STORM

April 16, 1998

[A windswept field under a clouding sky. The leaves rustle and the earth is in motion. A red-and-white-checkered 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 ‘Meeeee…’] 

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 unchangable.

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.