

# *Words, Wilting*

*A Two-Player Game of a  
Secret Relationship and  
Communication Wilting*

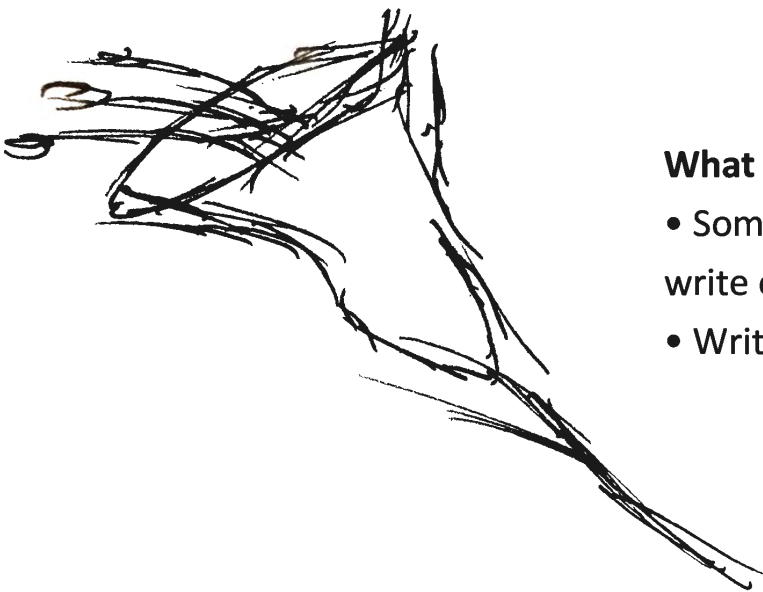
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# *Words, Wilting*

*A 2 Player Game of a Secret Love and Communication Wilting*

## **Premise, An Introduction:**

In Words, Wilting you and a friend will take the role of two young lovers of the same age whose love must be concealed. To aid in this, the lovers have created a way to communicate secretly through flowers adorning their outfits, inspired by the Victorian floral language of love. This game is written with the assumption that the lovers must hide their relationship because they are of the same gender, but you can decide together something different about them and their relationship that makes them hide it from society for their safety. They could be of differing faiths, races, ethnicities, or similar things that puts them at odds with the hegemony of the majority. You will then communicate using your language and making scenes from it, hoping to remember what you made together and avoid miscommunications that could hurt your love.



## **What You'll Need:**

- Some index cards or scrap paper you can write on both sides of.
- Writing instruments of your choice.



### **Before Play, Content Warnings and Safety:**

As the introduction indicates, the topics of homophobia, racism, transphobia, islamophobia, antisemitism, and similar hatreds are part of the space this game operates in. While the appearance of these depends heavily on the nature of the lovers and their relationship, they need not be explicitly present at all. Before play discuss what kind of themes and topics you would like to explore together, and more importantly which things you do not feel comfortable having appear. Before it is anything else this is a game, and no game should be put above your comfort or the comfort of the people you play with.

Additionally, if in play either of you find a scene or topic upsetting or uncomfortable, please do not hesitate to ask for it to stop. Take a minute and make sure you are both ok and if you want to continue. Similarly, if you find the scene's trajectory to be coming to an uncomfortable place that you are interested in keeping but not having it appear 'on-screen,' suggest that the scene 'fade to black' with the understanding of what occurs next generally left unsaid.

If you do not feel comfortable speaking these requests out loud, have one of the index cards set aside with a clear symbol on it such as a big X, and when uncomfortable point to or grab the card. As above, the other player should check in, make sure you're ok, and discuss if you want to continue the game or stop.

## Making the Lovers, the Language:

Together, create your two lovers. Who are they, how old are they, how did they meet? Consider such things as: if their families know each other, if they go to the same school or not, if they met through their similar interests or if they are into very different things. How do they act in front of other people? When did they realize they loved each other? Not every question nor aspect of this relationship needs to be nor should be answered now, but have some groundwork laid for the game and how you will roleplay these two.



Next, using the index cards or scrap paper, make the language together. On one side of each card have a type of flower and where it's worn. If you'd like, consider what flowers might be accessible and used by your lovers, and where they'd commonly adorn them. For instance you could have 4 cards that are all daisies, but one is pinned on the left breast of a jacket, one pinned on the right, one worn behind an ear, and one pinned to a messenger bag, but all will mean something different.

Then, on the opposite side, create what the meaning of the flower and adornment is. Perhaps the daisy on the right breast means 'avoid my house,' but on the left breast means 'come over my house after class,' while the daisy behind the ear means 'I'm sorry' while the daisy on the bag means 'I wrote you a poem.'

Play around with the similarities and differences of similar flowers or how their worn, do not worry if it seems like it will get mixed up or confusing later, in fact it is encouraged! You might then have a lily on the left breast means 'meet by the lake,' or the rose behind the ear meaning 'I want you to say I love you.' It is also encouraged, but certainly not required, that on the first side you adorn the card with a drawing of the flower and how it is adorned. Your art needn't be good, or even look remotely like the correct flower!

When you have 16 cards, you are done creating your language together.

## Beginning Play, Communicating and the First Bloom:

At the beginning, take four cards each, being careful to only let the other player see the name and drawing of the flower but not its meaning. Each player should select the card they want to prompt the scene and play it, again so that the other player cannot see the meaning. You each say what you believe the meaning of the other player's card is, in whatever order. You then reveal to each other what the cards were and craft a scene or two together from these interpretations. Perhaps the card meant to avoid the player's home, but you show up and see their parents are home. How does this play out? How do you hide your relationship, or explain showing up? More importantly, how does this miscommunication and forgetting of the language you developed together affect your relationship? The scenes can be any length, acted out or narrated: it could be you two narrating

how you each went to different locations to meet up and sit their alone, a fully roleplayed conversation the next day about being upset at having missed each other, or anything you please.

In this first half of the game the stakes should be relatively low. Even if you mistakenly arrive and meet your lover's homophobic parents, that does not mean the scene ends with you getting found out. Missing each other once does not cause a break-up, and perhaps not even an argument. Just the same, successes are also relatively small scale. Meeting up together at the lake could simply mean a good conversation, but also a chance to steal a kiss.

Determine how much time passes before the next card. Days, weeks, months, longer? Then, resume by each playing another card and crafting a scene as above. After that scene repeat one more time, for a third time total, deciding how long it's been between scenes and playing cards as above.



### **Continuing Play, The Turn:**

After you have each played three cards, discard your remaining card. Something changes, a dramatic turn takes place. Someone finds out about the two of you, your relationship, and perhaps even your language. Look back at your previous scenes and the consequences of them. Was it mostly positive, you understood each other and generally guessed the correct meanings of cards? Or was it mostly negative, upset at each other and your miscommunications?

If it was mostly positive, then the reverse comes to pass: the person who learns cannot be trusted. They could be simply a gossip, or more malicious; they could oppose your relationship however they can. They become a fixture of the scenes to come and should be considered when discussing consequences of miscommunication. They could be a homophobic parent, eager to keep one lover grounded or worse, a teacher putting one of you in detention, a jealous 'friend' who will try to split you up.

If it was mostly negative, then the reverse comes to pass: the person who learns can be trusted. They will keep your secret, and more importantly will support and help your relationship however they can. They become a fixture of the scenes to come and should be considered when discussing consequences of miscommunication. They could be a helpful librarian, themselves familiar with hiding their love and happy to lie to parents about the lovers being at the library and supervised, a supportive parent or sibling who will make their home a safe place, a friend who will stand up for the lovers against any authority.

Together create the person who discovers the relationship, and a scene where the person does just that, setting the tone for how they will continue to appear.

## Ending Play, the Second Bloom:

The dramatic turn having occurred, play resumes as before. Each of you will take four of the remaining eight cards, and each play a card. As before, you will try to interpret the other players card, and create a scene over the success or failure thereof.

This time though the stakes are much higher. Coming over when homophobic parents are still home is dangerous, each going to opposite locations can easily become a nasty argument. More people can discover the truth, for better or worse. The person from the Turn will be ever present, to hinder or help. But with higher stakes come higher rewards. Arriving at your lover's home with no one else present could lead to a night of passion, going together to the lake could mean making concrete plans for a future together.

As before, after a scene discard the two cards, each play another card and make another scene. Then repeat one last time.

After this sixth and final scene, look back on the game, and where the last scene ended. Discuss what you two think happens to the lovers after that. Will they stay together, having shown dedication through the language they crafted together, or even staying strong through doubts of each other's commitment after miscommunicating that which you made? Will they split up, the consequences of their mistakes too much to continue, or even that they find they aren't a good match for each other despite remembering their language?

Craft one final scene; no cards, no hidden language, just the two lovers and what the future may hold for them.

