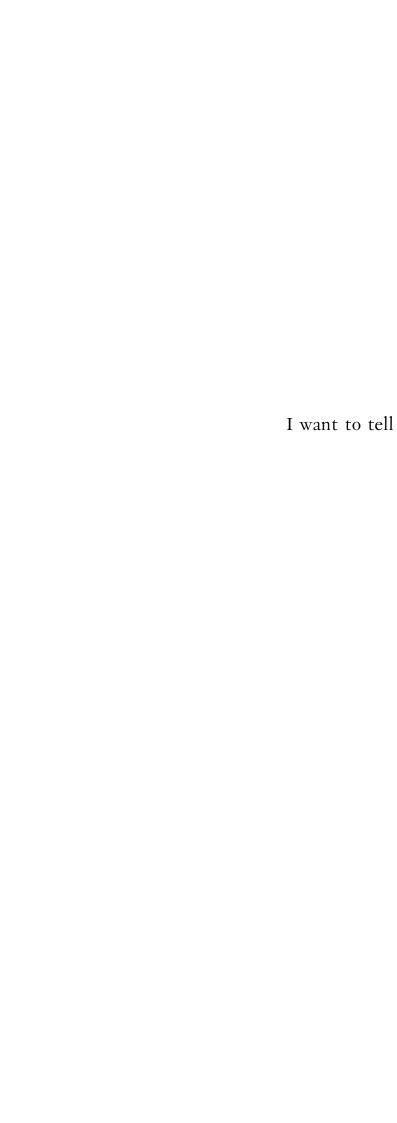
AUTHOR OF ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT

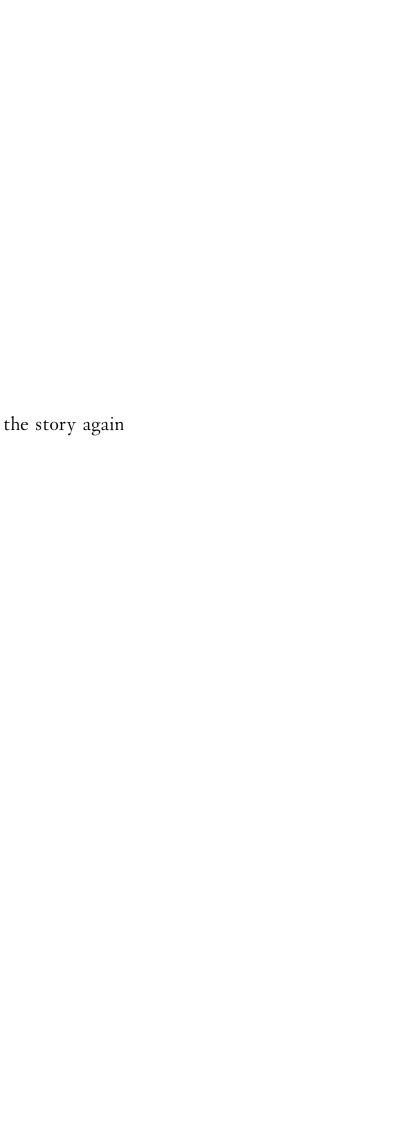
# Jeanette Winterson

'Playful, expansive and full of heart' *The Times* 

Weight

HE CANONS





The free man never thin
In the beginning the
space and time. You coul

at me and I would have c

was no universe. It was of This happy nothing en a strange time, and wha

a strange time, and what radioactive whispers; the

great shout into the siles.

What is it that you contain

minute, in each of you, a f succumb to radioactive powers these tiny atom

patterns of millennia of

ks of escape. re was nothing. Not even

d have thrown the universe aught it in one hand. There

easy to bear.

ded fifteen aeons ago. It was

at I know is told to me in

at's all there is left of one

nce.

ain? The dead. Time. Light

ening in your gut. Every

e decay. The energy that ic events has been locked

and radium, is a long-lived of the supernova bang that Your first parent was a s

It was hot as hell in those

inside potassium atoms eve exploded nothing into being

is where the life we love calless burning fires and volcain us as ultimate fear. The hells we have known. Hell Science calls it the world Hadean period. But life hadean

more than the ability to rep spills and cratered rocks, life the almost, the maybe. Not Ve Planet Earth, that wante

Moving forward a few billio cle. At least that's what I

r since a star-sized bomb . Potassium, like uranium radioactive nuclear waste

accounts for you. tar.

days. It was Hell, if hell

annot exist. Those ceaseanic torments are lodged hells we invent are the

is; was not, is not, cannot. before life began - the

nd begun, because life is roduce. In the molten lava

e longed for life. The proto, enus. Not Mars. Earth.

d life so badly, she got it.

n years, there was a miracall the unexpected fact

I WANT TO TELL

that changes the story. In o oxygen, and oxygen with in a quiet revolution as a star, a new kind of bac

thesis is oxygen. Planet e
The rest is history.

to photosynthesise - and

Well not quite. I could lis
of the Cambrian era, push
grows daisies, or the Silu
and gastropods. About 4
ing salt water from thei
land animals climbed out
vast coral reefs. The Tr
belong to the dinosaurs,

common as nightmares. years ago – chancy and br

here - a mammoth and s

### THE STORY AGAIN

Carth had bacterial life, but was a deadly poison. Then, explosive in its own way as teria, cyanobacteria started la bi-product of photosyn-

arth had a new atmosphere.

t for you the wild optimism ning up mountains like grass rian dream-days of starfish

on million years ago, shaker fins and scales, the first of the warm lagoons of the massic and Jurassic periods efficient murder weapons, Then three or four million and new – what's this come comething like a man?

new to herself. She never and do next. She never guessed loved the risk, the randon bility of a winner. We forge what we take for granted

failures have disappeared.

trees, roses, spiders, snails, frog

The earth was amazed. Eart

obvious and inevitable is to blue ball with the winning

Make a list. Look around

fall, sunshine, you and me. Thi called life. What could be a All the stories are here, silt The book of the world ope

is one method only and not time. Even radioactive roo DNA, can only tell time lil th was always strange and ticipated what she would the coming wonder. She mess, the lottery proba-

the coming wonder. She nness, the lottery probat, but she never did, that is the success story. The

This planet that seems so the jackpot. Earth is the number on it.

you. Rock, sand, soil, fruit gs, fish, cattle, horses, rains is the grand experiment

nore unexpected?

-packed and fossil-stored.

ns anywhere, chronology the best. Clocks are not

ck-clocks, even gut-spun ke a story.

ticking like a bomb too. in another hundred mil lights will go out and th

When the universe exp

by any more.
'Tell me the time' yo

say is 'Tell me a story.'

Here's one I haven't b

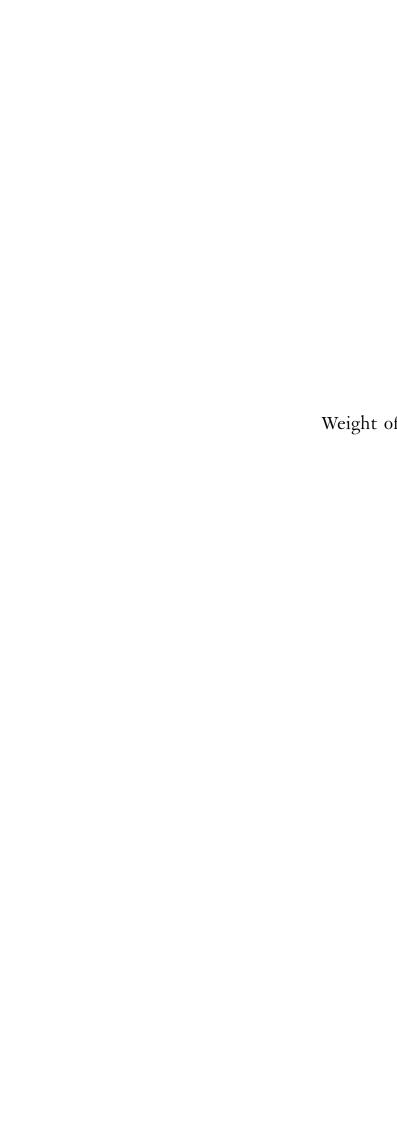
#### THE STORY AGAIN

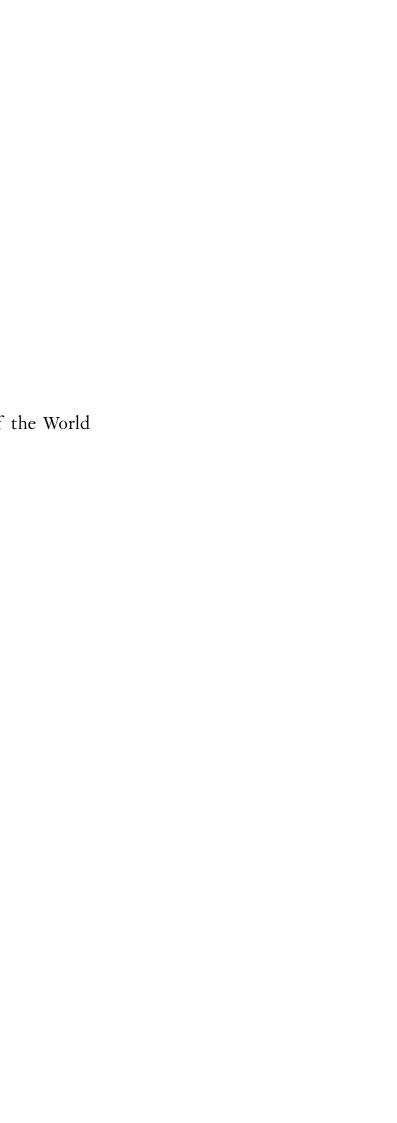
loded like a bomb, it started We know our sun will die, lion years or so, then the ere will be no light to read

u say. And what you really

een able to put down.

7 —





My father was Poseidon.

My father loved the

mother's body. He loved boundaries. He knew wh

was solid, certain, shaped My mother loved my f no boundaries. His ambi

he sank, he flooded, he deluge of a man. Power fl sometimes calm, but nev

My mother and father life. Creation depended on

there was air or fire. The were so much. To each of

Both were volatile. M

My mother was the Earth. e strong outlines of my

her demarcations and her

ere he stood with her. She d and material.

ather because he recognised

tions were tidal. He swept, re-formed. Poseidon was a owed off him. He was deep,

er still. teemed with life. They were them and had done so before ey sustained so much. They

ther they were irresistible. ly father obviously so, my

but tectonically challenged a plate across the room, t crash. My father could be moments. My mother gru

mother more alarmingly. S but volcano'd with anger. S

fissured and crumpled entikind into lava-like submiss

Humankind... They never at Pompeii. There they are in

their chairs, wearing skeletal

When my father wooed my

shook for days or weeks o

He was playful, he was wa the bright blue shallows and drew back, and his pull wa her shore; a piece of coral,

as spiralled as a dream. Sometimes he was a long he was serene as a rock She was quiet as a desert

When my mother threw he whole world felt the

whipped into a storm in mbled and growled and r months until her rage re cities or forced human

ion. could see it coming. Look

the bathhouses, sitting in looks of charred surprise.

mother she lapped it up.

rm, he waited for her in l came a little closer, then

mother of pearl, a shell

s to leave a little gift on

g way out and she missed

he was all over her again together, because there was about my father, for all hi the same kind, just as fire She loved him because was her moving mirror. He the world that she was, a

him and the beached fish

the world that she was, a her beauty of forests and

places. To him she was be loved both. Together the ever been. Places only the

ever been. Places only the could be. Wherever he w restraint, a serious remin

that covered the earth. He l

could not cover the whole whole of him. For all his

I was born. I was born o half god, a giant of a gi

## THE WORLD

as always something feminine is power. Earth and water are and air are their opposites. The showed her to herself. He is took her round the world, and held it up for her to see, cliffs and coastlines and wild oth paradise and fear and he is went where no human had by could go, places only they ent, she was there; a gentle

es gasped for breath. Then

strength, she was strong.

ne of the Titans, half man,
ant race. I was born on an

nder; the earth and the waters knew though, that while he of her, she underpinned the

a day and a night befor prolonged intercourse, ride crack, I was bound to be a f both. I am as turbulent as ing as my mother. I act su

island where my father cou

sometimes forgive, com memory. I know what love feit. At the same time, my

feit. At the same time, my easy to deceive. Like my br been punished for overstep

fire. I fought for freedom.

Boundaries, always boundar

I keep telling the story
different exits, the walls no
out – here and here and he

find a way out, but the exit inside, leaning on the limit This is the body, the se

but I can't get beyond it. I

ld lie over my mother for e subsiding. From this dling himself into every

atal combination of them my father. I am as brood-

ıddenly. I never forget. I

passion washing away is. I know love's countergood nature makes me

other Prometheus, I have

ping the mark. He stole

ries.

again and though I find ever fall. My life is paced re – I can alter its shape

tunnel through, seem to s lead nowhere. I'm back

s of myself.

aled unit that cautiously

invaders of the microbe k boundaries weaken only

takes in what it needs to

dom it brings is useless. last, I am dead to it.

This is the body, and little. I am the Kosmos

at the same time I was

more than nothing. Noth Nothing has an unlike

The story is a simple one

I had a vineyard. I had da the perfect synthesis of a

father. The Titans bowed whose thunderbolts were

When I wanted gold ar where she kept them and

ers indulge sons, and sh

and underground caves.

## THE WORLD

survive, that stoutly repels ind. This is the body, whose in decay and then the free-

United with the world at

– the all that there is, and never more outside, never

my body is the world in

ning bounded by nothing.

ly property. It is heavy.

e. I had a farm. I had cattle. ughters. I lived on Atlantis,

wealthy mother and a proud l to no-one, not even Zeus,

e like a game to us.

id jewels I asked my mother I she indulged me as moth-

owed me her secret mines

When I wanted whales of

when Atlantis was finally de of gladness. All that loss mother and father's emb returned to nothing. I wish

WEIG

with fish or pearls for my father, who respected me ar I dived with him into hot floor of the ocean. We so porpoises. Land and sea we

Boundaries, always boundaries, space.

them carefully, as a goath gaps to let the wind throu collapsed. My mother stirr as much. A wall well built

I built a walled garden, a

or harbours or nets lined daughters, I went to my d treated me as an equal.

springs that blasted the wam wrecks and tamed re equal home to me, and estroyed, I even felt a kind

race. I was nothing. I it had been so.

was after all, only my

, and the longing for infinite

temenos, a sacred space. I

my own hands and piled erd would, leaving tiny gh. A solid wall is easily

ing in her sleep could do

with invisible spaces will

WEIGHT OF

When the earth underned make room for movement stands. The wall's streng in the spaces between the

allow the winds that rage

in the spaces between the me I think, that for all n

wall relies on nothing.

NOTHING.

This garden is well kn

Hesperides, tend it, and *Garden of the Hesperides*. A fruit, the garden enjoys a

her wedding day, and He that she asked me to ten I have heard some men

Earth gave the goddess I

gold, and that this is the guarded so carefully. Eve

is valuable to himself n

#### THE WORLD

e against it to pass through. ath it trembles, the spaces t and settlement. The wall

gth is not in the stones but e stones. It's a joke against

ny strength and labour, the

Write it more substantially –

nown. My daughters, the far and wide it is called *The* long with the usual kinds of

rarity. My mother, Mother Hera a golden apple tree for era loved the tree so much

d it for her. say that the apples are solid

e reason why they must be ry man assumes that what

nust be coveted by others.

Hera want with gold? No, in its living nature. Its apscented jewels that hang covered in dark green leaved like it. It stands in the centre

a year, Hera comes to colle All well and good. At leas appeared to me in a rage tha

Men who love gold, long for their lives, though life is metal. My mother has no ne

a shed of excuses.

fruit. Who could blame ther and heavy, and the grass evening dew? Their feet we were eager. They are girls

My daughters had been

I did not see the harm

jealous of their belongings Ladon to guard the tree, ar or gold and guard it with more precious than any ed of gold, and what does

the beauty of the tree is ples are tiny, pineapplefrom fruiting branches

s. There is no other tree e of the garden, and once ct its harvest.

st I thought so until Hera t sent me cowering inside

secretly eating the sacred n, the tree, sweet-scented

underneath it wet with re bare and their mouths after all.

myself, but the gods are

s. Hera sent the serpent nd there he is now, coiled

and watchful, with a hun in tongues. I hate him, the my mother's, a solid night When I was cast out of ing heavier could befall to

The war between the goo we had preferred to

I was wrong.

versions of this war. C

began as just cause beca for ten years. Some say that my fath

brothers and I, especially

him and castrate him. It off the genitals of Ura himself. It is certain too Zeus, who likewise dethat control of the heavens. Ze

and Poseidon, and while

ne.

dred heads and double that nough he is a dark dream of ntmare birthed into day.

the garden, I thought noth-

ds and the Titans was a war avoid. There are several

me thing is certain; what me just excuse. We fought

er was Uranus and that my

Cronus, plotted to attack
is certain that Cronus cut

that Cronus bore a child, coned his father and gained

eus had two brothers, Hades Zeus became Lord of the

WEIG

was left to mankind.

Sky, Poseidon had his kin Hades was content with wh

It was mankind who atta Zeus who helped them to des and joined the revolt again

war-leader, the one who had to fear. What can a man fear In the long fighting, mo

my mother, out of her s victory to Zeus. What Titan to Britain, where the colo

worse than death. I was span In a way I was allowed to Because I loved the earth.

earth held no fear for me. I positions of the planets an Because I am strong, my pu

the Kosmos on my shoulde

gdom in the waves, and at lies beneath. The earth

troy my people. I escaped,

d lost most and had little

with nothing to lose?

st of us were killed, and

ecret nature, promised

ns were left were banished d inhospitable rocks are ed for my great strength. be my own punishment.

Because the seas of the Because I had learned the d the track of the stars. nishment was to support rs. I took up the burden

st the heavens. I was the

acked quiet Atlantis, and

depths below. All that the it in my control. This is boundary of what I am.

And my desire?

of the whole world, the

It was the day of my pu
The gods assembled. The and the men were on the worked muscle and tied-

Infinite space.

bow so that she doesn't he friends. We hunted toget

There's Hera, sardon less. As long as it's not he

ble. Next to him lounge and lame, Hera's crippled smithy. Opposite him is loathes his body. We've a

There's Hermes, fidge

heavens above it, and the tere is, is mine, but none of my monstrous burden. The

The women were on the left he right. There's Artemis,

nishment.

back hair, fiddling with her have to look at me. We were

c, aloof. She couldn't care

ner. Ity and pale, he hates troues Hephastus, ill-tempered

I son, tolerated for his gold
S Aphrodite his wife, who
Il had her, though we treat

her like a virgin. She smiled one who dared . . . Zeus read out his decree.

my name, I should have knit means 'the long suffering

I bent my back and brace with my left. I bowed my palms up, almost like surrender. Who is strong en Who can avoid what they to The word given, teams of

ity, pieces of time were earth, giving the gift of pro Some were thrown out in black holes where past and guished. Time spattered r

sinews in my thighs. I felt t

to strain forward, dragging like a disc-plough. As the g

d at me. She was the only

Atlas, Atlas, Atlas. It's in own. My name is Atlas –

g one'. d my right leg, kneeling head and held my hands,

render. I suppose it was ough to escape their fate?

nust become? of horses and oxen began

the Kosmos behind them

reat ball ploughed infindislodged. Some fell to ophecy and second sight.

to the heavens, making future cannot be distinny calf muscles and the

he world before it began,

WEIGHT OI

and the future marked n As the Kosmos came no

my back. I felt the worl my foot. Then, without any so

earth were rolled up ove them on my shoulders.

I could hardly breathe I tried to shift slightly o

still as a mountain. Mo me, not for my strength

There was a terrible p of my neck. The soft tiss

hardening. The hideous v me of life. Time was my

me to stone.

I do not know how long

fied and motionless.

ne. I would always be here. earer, the heat of it scorched

ound, the heavens and the r my body and I supported

d settle against the sole of

. I could not raise my head.

r to speak. I was dumb and unt Atlas they soon called

but for my silence.

sain in the seventh vertebra

sue of my body was already

ision of my life was robbing

Medusa. Time was turning

I crouched like this, petri-

23 —

WEIG

At last I began to hear son I found that where the w I could hear everything. I

parrots squawking, donke

rushing of underground rive lighted. Each sound becam began to de-code the world

Listen, here is a village it, and at dawn they take the and at evening they herd to

limp takes the pails over h limps by the irregular clan

a boy shooting arrows -t padded hide of the target.

per out of a wine jar.

Listen, there's an eleph

men. Over there, a nymph sighs turn into sap.

Someone is scrambling u loosen the ground under hi НТ

l.

nething.

orld was close to my ears, could hear conversation,

ys braying. I heard the

ers and the crackle of fires e a meaning, and soon I

with a hundred people in

neir cattle to the pastures

hem home. A girl with a er shoulders. I know she

x of the buckets. There's hwack! thwack! into the His father pulls the stop-

ant chased by a band of is becoming a tree. Her

p a scree slope. His boots

m. His nails are torn. He

WEIGHT OI

heavily and goes to sleep

I can hear the world b back for me. I can hear th

falls exhausted on som

tight rest. I can hear pool I am carrying not only

worlds. I am carrying the space. I am carrying th glories. I am carrying it

has so far been realised. As the dinosaurs crawl

eruptions pock my face, I what I must bear. There

world, there is only the V am continents. I am the j

Listen, there's a man tel who holds the world on

laughs. Only drunks and

e goat-grass. He breathes

beginning. Time plays itself

e ferns uncurling from their s bubbling with life. I realise

this world, but all possible world in time as well as in

e world's mistakes and its

s potential as well as what

through my hair and volcanic find I am become a part of

is no longer Atlas and the Vorld Atlas. Travel me and I ourney you must make.

ling a story about the man his shoulders. Everybody

children will believe that.

25 —

WEIG

No man believes what he constitute should like to unbelieve my wake in the morning hope happens. One knee forward the world.

НТ

oes not feel to be true. I yself. I sleep at night and ing to be gone. It never

d, one knee bent, I bear