptuous and **spellbound** on stillness and time. The drone of a dumbledore. The lapping

of waves. The sound of the wind in the trees. The living is easy indeed on a warm summer afternoon.

Summer evenings. The sunset can be riot of almost too much color or it can be a simple pale lemon light that lingers like the last note of a sweet melody. In the gloaming, there are treats appropriate to the season. The *jazz riff neon lights* of a carnival, discordant and slightly tilted. The *ancient flicker of a campfire*, redolent with woodsmoke and the taste of s'mores. The simple sway of a porch swing, *caught between the scent of honeysuckle and the lights of home.* A cold popsicle providing a proper nightcap to an *eternally perfect day.*



The glamour of summer harkens back to the ancient meaning of that word. Summer is magical, intoxicating, and enchanting, but like all enchantments, the glamour of summer comes at a price. While summer may seem eternal, it is, in fact, fleeting.

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Once the potential of the summer solstice is reached in June, each subsequent day *steals the season away* until, bit by bit, we are left with a day in mid-September when we realize that the flowers of summer are withering, their shriveled petals revealing the **obsidian bones** of the coming winter.

Winter. A cold and deadly thing. The antithesis of summer. The days are short and the dawn itself is late, *as if the sun itself is loath to rise and face the chill.* The light is stark, nakedly illuminating the bare branch and the windswept ground. In the monochrome of brown and white and black, green is a fading memory. The *hounds of winter* - the cold, and the gale, and the bleary light - drive us indoors and pin us to the **warmth of a crackling fire.**

Yet, it is in the midst of the dark of winter that *the promise of summer is made once again.* The low point of the winter solstice marks the moment when the balance of the world shifts once again towards the light. There could be no warmth of a midsummer's day without the

corresponding cold of a midwinter's night. Each is dependent on the other and the world is caught in the *swirl* of their dance of opposites.

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Summer is sweet precisely because winter gives us a contrast that allows us to be able to savor that sweetness. Experiencing too much enchantment makes us unable to appreciate the miracle involved in the magic. That's why the great circular wheel of time revolves. We need contrast to understand the promise that lies at the heart of two opposing forces.

As with seasons, **so too with life.** Each of us faces and experiences the same dance of opposites that we see in the outside world. *Our inner light reflects the dark* that is also a part of each of us. Our ability to act sweetly contrasts with the sometimes inevitable sour. *Truth struggles with dishonesty* in all of our lives. Yet, **none of these things are absolutes**, and the existence of one is an unbreakable promise and proof that its opposite exists as well.



So, when a season of personal darkness arrives at your doorstep and all of your world seems *frozen and cold and painful*, **there is still a light.** In the depth of the bleakest winter, under the snow, lies a seed. Yes, the seed is inert, *seemingly* lifeless. Yet, within that seed lies a germ, the *potential for strength and beauty, fragrant and filled with life.* Inevitably, the wheel will spin. Winter will melt away and the warmth of summer will return. And when it does, the green fuse within that seed will **ignite** and produce something **wonderful and unique.** In the end, the wondrous upward spiral of life guarantees that ***even though some things must end, other possibilities are always being born.*** Life will always evolve.

What seems like the end is, in reality, always a *new beginning.* And, in each of those endless endings and beginnings, there is a lesson to take forward into the next turn of the wheel.

This is the **promise** that life will always be pushing us into more. The potential of that seed cannot be wasted. It will receive the light and warmth of the sun. *It will grow.*



This movement may not always be *comfortable*, but it is **always necessary**. Without the turn of the wheel, without that forward momentum, there is only imbalance and stasis. We can become **stuck** in the snows of winter, the potential of that inner seed wasted.

Even worse, we can become **becalmed** in an endless summer where, without the *contrast* of winter, we become blind and disdainful of the bounty that surrounds us.

In the end, it is this beautiful struggle between opposites that defines us. *A personal winter is survivable because we know that it has an end.* Things will always change. We can become aware of and be grateful for the small tokens that speak of this change - gradually lengthening days, moderating

temperatures, and the appearance of the *smallest bit of green*. As we move into our most authentic life, we are able to endure and courageously overcome our darkest hours because we know that every winter makes a promise.

And summer is that promise kept.

Until next week,



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