

When Your Love Blew in on the Breeze

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Peace was not the wind's nature. It could never have existed as a kind thing.

The wraiths of wind hadn't been born of placidity and good humour, but of air congealed with the emotions running rampant across the world. Feelings were dangerous enough constrained in human hearts, the things they could do when given a form and mind of their own... well, even the witch queen of the world wouldn't cross a wind wraith. For all the humans boasted of being the greatest of species, monsters of their own creation were constantly pulling on their puppet strings. Wherever the wind blew, humans would become prey. And the wind wraiths were everywhere.

Olivia,

I've turned these words over in my head so many times over the past months. I've made so many opportunities for me to say them, and made even more excuses to get out of it. They might prove to be the end of everything for us, but too much of me is made of dreams for me to let it all go unsaid. I feel like you're slipping away from me, Livvy, we used to spend all day together, and now I feel lucky for a conversation or two. I shouldn't be this upset. You said it yourself: we have barely anything in common. We don't make sense. And yet. I feel like myself when I'm with you, the time flies by, the laughter comes easier. I've sat beside stinking rubbish bins and listened to you grumble about an out of tune guitar and felt like perfection. I'm rambling, just like I knew I would. I'm not good with people. I'm not good with words. I'm not good with feelings. I'm certainly not good at putting all three together, so I'll say what I need to simply. One: You're far too good for me. You'll shake your head as you read this, but it's the plain truth and we both know it.

Two: I love you. Not as a friend.

Sometimes I wish I knew everything there is to know. Now, I'd rather know you.

~~Yours~~ Frances

Willow, the wickedest of Wellington's wind wraiths, gilded idly through the sky, searching for someone special to torment. Laughing at mediocre middle aged men fuming and cursing at the bird droppings she'd blown right into their ill-advised hairstyles only remained amusing for so long. She swooped downwards for a better view of her hunting ground, but alas, the street appeared deserted. Then, a movement a few metres away caught Willow's eye. Drawing nearer, she saw a petite girl of around 16 darting out of a clump of bushes. She glanced around furtively, then drew from her coat

pocket an envelope, with a single name that Willow couldn't quite make out scrawled on the front. A spark of interest flared in Willow; letters could be promising, couldn't they? She could steal it and deliver it to the wrong person, replicate it and leave all the copies in convenient locations for all the girl's friends and family to see. Even just taking it for herself and feeding on any anguish poured into the words would be delightful. A bitter letter of hatred would be just perfect!

Quick as a flash, the strange young girl slipped the letter through the slot in the nearest mailbox, and with another terrified look around the seemingly empty street, she slipped back into the bushes from whence she came.

Willow, ever so carefully, sucked the letter back out of the slot.

Frances,

This will be a strange letter, Frances, but as you've never shied away from any of the many strange things about me, I will cling to the hope that you will not turn away from this either. I wish I could read the future, I always have, just like you always say you wish you could read minds (I don't think you would, really, but I suppose that doesn't matter now), this would be so much easier if I could look through the mist and see if the things I say here will rip us apart. I guess I'll have to take a risk, just like you always tell me to.

I think I'm in love with you. I'm good at feelings, usually, but this one overwhelms me whenever I'm with you. It's too much, and I always want more. It feels like light and laughter, and it's the best thing I know. I don't understand it at all. I don't know if I even understand you, but I want to. I want you.

Please, tell me you feel the same.

Love Olivia

The next day, Willow the wind wraith hung lazily above a charming little house on the top of a hill. She watched with a smile as a young girl with colour in her hair and stars in her eyes carefully slid a neatly labelled envelope into the house's letterbox. The previous day's letter had been so succulent with hope, anxiety, and yearning, that Willow had opted to indulge herself and keep it, rather than throwing it away on an amusing trick. The human rights activists at the most recent city-wide meeting of the fairy folk had rallied hard against the normalisation of stealing from humans *needless cruelty! How would you feel?! -* but Willow had no such qualms. It was just like one of those taxes the silly little people loved so much: they got to exist, and in return, they simply had to put up with some unpleasantness. It seemed a personally reasonable bargain to her.

The sound of footsteps had faded from the street below, and Willow peered down at the orderly, empty road. The girl was gone. With excitement fizzing through her and a wicked grin of anticipation twisting her lips of mist, Willow swooped downwards. She ducked through the slot in the mailbox and, engulfing the beautifully decorated envelope with her swirling form, zipped back out again.

Within minutes, she was hovering above her treasure trove, carved deep into a hill overlooking the ocean. The humans could've started up a museum with her hoard, containing everything from tatty gumboots with a pattern of daffodils that had caught her fancy, to centuries-old coins and pottery. Now, her newly collected letter lay on top of a sturdy box which contained the rest of her paper treasures.

She twisted her form into a long, thin, blade-like shaft of air, and with a *swish*, she cut across her prize, breaking the adhesive holding the envelope together. Seconds later, the letter lay unfolded before Willow's greedy gaze. It gave the slightest of quivers, then lay still.

Dear Frances, it began. From Olivia, it ended.

Willow laughed long and hard, and all around the hill, humans shivered at the howling of the wind.

Olivia,

I miscalculated. I'm sorry.

You wouldn't look at me today, or yesterday, or at all this week. You left the room almost as soon as I arrived. I'd give anything to hear you speak to me again. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I feel like I'm falling apart for missing you, I can't even think of anything but you. I remember laughing with you, sprawled across the grass. I wish I could go back in time to that day and never write what I did. I wish I could tell you to forget you ever read that horrible letter. You can't though, so all I can ask is this: say something. Say you hate me, say you never want to see me again, but if I mean anything to you, don't leave me here wondering.

Frances

Frances,

If I understood little before, I now understand nothing at all. I had a friend I couldn't live without, now I'm living without her and I'm so lonely I feel like caving in. I'm sorry I wrote that mess. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I've never regretted anything more in my life, Frances. Please believe me. Please come back. You wouldn't talk to me the other day, you didn't even look at me when I passed you in the corridor. I couldn't focus a bit in

maths class - I miss having you around to bounce ideas off. I miss your brilliant mind. I miss you. I don't care about the numbers and tables, I care about you, and you seem to have stopped caring about me. This week felt like an endless storm cloud hanging above. Tell me something, even if it hurts. It'll be less painful than your silence.

Olivia

With near-reverence, Willow placed the newest of the letters on top of her stack, and closed the lid gently. She'd forgotten how sweet the taste of heartbreak was, and these ridiculous letters practically oozed it. The melancholic musings beat out ranting men by miles. She really ought to invest in creative forms of feeding more often. She could keep playing with these adorable little dolls and their wild, breakable hearts forever. Humans, though, were not good at forever. It came with the fragility of their feeble bodies and insignificant lives. Every story came to an end.

Olivia,

These past few weeks have been even worse than the one before. I haven't seen you at all, not even a passing glimpse in the hallways. I have no answer, and no hope left to give. If you even open this last letter, Olivia, just know, once again, that I'm sorry. I had a good thing, a brilliant, lovely person, and I tore it all apart. I keep trying to pretend it's a dream I only have to endure a little longer before I wake up. It's not, though, and I was never good at pretending.

Here are the facts:

- 1. I love you. I will love you for a very long time*
- 2. I've lost you.*

Goodbye

Frances

Frances,

Everything is wrong, isn't it? It's my fault of course, with my stupid risks and stupid dreams. Some feelings are better left in the heart. I've seen you only once since I sent my last letter, and it barely counts. It was from a distance, and you looked miserable. I hated that - knowing it was probably me who put that look on your face. I won't do any more damage, Frances. I'll leave you alone for good, and I'll love you every day. All I can dream of now is the day it passes. It all passes in the end.

Farewell,

Olivia

Willow closed the lid of her box on what would likely be the last of the letters. If the previous ones had been delicious, these were utterly mouth watering. She'd even gone

so far as to share them with a couple of friends the previous day - they'd simply adored them.

From beside Willow's ear, a cold, tinkling voice said: "Are those the letters?"

Willow twirled around to see her girlfriend, Foxglove the fairy, hovering in the air, looking between Willow and the box with a dark scowl.

"Hello to you too," Willow said mildly. "Who told you about the letters?"

"Your friends. The ones I begged you to cut off months ago. They're telling anyone who will listen about the *brilliant* trick you played."

"Well, it's nice to get a bit of appreciation for all my work."

Foxglove stared at Willow as if seeing her for the very first time.

"*Hard work?*" she repeated. "You stole private mail and ruined a relationship! What possible reason could you have had?"

"Do I need a reason? I was bored and they were there, darling." Willow had no idea why Foxglove was looking at her that way. Was there really any reason for the disgust in her eyes?

"You can't just go around hurting people," Foxglove said softly, almost beseechingly. "It's cruel. It's not you."

"Of course it is! Hurting people is what we *do*, Fox. Are you feeling quite well?"

Foxglove shook her head. Her eyes swam with tears, and the soft sound of her light breathing had become erratic.

"No. I just discovered I'm dating a stranger."

Suddenly, she dived, lunging for Willow's box, and sweeping the papers up in her tiny arms.

"Hey!" Willow protested, too shocked to pull the letters back. "Why are you acting like this?"

“You’re cruel,” Foxglove said. “I thought you just took things a little too far sometimes, but I was wrong. This is you: cold and hard. Whatever conscience you used to have shrivelled up and died long ago, darling.”

And then, without as much as a “goodbye”, she’d soared from Willow’s cave, and out into the open sky. Willow could do nothing but stare, left alone in the dark feeling just like the two girls whose hearts she’d broken: not understanding anything.

- 1 week later

Frances walked along the beach at sunset, trying to lose herself in the beauty of the scene. The dying sunlight shimmered across the dark water like a hundred flickering candles. *The stars in Olivia’s eyes.* She turned to the hills, standing stark and imposing against the fiery sky. *Olivia, who wasn’t afraid. Olivia, who never backed down.*

She shook her head in frustration and stared at the sand below her feet. There was no forgetting someone like Olivia, no end to the missing her, or the yearning for her laugh.

A crunching sound beneath Frances’ jandals brought her to a halt. Frowning, she got to her knees and carefully swept away a thin layer of sand to reveal a small stack of creased and crumpled papers. She pulled them from the sand and straightened up, heading towards a nearby rubbish bin. Then she caught sight of the name at the head of the first letter, and her heart stopped beating.

Frances, it read, in handwriting she knew as well as her own. Skipping to the bottom of the page, she had to swallow a sob as she saw the sign off: ~~Love~~ *Olivia.*

Love?

She scanned the rest of the letter quickly.

This will be a strange letter, Frances, but as you’ve never shied away from any of the many strange things about me, I will cling to the hope that you will not turn away from this either, it read. Legs shaking, palms drenched in sweat, and eyes swimming with tears, Frances sat down heavily.

The tears blurred her vision and the fresh, overwhelming burst of hope blurred her mind as she read. *Like light and laughter. I want to. I love you. Tell me you feel the same.*

But she *had*. She'd told Olivia over and over again, she'd wrecked herself for the love of Olivia.

With shaking fingers, Frances pulled the second letter in the stack forth, and let out a sound that was half gasp, half sob. The letter was the one she'd poured her heart into for Olivia. So was the fourth letter. And the sixth. What the hell were they doing here? Had Olivia buried them here? But, no, that didn't make sense at all. If Olivia loved Frances too, why would she do a thing like that?

At last, Frances bent her head over the remaining letters. They too were in Olivia's hand. They too were knives to her heart.

Tell me something, Olivia's letter begged. *I'm sorry. It's all my fault. I'll love you every day.*

Echoes of the agony Frances had felt every day spent apart from Olivia filled her words, and Frances wanted nothing more than to run the several kilometres to her house right then and there, to throw her arms around her and feel the warmth between them rekindle.

This whole awful mess might be gone by tomorrow.

Olivia did not hate her.

Olivia *loved* her.

Then, as any other reasonable person would have done, Frances sat on the beach and wept for a good long while.

One minute or thirty might have passed by the time she had pulled herself together again. Her head and heart were full of the all-consuming Olivia. She pulled her phone from her pocket and dialled a number she'd fought hard to leave untouched for weeks. She hardly dared to breathe as she waited. Like a burst of light in the darkness, Olivia's voice crackled through the phone, and Frances burst into a smile so wide she felt like her face would split in two.

"Frances?" Olivia asked, with a tone of unbearable hesitancy.

"Olivia." Frances's voice broke around her name. "We need to talk. Face to face."