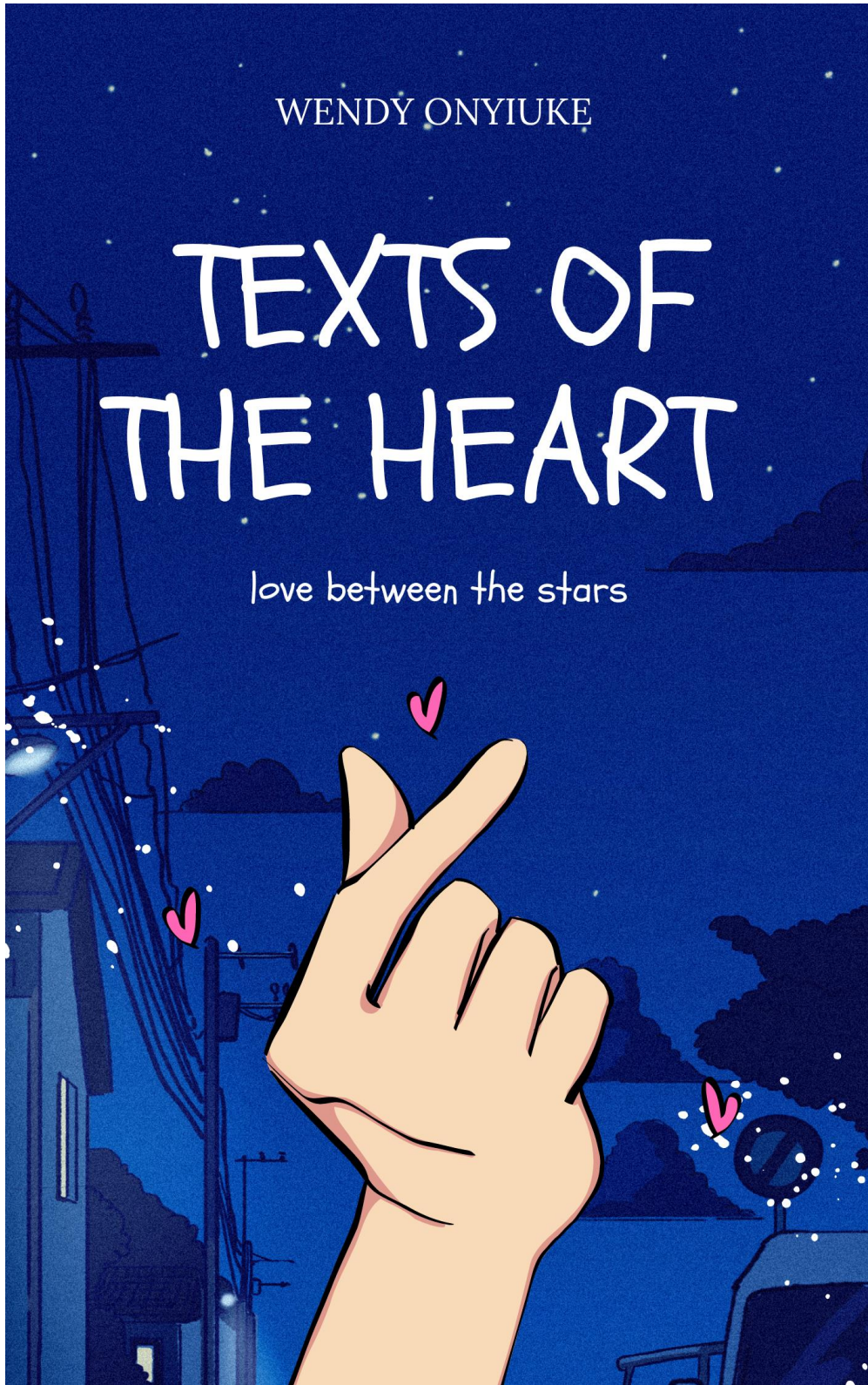


WENDY ONYIUKE

TEXTS OF THE HEART

love between the stars



Chapter 1: A Chance Encounter

Brittany rushed across campus, balancing her coffee and hurriedly checking her phone as she power walked. Her Literature class had run long, and she was already ten minutes late for her Art History lecture on the other side of school. Not watching where she was going, she collided with a solid chest, spilling hot cocoa all down the front of her shirt.

"Oh crap, I'm so sorry!"

said the stranger whose things now littered the ground along with Brittany's ruined beverage. They both crouched to gather notebooks and pens. When their eyes met, Brittany found herself lost in warm brown eyes set in a handsome face framed with black wavy hair.

"It's okay, no harm done. Let me buy you another coffee to make up for it," he said with an easy grin.

She flushed, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear as she accepted his offer. They walked together to the campus cafe, chatting casually about classes and majors as they ordered. His name was Edgar, a senior Engineering student. When their drinks were ready, Edgar insisted on exchanging numbers.

"So we don't end up like clumsy bumper cars again. I'll message you later if that's cool, maybe we could grab food after your next class?"

Hesitating only a moment, she agreed with a smile before rushing off once more. That evening, her phone lit up with a text from an unknown number.

Edgar: Hey Brittany, it's Edgar from earlier. How was the rest of your day?

Brittany: Hey! It was good, but busy as always. How's your evening going?

Edgar: Not too bad,. What are you up to?

Brittany: Procrastinating on my Lit assignment that's due tomorrow.

Edgar: Haha I feel that, engineering assignments can be brutal. Want some company to avoid doing work? I could go for a coffee or snack if you're free.

Brittany bit her lip considering. She hated putting things off but was enjoying talking with Edgar more than focusing on her essay. Against her better judgement, she agreed to meet up.

An hour later found them in a cozy corner cafe, chatting animatedly over hot drinks. Brittany learned that Edgar was also passionate about the arts in addition to his major, and they bonded over favorite books, films and artists. Time flew by as they delved deeper into tales of siblings, parents, and past relationships - both the triumphs and failures.

It was nearing midnight when Edgar walked Brittany back to her dorm.

"I had a really great time getting to know you tonight. We should do it again sometime, if you'd like?"

Hope shone in his expressive eyes. She nodded, feeling butterflies at his boyish smile.

"I'd like that. Goodnight, Edgar."

As she prepared for bed, her phone buzzed with one last text.

Edgar: Sweet dreams, Brit. I'll see you around campus :)

She fell asleep smiling, eagerly wondering what adventures their digital connection might lead to next. A new friend, and perhaps something more, had blossomed from a simple bump in the hallway - and she couldn't wait to see where their story went.

Chapter 2: The Perfect Date

A few days later, Brittany was working when her phone vibrated with a message from Edgar.

Edgar: Hey beautiful, hope your week is going well so far. I was wondering if you'd like to go to the autumn festival in town this weekend? They've got music, food, pumpkin carving - should be a fun time.

She smiled, immediately intrigued by the invitation. She'd heard about the event but never gotten around to attending. Going with Edgar sounded way more appealing than being alone.

Brittany: That sounds lovely, I'd love to go with you! What time did you want to meet up?

Edgar: Great! How's Saturday at 6pm? I'll pick you up from your dorm. Wear something comfortable :)

Saturday couldn't come fast enough. Brittany spent the afternoon getting ready, trying on several outfits before settling on a cozy sweater and jeans. Right on time, Edgar texted that he'd arrived. Grabbing her jacket, she hurried downstairs.

Ethan leaned against his car, grinning when he spotted her.

"You look beautiful."

He opened her door like a gentleman before getting in himself. Musical banter passed the drive, hands brushing as they sang along. Too soon they arrived at the festival, fairy lights glowing warmly through the fall trees.

Edgar insisted they start with the food trucks. As Brittany savored a caramel apple, she gazed around at couples strolling hand in hand. An autumntime slice of domestic bliss. Their next stop was the pumpkin patch, where each chose a plump gourd to decorate.

Settling by a hay bale with supplies, their hands met jokingly reaching for the same marker. Lingered a moment, Edgar gave her hand a gentle squeeze before letting go. They talked and talked as their pumpkins took shape, learning more intimate details the longer their eyes held each other's gazes.

Once finished, Edgar declared they needed a selfie with

their works of art. She laughed but obliged, leaning into his arm as he held up his phone. The perfect fall festival couple, she thought smiling privately. Their next activity was a bonfire, mesmerized by dancing flames while mugging cider.

As the night wound down, Edgar accompanied Brittany back to her pumpkin. He gazed at her with such tenderness that her breath caught. "I had an amazing time with you tonight, Brit." Unable to resist a moment longer, he cupped her cheek and pressed his lips gently to hers. She sighed contentedly against his mouth, hands resting on his chest. Their smiles said everything in the silence afterwards as they walked back hand in hand to the car. Too soon they arrived back at her dorm.

She turned to him biting her lip shyly.

"Thank you for the most perfect date. I...I really like you, Edgar."

He grinned, squeezing her hand.

"I really like you too, Brit. Sleep well, beautiful girl."

With one last lingering kiss, she exited and waved goodbye, soul soaring all the way to her room.

That night, text messages volleyed back and forth filled with laughter, inside jokes and growing care between them. But beneath the lighthearted words, a cautious vulnerability emerged too.

Brittany: Tonight was amazing, but I want to be honest - my past relationships have left me kind of guarded. It may take me time to fully open up.

Edgar: I appreciate you sharing that with me. Take all the time and space you need, I'm in no rush. All I want is for you to feel comfortable and cared for. You've been through a lot - I'm here to listen without judgment whenever you feel ready.

She sighed in relief at his gentle reassurance. She cared for Edgar deeply but past hurts lingered, making her

hesitant to fully commit her heart. Only time would tell if she could truly trust again. For now, she was content deepening their bond one text at a time.

Chapter 3: Facing Fears

Over the following weeks, Brittany and Edgar's relationship blossomed. They spent free weekends exploring new activities together like hiking, trying recipes in the dorm kitchen and stargazing on blankets outside. Their text conversations flowed endlessly on everything from philosophy and politics to silly memes.

Yet cracks of uncertainty remained in Brittany's heart.

Though Edgar proved himself patient and caring at every turn, old insecurities lingered from the disappointment of John, her ex who had taken cheated on her with her highschool best friend. She tried mentally preparing herself to open fully to Edgar, but fear of betrayal stopped her each time.

One Thursday night, such thoughts swirled particularly dark while studying alone in her room. She jumped when her phone rang, surprised to see Edgar's caller ID.

" Hey, areyou alright? Your replies seem off tonight." Worried eyes appeared on her screen as he used Facetime.

Brittany sighed, rubbing her temples. It's nothing, just overthinking as usual. But Edgar insisted softly. I'm here to listen no matter what, you know that. After several minutes of weighing options, Brittany decided he deserved honesty after so many weeks together.

Okay...I'm just having trouble fully trusting again after John. He really broke my heart and now I'm scared to get hurt again.

Edgar listened intently without judgment as she spoke of her ex's transgressions and her own doubts. When she finished, he said thoughtfully, I understand why you're guarded after going through that. But I want you to know I'm nothing like him, Brit. You can take all the time you need, but know that you're safe with me - emotionally and otherwise. My feelings for you run deep.

Brittany felt tears prick her eyes, touched by his empathy. For the first time, she started relaxing walls she'd held so tightly. They talked for over an hour as she shared more vulnerable parts of herself, and he reassured with kind words from his heart. By the end, she dried her eyes feeling significantly lighter. Thank you for hearing me out tonight, Edgar. It means everything.

After that emotional night, their bond strengthened immeasurably. Brittany made a conscious effort putting trust in Edgar each day, opening up pieces of herself she'd kept hidden for so long. And he constantly proved worthy, always listening without judgment or pressure. Intimacy grew between them on a soulful level, leaving her falling more and more in love.

One sunny Saturday, Edgar called her for a surprise. I have a picnic planned if you're free this afternoon. There's someone special I want you to meet. Curious, she agreed and met him at the usual spot by the river. Edgar held the hand of a young girl around six who waved shyly. Brittany, this is my niece Jade. Jade, say hi to my friend!

Jade seemed instantly smitten with her, and she felt the same charm radiating from her small form. As the afternoon passed in laughter and play, Edgar shared snippets of his difficult childhood learning to parent his niece after his sister's passing. By opening this precious part of his life, Edgar revealed a deeper trust in Brittany that filled her with joyful tears. You've given me so much - thank you for trusting me too. This means the world, she said squeezing his hand. A new level of understanding shone in their eyes that day, strengthening roots of care that would sustain them through any storm. Their connection grew from texts of the Heart

Chapter 4: Connecting Deeper

A few weeks later, Edgar surprised Brittany with tickets for a weekend getaway to a quaint B&B by the coast. She was apprehensive leaving campus for so long but trusted Edgar implicitly now.

Checking into the rustic cottage, they explored postcard-worthy scenery along the shore. Brittany loved photographing Edgar laughing against crashing waves, memories to cherish. That evening, they curled by the fire

sharing a bottle of wine under a cozy knit throw. Hands wandered more freely as lips met unhurriedly, conveying the depth of care between them. In the intimacy of the moment, Brittany's sensed unspoken hopes lingering just below Edgar's surface.

She cupped his cheek gently. Talk to me, Ed. Whatever you're feeling, I'm here.

He sighed, giving a small smile. I know we said we'd take it slow, but being with you this weekend...I can't ignore wanting more, Brit. I love you so deeply - will you be mine, officially? Brittany beamed, elated tears welling in her eyes. Yes Ed, of course! I love you too. Leaning in, they sealed the commitment with a sweet lingering kiss that said everything without words. The bond was complete - they'd transcended friendship and reached the changing point of true partnership.

That magic shift brought newfound joy and fulfillment, yet also unearthed underlying worries neither had fully confronted till now. In the embrace of unfiltered intimacy that weekend, small insecurities surfaced which, left unaddressed, could take root and damage their foundation over time.

One morning, Edgar seemed distracted over pancakes, rubbing his neck nervously. Brittany, there's something I want to bring up but I'm scared of messing this up. Please know I am completely devoted to you, but... John hurt you so much in the past, and I'm afraid one day you'll wake up realizing I'm not who you really need. That you'd be happier without me dragging you down.

Brittany gazed at him lovingly, taking his hands. Oh honey, that will never happen. It's true John left scars - and you've helped heal them in ways I can't describe. I am exactly where I want to be, with the person who sees me, heart and soul. You light me up in a way no one else ever has. Please don't ever doubt how much you mean to me, Ed. He exhaled shakily, as if releasing a weight he'd carried alone too long. You always know how to reassure me, baby. I'll keep trying to believe that every day. Wanting nothing but his happiness, Brittany vowed always showing Edgar unconditional acceptance and compassion whenever insecurities resurfaced. Balancing honesty with empathy had brought them so far - she had faith in love's ability to conquer all.

That faith was tested again later that night during a long drive staring at the stars. Brittany's head rested on Edgar's shoulder as easy silence filled the car. She glanced at his face, seeing worry etched between his brows again. Talk to me, my heart, she repeated softly. This time he admitted concern Brittany would change her mind after seeing his dysfunctional family dynamics up close during holiday visits. She took his hand, meeting his downcast eyes meaningfully. Ed, I didn't fall in love with genetics or a picture perfect family portrait. I fell for YOU - your heart, humor, work ethic, compassion. However messy life gets, I choose you. And I will stand by your side through anything, my love, so try leaving those fears at the door, okay? Their gaze held understanding and newfound peace as Edgar processed her unconditional vow. You're my world, Brit. I'm the luckiest man alive.,

Chapter 5: Day one of Forever

The weekend away served to strengthen their bond tremendously. Returning to campus revived their busy schedules, yet they made efforts prioritizing quality time together amidst assignments and their jobs.

Texts flowed consistently, a loving thread tethering them. One autumn evening, Brittany was curled under blankets catching up on a drama series when a poem appeared on her phone from Edgar:

**'My dearest Brit, shining star above -
You coming into my life completed me.
From that chance meeting your smile stole my heart,
Filling each day with purpose as the weeks unfold.
Remember our sunset picnic by the creek?
Caramel kisses tasting sweeter than the view.
Bonded two hearts forever me and you.
Thank you for staying by my side through it all.
You are my happiness, my dawn, my song.
Without you, this earth would lack beauty's call.
Brit, my everything, will you make me the happiest?
Meet me at the fall festival to begin forever at last.'**

Tears welled up in Brittany's eyes, heart soaring. She threw on her coat and rushed out into the chilly night, feet carrying her faster than she'd ever run before. Bursting into the

festival gates, she searched wildly among the strolling crowds until spotting Edgar's familiar form by their pumpkin carving spot.

He turned, face illuminating upon seeing Brittany sprinting towards him breathlessly. Before he could speak, she launched into his waiting arms and kissed him passionately, pouring all the emotion his beautiful words contained. Pulling back, she gazed into his moist eyes beaming. Yes, Edgar James, I will marry you! Edgar laughed jubilantly, spinning her in a circle before setting her down to slip a simple yet elegant ring on her finger. It was made from their initials intricately twisted together in silver wire, clearly a labor of love. She hugged him tightly, overcome with pure joy and gratitude for the man who'd captured her heart so completely through patience, honesty and care. This was day one of Forever.

One year later:

Brittany adjusted her vintage lace wedding gown before the mirror, smiling fondly at memories of their chance meeting that led her here - to the best day of her life so far. Her mother entered, welling up at how radiantly happy and beautiful her daughter appeared.

"It's time, darling. Are you ready for your new chapter to start?"

Nodding, Brittany accepted the bouquet of fall flowers and linked arms with her dad. She walked down the aisle beaming amidst family and friends towards the man smiling tearfully with deep love and admiration. Their 'I dos' were spoken with sincerity and promise as the colors of autumn leaves whirled around in a picturesque backdrop.

At the reception, Brittany and Edgar swayed closely to their song, eyes only for each other.

"Who would've thought a silly coffee spill could lead somewhere so wonderful?" she whispered,

touching their wedding rings. Edgar kissed her softly.

"I'll be forever grateful to that chance

encounter. I love you, Mrs. James, to the moon and back."

Their future shone as bright as the glittering string lights that night, heartlines entwined by faith in love's enduring magic.