

What If We Fly?

By

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EXT. GARDEN. THE BRIGHT HOUSE- DAY

Unkempt and Overgrown. Dead leaves cover dry grass and only a few living plants are scattered amongst wilting wild flowers. At the bottom of the autumnal garden, is an apple tree.

The tree is suffering obvious neglect. Its trunk is dry and its branches almost bare, the crimson apples having fallen to the ground.

INT. KITCHEN. THE BRIGHT HOUSE- DAY

The kitchen is a mess. Trays and mixing bowls fill the sink. The surfaces are covered in flour and egg yolk.

A BIN BAG, so full it threatens to spill over, has been dumped by the door. The necks of empty WINE BOTTLES peek out.

OLIVER BRIGHT (45) ices a cake with bright pink buttercream. He's ungroomed, in desperate need of a shave, and there are dark circles under his eyes.

But his features are framed with laughter lines and he HUMS along to the UPBEAT 60s LOVE SONG playing on the record player.

With an icing tube, Oliver scrawls a message on the cake:
Happy Birthday, Heather!

He sticks in some candles and lights each one.

A HAND slams down on the record player. The music stops.

The hand belongs to HEATHER BRIGHT (16) a tall, mousy teenager. The withering scowl she dons gives an illusion of maturity, but her youth is betrayed by big doe eyes.

Oliver lifts the cake, turns around, and presents it to her. His smile falters under her scathing stare.

INT. KITCHEN. THE BRIGHT HOUSE- DAY

Oliver and Heather sit at the kitchen table. If it wasn't for the SCRAPING of Oliver's fork on his plate, the silence would be deafening.

Heather plays around with the cake but doesn't take a bite. She looks miserable.

HEATHER
It's buttercream.

Oliver stares at her blankly.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
I hate buttercream.

His face falls.

OLIVER
I can scrape it off?

Heather rolls her eyes and pushes the plate aside. She pouts and stares stubbornly at the table. Oliver puts down his fork. It CLANGS against the plate.

SILENCE falls. Oliver observes Heather with clear concern.

HEATHER
Stop staring at me.

Oliver averts his eyes.

OLIVER
Sorry.

Silence falls once more. Heather's gaze drifts to the bin bag with the empty wine bottles. Her jaw ticks minutely. Oliver notices. His cheeks flush. He CLEARS his THROAT.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
I thought we could spend the day
together. Watch a
film...or..erm...maybe play a board
game?

Heather finally looks at him.

HEATHER
No thanks.

Oliver looks taken aback for a moment, eyebrows raised and mouth agape as though unsure how to proceed. Heather shrugs.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Not in the mood.

She stands up, takes her plate, and scrapes the cake into the bin. Then dumps the plate in the sink. Oliver watches her, face contorted in confusion.

OLIVER
I booked the day off-

HEATHER
I didn't ask you to.

Heather swipes the lighter from the counter and makes swift exit. Oliver stands up.

OLIVER
Heather, I'm-

It's too late. The door swings closed with a BANG.

Oliver clenches his fist and kicks the table leg.

EXT. GARDEN. THE BRIGHT HOUSE- DAY

Heather sits on the grass, leaning against the apple tree. She is playing with the lighter.

She rummages in her pockets. Pulls out a cigarette. She places the cigarette between her lips, fumbles a little as she tries to light it. She figures it out on the third try.

Heather takes a long drag. She COUGHS on the exhale. When she pulls herself together she clicks the lighter on and off, staring intently at the flame.

She turns her head to the side where she sees Oliver across the garden, pulling weeds out of the soil. Her gaze shifts to the apple tree, then, to the lighter in her hand.

ACROSS THE GARDEN

Oliver GRUNTS as he tugs ferociously at the weeds, using more strength than necessary, then tossing them aside.

He pauses. Frowns. SNIFFS. His eyes go wide with panic.

BACK TO HEATHER

The apple tree is on fire. Heather stands frozen and watches it with a mixture of horror and astonishment as the flames slowly devour it.

A stream of water hits the tree. The fire is put out. A stunned Heather turns to see Oliver, who holds a hose in one hand. He shakes with anger.

As she comes to her senses, Heather looks at him with pleading eyes.

HEATHER

Dad...I-It's just a tree.

Oliver observes her. Pensive, as his eyebrows knit together and his lips purse.

OLIVER

Get in the car.

She blinks.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

Get in the car. Now.

Oliver points at the cigarette in her hand.

OLIVER (CONT'D)

And put that thing out. You don't smoke.

Oliver drops the hose and marches in the opposite direction. Heather drops the cigarette and stamps it out.

EXT. QUARRY- DAY

A grass-covered cliffside made up of sharp, jagged rocks. Below is a crystal clear body of water.

Heather sits cross-legged on one of the rocks, facing the spectacular view of the sky. Her scowl has returned.

Oliver stands behind. His face is a turmoil of bittersweet emotion as he admires the view.

OLIVER

Beautiful, isn't it?

HEATHER

Is this an intervention?

Oliver sighs and sits down beside her.

OLIVER
I've...uh...I've never been very good
at this, but...well...how are you,
Heather? Honestly.

HEATHER
I'm fine.

OLIVER
I remember a time you were so small,
you could fit in the palm of my hand.
You think I don't know when you're
upset?

Heather picks at the grass and refuses to meet his gaze.

HEATHER
I have a right to be.

OLIVER
You've also got a right to be happy.

Heather rolls her eyes.

HEATHER
I don't want to talk.

OLIVER
Good. Neither do I.

Heather turns him with a frown.

OLIVER
Do you trust me?

Heather observes him, skeptical eyes searching his hopeful ones. Eventually she nods. Oliver responds with a grateful smile.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Alright. I want you to put your hands
on the grass and close your eyes.

Heather lies her palms flat beside her and shuts her eyes tight. Oliver does the same.

OLIVER
Breathe. In and out.

They both take a deep inhale and exhale slowly.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
What do you feel?

Heather strokes her hands through the blades of grass, over the rock. Her movements are timid.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Listen. What can you hear?

A gentle BREEZE blows. A bird CHIRPS. Waves CRASH against the cliffside. Heather's body loses its tension and she looks almost-not quite- serene.

Oliver's expression becomes sombre.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Picture that moment. Remember what you saw, what you heard, what you felt.

Heather becomes tense again. Her eyebrows furrow. Oliver swallows.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Hang onto it.

Tears roll down her cheeks. Somewhere, a bird SQUAKS and it sounds like a high-pitched cry. Heather's fists clench, her nails dig into the soil. Suddenly, she lets out an almighty ear-splitting SCREAM.

Flabbergasted, Oliver opens his eyes and and stares at Heather. Then he closes them again and lets out a piercing SCREAM of his own.

The sound reverberates. Then it is quiet.

Wide-eyed and startled, Heather catches her breath.

Oliver blinks his eyes open. He's crying now. Gingerly, he touches his fingertips to his cheeks. They come away wet. He frowns as he studies them. Then the tears fall uncontrollably until he's SOBBING. His shoulders shake and he puts his head in his hands.

Heather hesitates. Then gently pulls his hand away from his eyes and wraps her arms around his neck. She rests her head on his shoulder.

Oliver holds her tight. He rocks her soothingly and strokes her hair as she cries silently.

EXT. QUARRY-DAY

Oliver and Heather sit side by side just inches apart, their postures identical. Heather takes a cigarette and a lighter out of her pocket. Lights the cigarette and takes a drag.

HEATHER

I'm sorry about Carmine.

OLIVER

We can grow another tree.

They sit in comfortable silence watching the clouds roll across the sky.

OLIVER

My brother used to bring me here when I wasn't much older than you.

HEATHER

Why here?

A fond smile graces Oliver's face.

OLIVER

It's the only good diving spot for miles.

Heather raises her eyebrows and points down the cliff.

HEATHER

You've jumped down there?

Oliver nods.

OLIVER

Colin was a bit of a dare devil.

Heather purses her lips. She sits in quietly for a moment, looking out at the blue sky, eyes narrowed slightly. She puts the cigarette out and slowly stands. Oliver watches her warily.

Heather is looking straight forward, sheer determination in her eyes. Oliver follows her line of sight. His face falls,

dread written across his features. He turns back to Heather but she's already started racing towards the cliff's edge.

OLIVER

No!

Oliver jumps up and hurries to catch up with her, but she's too fast. Before he can get anywhere near, Heather has leaped off the cliff.

Oliver can do nothing but watch, his body still, his face frozen in mortification.

Heather's SCREAM echoes.

EXT. WATER. QUARRY- DAY

Heather PLUMMETS into the water. It is SILENT. The WATER ripples.

EXT. CLIFF'S EDGE. QUARRY- DAY

Oliver takes a couple of steps back. Takes a breath. Then he rushes forwards and jumps off the cliff.

EXT. WATER. QUARRY- DAY

Heather breaks through the surface, COUGHING and spluttering. She opens her eyes and there is a sparkle in them that was absent before. A huge smile slowly spreads across her face.

She looks up to see Oliver falling rapidly towards her. She swims out of the way just in time for Oliver to CRASH into the water. She recoils as he splashes her.

Oliver goes under for a moment. Then he reemerges. He glares at Heather for a long, tense moment. Heather watches him with nervous anticipation.

Then his features soften, his shoulder's shake and he begins to LAUGH hysterically.

OLIVER

You gave me a bloody heart attack!

Heather giggles. Oliver wraps his arm around her and kisses her forehead.

OLIVER

Happy Birthday, you lunatic.

Heather sobers up. She looks up at Oliver and offers him a small smile.

Then she averts her gaze, tries for a more mirthful expression and nudges him in the side.

HEATHER

Next year, I'll bake.

Oliver puts a hand over his chest and feigns an offended gasp.

He splashes her and she retaliates. He grins mischievously as he swims away, kicking water in her face as he goes. She rolls her eyes, but beams from ear to ear as she chases after him.

Their LAUGHTER echoes as the sun sets over the quarry.

FADE TO BLACK.

