

“The Last Wight”

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<http://textshopexperiments.org/textshop05/weirdness-of-rhetoric>

TRANSCRIPT

[Remy Bourgeois’s “Aube,” a quiet electronic song, begins to play]

The tree that ages backward in Bruskina Park has delivered a message. It was discovered yesterday evening by Selma Mose, one of the local park rangers. As usual, it was written in neat letters on the back of a piece of bark recently shed by the tree.

As regular listeners know, the tree that ages backward in Bruskina Park was dead until 1941, at which point it slowly began growing healthier year by year. While it is now noticeably smaller than it was when it first stopped being dead, it remains one of the park’s more impressive trees and, since around the mid-1950s, has had a consistently beautiful canopy of leaves that turns miraculous colors for a few weeks each fall. Every decade or so, the tree leaves a message for us, confirming details and events from our future that, given its unique condition, the tree has already experienced as part of its past. We all remember and appreciate the tree’s assistance in helping the town prepare for the flood of 1998.

According to Selma, the tree’s message reveals it’s now approximately halfway through its lifecycle. “And at this point,” the message goes on, “I will tell you a little more about myself. I was planted in 2095, the day the last wight will leave town. While they



still live among you now, and will still do many terrible things in the years to come, events have now been set in motion that will lead to their expulsion. What those events and intertwined causes and effects have been, I cannot confidently say. I can only pass on what I have experienced and report that these events are now inevitable.”

In response to the tree’s message, the mayor has scheduled a public forum for this Friday, calling it the first in a series of forums to address cryptic, vaguely xenophobic messages that have appeared across town over the past year—messages thought to contain various threatening symbols, but that had until now been assumed to be empty provocations.

“The next eighty-seven years will not be easy or without what will feel like defeats,” the tree’s message went on. “Moreover, that will not necessarily be the end of it. When the last wight leaves, it may go somewhere else, and I cannot say another will not return. I can only say there will be a respite.”

“They will grow bolder for a while, but then you will grow bolder. Throughout that time, I will grow younger and less powerful. Eventually, I will return to a sapling, and then I will be gone.”

“When I am gone, I ask only one favor. This is the first time you will hear me ask it, but I have asked it before when I was younger. Upon my disappearance, dig in the soil beneath where I have been. You will find there a young girl. It is beyond me to explain how, but she will be there in 1941 when I die and she is there now, intertwined with and protected by my roots. When I vanish in your future, she will be reborn, and for some time she will help protect this town when I no longer can.”

Selma reports that the tree's words at that point become muddled with some sort of sap. For now, the message has been handed off to the dendrologists at the local college, who will try to decipher more of what is written.

[music fades out]