

It was always going to end this way. With you and me, together, sharing this room across time with the distance of years standing between our souls. That rift may seem too much to bear. Even here, at the top of everything, with my words in your hands and whatever echo you can conjure of my voice in your ears, you might still feel alone.

But here's the thing you may not have known, child: the furthest distance between any two hearts is still only a moment's passage for the right kind of love. And so it was that the voices in the grass told me tales of your footsteps, fated to track their way along the river on some hot night, long after my last breath has been lost to the wind.

You have always been different, my love. Destined for some burden too great for the weak limbs of this family tree to hold. I could see it in you from the moment you first opened your eyes, some strange magic too new and wonderful for my old hands to grasp. Whatever form this wonder takes when it bursts from your fingertips, it will not be easy.

One day, I fear, listening to the tongues of the grass, you may start to feel this family has no place for you. Your mother, spun from starlight though she is, lost her second sight a long time ago. And in the times you need her to see you most, her eyes will cloud over with visions of a simpler world.

But know this: there is a soul to these woods that I will join when I pass on, and that soul will always have a place for you. The boughs may bend, but the roots are strong.

I have lived a long, long life, and in that time I have seen many, many things. I was in this town when the sprites flew away and left these hills without water for six years. I watched the last train roll along the tracks in the woods, watched the vines and the flowers of this forest comfort those lonely rails, wrapping them all over in a tender embrace. I watched countless years of children pluck the petals from those stems to breathe in deep their smells and witness, often for the first time, a love so great that it could leave no soul behind.

I have tamed demons, and sewn up sprites, and loved people who did not know how to love me in return.

This house is full of memories, each one another loop around the post that ties me here. With each year, the leash is reined in a little further. I can hardly stray from the stoop. It is time to move on, and my only regret is that I will not be there when that strange magic strikes you and you need someone to love you, and to hold you, and to tell you not to be afraid.

I can only pray this letter will find you when you need it most. Then again, maybe you won't need me after all. At six years of age, you are already so brave.

Can you smell it in the air? The clouds are breaking. Do not be afraid, my love. A new day will come.

Oh, lord, grant me one last thing before I go. A rain and a fire to clear the air, that I might go into the dark unafraid.

I can feel it already. Making the earth soft for me. I am ready to go. Up above the world, oh god, such sweet summer rain.