

Of Winds and Wisdom

by cflower

From the depths of the forest, the wind howled its pitiless wisdom.

One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Disclaimer: I do not own anything that J. K. Rowling has written.

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The wind seemed to scream as it swept through the Forbidden Forest across from her window. In her room Hermione could see the dark green leaves tremble off in the distance. Gazing at the forest reminded her of the first Welcoming Feast, when the Headmaster had said that a painful death awaited anyone who dared to enter the forest.

An intense shudder ran through her body at the terror that hid between the trees.

She mentally shook the worrying thought away; there was no use getting anxious. Trying to placate her mind, she thought of how safe and warm her room was. Hermione tried to focus on the crackling of the fire behind her. If she concentrated, she could hear the exact snap of the flames flickering in and out. And then, seconds later, the hissing of sparks taking flight and landing beside a blackened piece of wood.

But the forest seemed to desire her complete attention. From its depths, it sent another wind gusting into her room. This time the air lifted her hair to make it dance around her face. A thin brown strand made contact with her eyes, causing her to flinch.

As the wind died down, Hermione moved the offending strand away with her hand. She refused to divert her eyes away from the forest.

She was determined to find what she was waiting for.

Her eyes narrowed with the intensity of a girl on a quest to see something no one had ever bothered to see. Or perhaps, it was someone.

Time stood still as Hermione scrutinized every flutter of a leaf she could catch with her eyes.

Monotony was swept away by a silhouette moving slowly towards the castle with bursts of a forceful wind for assistance. His long legs stumbled occasionally when the wind blew a particularly strong gust in his direction.

Hermione gripped the windowsill tightly. Her knuckles turned white from the strain, but she only barely noticed.

The man, her Potions master, slowly walked out from the shadows of the towering trees.

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Squinting her eyes, Hermione could make out the blackness of his figure, blacker than the night itself. As he moved, his cloak billowed behind and around him, almost as if the cloak and the wind were caressing each other. Strands of hair whipped across his face as he moved closer to the castle's entrance, closer to her window.

This was what she had been waiting for, reassurance that he had not left irrevocably. His lack of presence at dinner had admittedly unnerved her. If there was one constant about dinner and Hogwarts, it was that the Potions master always attended. Whenever Hermione glanced up at the High Table, she would see his endless scowl punctuated with the occasional mutter in answer to another professor's inquiry.

Hermione knew that she should have been able to reassure herself with the possibility that his disappearance had to do with a request from Professor Dumbledore. After all, if it was Hogwarts' business, then he would be excused.

But this possibility, and the endless others that frantically made their way into her mind, could not appease her. They could not ease the tension in her hands or the painful feeling of being denied air in her chest. Hermione felt as if his empty seat at dinner had threatened her very existence, her happiness.

Loneliness had sat and eaten a delicious Hogwarts' meal in his place.

Hermione's thoughts came back to the present as she stood and gazed intently at the walking—no, the standing—man through her window.

He was doing a bit of gazing himself, Hermione realized. Anxiety blanketed her senses; all she could hear was the beating of blood moving through her ears. All she could feel was the coldness of the wind, and all she could see was his tilted face staring up at her window.

Her hair whipped around as if it was frightened of being caught.

Hermione imagined the exchange of words that would have taken place if they were in speaking distance of each other. His voice permeated her mind effortlessly. In the past weeks, she had often envisioned gaining his attention and having him focus on her with his customary left eyebrow raised.

Tonight, Hermione fabricated their window conversation.

"Twenty points from Gryffindor for meaningless staring," a deep voice would say.

"But it isn't meaningless," a feminine voice would answer.

Directing her attention back to the present situation, Hermione noticed that he was still staring at her. His black eyes refused to blink as strands of hair stroked his nose and forehead.

Calm, unaffected eyes met earnest, brown ones.

After weeks of watching him, she finally had his undivided attention. Hungrily, Hermione took in his presence, his manner of stance, and the position of his tilted head. Hermione drew up an image of the loneliness-filled seat she perceived at dinners past. She wanted to exorcise his seat of the wrongness. All Hermione wanted was to replace the darkness with comfort and a living, breathing, warm Potions master.

Mentally, Hermione tried to conjure up an image of her person in the Great Hall removing the loneliness and pushing and forcing his seat to be inhabited by the man presently standing on the cool, green grass below her window.

Emotionally, she could almost reassure herself that he had always been there and that he never left. But Hermione knew that she hadn't truly won and that her imagination could only be so persuasive. A more sincere picture was composing in her mind. In this picture only a shadow of him remained, flickering and sharing the seat with loneliness.

Hermione shook herself from her reverie and looked down at him from her window. With her eyes she tried to plead with him to be at dinner tomorrow. *He is a spy*, she thought. *He should be able to read my emotions.* Alas, he refused to show his understanding. Another thought came to Hermione *perhaps he is just resigned to his nightly duties.* He only looked up at her with his cold eyes, a frown on his face.

At that moment she knew that loneliness could triumph with an unexpected sweep of the wind.

Hermione shivered and wrapped her arms around herself as another pitiless, cold wind blew into her once warm room.

She glared down at the windowsill as if it was the barrier keeping her mind from succeeding. Hesitantly, Hermione looked up in time to see the dark man continue his walk towards the castle entrance.

She hoped he would be seated in his chair tomorrow.

