

STORM

April 16, 1998

[A windswept field under a clouding sky. The leaves rustle and the earth is in motion. A red-and-white-checked cloth center, under an oak. A bottle of wine lays on its side, the last of its contents dripping to stain the cloth. Two wineglasses. One is cracked.]

[A girl, HER, lies like Sleeping Beauty beneath the tree. A dozen leaves have fallen to cover her. Her hands clutch a red rose.]

[We hear the wind howl, and in the wind, ACCUSATIONS.]

ACCUSATIONS: You were thinner. You were innocent. You lied.
You never kissed me. I never knew.
You're scared.

[We notice a man sitting in the branches above HER. He looks down.]

HIM-G: You hurt me. You were immature. We dated for over a year!
I taught you everything. I have right to you.
I trusted you. You played games.

[Another tree sitter speaks.]

HIM-J: You didn't pay attention. You never thought of me. It lasted over a year!
I made out with you. I tried to make you happy.
I own a part of you. You don't remember.

[More voices and more men in the tree.]

HIM-A: We were soulmates. We talked and teased. You never wrote.

HIM-B: Our summer was perfect. You moved away.

HIM-A: You never kissed me. You made up crises.

HIM-B: We could have tried. I'm ready now.

HIM-G: You weren't ready.

HIM-J: I would never hurt you.

HIM-B: I'm the stable one.

[HIM-D makes himself visible.]

HIM-D: You were fun for a while. You got weird. You didn't have time.

I had other things on my mind. It wasn't intentional.

You're cute.

[HIM-M sits at tree top.]

HIM-M: She would have slept with me.

HIM-G: She went further with me!

HIM-B: I've seen more of her.

HIM-D: Not as much as I.

HIM-M: I was exciting.

HIM-D: You were innocent.

HIM-M: I was bad for you.

HIM-D: You were thinner.

HIM-M: I might have felt guilty.

HIM-D: You loved me.

HIM-M: It's just words.

HIM-B: You never wrote.

HIM-A: Never wrote.

HIM-J: Never paid attention.

HIM-D: You weren't like this.

HIM-G: Hated your mother.

HIM-B: You're dating someone new.

[The wind picks up and the branches sway.]

[HIM-M lets out a whoop and jumps out of the tree, taking off for something on the horizon. A listener might swear his running scream was 'Meeeeee...']

HIM-G: It's not just words.

[HIM-G, HIM-J, and HIM-A drop from the tree and circle the sleeping HER.]

HIM-J: I would have been right.

HIM-A: It could have worked.

HIM-G: You're growing up.

[They fly. The storm continues its approach.]

HIM-B: Who's left?

HIM-D: You and I.

HIM-B: There's another.

HIM-D: He comes.

HIM-B: And the two who wander?

HIM-D: They precede him.

HIM-B: I can't see.

HIM-D: You moved away.

HIM-B: She's infatuated with you.

HIM-D: Was. Bad timing.

HIM-B: It's always bad.

HIM-D: She's changed.

HIM-B: Not so much.

HIM-D: It's getting colder.

HIM-B: The storm is coming.

HIM-D: I've got to get back.

HIM-B: We're not important anymore.

HIM-D: Someone's waiting for me.

HIM-B: Bad timing.

HIM-D: I'm going to stay.

HIM-B: Yes.

In case.

HIM-D: I shouldn't.

HIM-B: She's beautiful.

HIM-D: Yes.

[They remain sitting in the tree.]

[The WANDERER enters from the North. THE OTHER enters from the South. They step lightly, not crushing the grass. The wind picks up.]

WANDERER: You've come.

THE OTHER: It's my concern.

WANDERER: You know her best.

THE OTHER: I can only watch.

WANDERER: You're her girlfriend. She trusts you.

THE OTHER: I'm tied by threads to all concerned. You're free.

WANDERER: So it goes.

THE OTHER: So it goes. I've loved men she loves. I love men she's loved. I cannot flee the appointment, but. . .

WANDERER: You cannot turn the wheel. Well. It falls to me.

[The WANDERER crosses to HER and whispers in her ear:]

I have come, Beauty. It is time.

Sleeper, awake.

[Her eyes flutter open. The WANDERER brushes the leaves off her clothing and takes her hand. He helps her stand.]

HER: I should know you.

WANDERER: I'm a whisper in your dreams.

HER: You've come for me.

WANDERER: No. I am of *mens*, not men.

HER: He is not here, then.

WANDERER: Your task is the summoning.

HER: I hurt. Why?

WANDERER: You've slept beneath the Tree.

HER: And been visited by its ghosts. The memories return.

WANDERER: This is your story now. My task is done.

HER: Stay. I may need your words.

WANDERER: Your own are sufficient.

[To THE OTHER.] You will not speak?

HER: She will stand by me, and I her. That is written and unchangeable.

WANDERER: The time approaches.

HER: It does.

He's coming, isn't he?

WANDERER: You draw him.

HER: I ache.

I feel the power of the storm.

I grieve in his absence.

I've never liked my body. I've seen his.

I was glad to be unhappy.

I can speak here.

I'm afraid of loneliness. Afraid to cry. Afraid to say...

I ache when I think of you. The storm brings you near.

I...

Is this real? Is this a dream? The sky grows purple.

You've never known rejection. You take it all so casually.

You jump from love to love uncounting.

I want this to work.

I know my ghosts distance you.

I know you think I should lose weight.

I know you think I'm beautiful.

I don't understand, I...

I've got so much emotional baggage.

There are things I need to work on.

Feelings slice through me.

Words fail me when I need them.

[Thunder rumbles in the distance. The storm builds around HER.]

This place is charmed for saying

The words terrify me

Unmeaning unknowing uncertain afraid

I must I can not I die to speak

I . . .

I'm afraid to be weak. Here I am strong.
I've been given choice, and I choose you!
The storm fills the air but I know you are coming.
I hear your voice in the trees. I see you in the clouds.
Will this ache last forever?

I . . .

I trust you! I . . .

Whatever may happen, wherever you are
If ever you need me, I'm there.
Is that enough?

I can't wait. I feel . . .
Crashing force wind blowing unstoppable
He comes!

I . . .

Trees as my witness, wind as my voice
Ghosts of love past hear me cry
I've found my seeking, made my choice

I . . .

I . . .

[She is interrupted by a huge flash and crash of thunder.]

I!

[JOHN appears, dripping wet. He stands apart.]

I!

[The wind builds to a gale.]

HER: I love you!

[The wind rips the words from her. He can not hear.]

JOHN: The wind...

HER: I love you!

[He shakes his head. Holds out his hand.]

[She runs to him. He takes her hand.]

HER: I... *[She looks back.]*

[The watchers have vanished. The tree is empty. The picnic-cloth is bare, unstained. The purple is gone from the sky. The wind has died. The rain softly falls.]

[HE looks at HER quizzically.]

HER: Oh. I...

[A long pause.]

It was nothing.

[Whispered.] I'll tell you tomorrow.