

To Wish Upon A Star

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She hurtled through time and space, her hair streaming behind her, entire centuries and universes flying by. It had long ceased to phase her, the irregular flow of space and time was just her default state of being. Her hands were starting to feel numb and her skin had an uncomfortable tightness to it. She'd have to stop somewhere soon.

A patch of luminous dust caught her eye. Stardust. She came closer, watching as it swayed and changed, forming and dissolving and, finally, solidifying into its final form. It radiated light and power, just like its sister, the sun. All curled up within itself, it had a face that made one feel young and slightly drunk on happiness. A young star. The star unfurled delicately and peeked at her through its fingers.

"Who are you?" it asked with a tentatively. "I don't think we've met before. Or have we? I'm never quite sure about these things. Maybe its best if you decide."

She chuckled internally. How odd. "No, I'm afraid this is the first time we've met." Her mirth eyed the star with interest, seeping out through her face as she spoke.

"Ah, well then, do you, by chance, happen to know yourself? Perhaps you could make us acquainted. I am rather shy around strangers. Or I think I am, anyway, I haven't quite found out."

That startled her. What did the star mean? She was perplexed. Stars weren't usually this forward, were they? She didn't know, she'd never talked to one.

"I think I do - or, at least, I would certainly hope so. Me, this is ... who is it that you are?"

"Oh, goodness me, I really haven't the faintest idea. Do you? I haven't been given a name, now have I, so I can't tell you. "

Well this star was certainly a strange one. She wondered what to say next. How did one even make small talk with a star? What were the appropriate topics? She looked at the star and wondered. It seemed, somehow, even more lost than she was.

"You know," the sudden voice interrupted her thoughts, "I've been wondering. You were in a hurry earlier. Where were you headed? I hope I'm not keeping you from anything important." Large, curious eyes stared eerily up at her. Inquiring, prodding at her consciousness gently.

"Oh, I wasn't headed anywhere in particular." She was never headed anywhere in particular, these days.

“No one ever really is, are they? Oh, If you don’t mind my asking, there’s one more thing. Where is your smile?” There was a moment of silence, the curious eyes different from what they were a moment ago. They had turned into deep, mysterious pools and were pulling her in with a force so magnetic, she felt the heels of her feet being lifted off the ground.

She broke the silence cautiously. “I’ve never had it. It’s been gone for as I can remember. There’s no need to feel sorry for me, though. It’s not such a bad life, I’m used to it by now, so it really isn’t a bother.” It was strange. She hadn’t thought of it in years.

“Then I shan’t feel sorry for you. Really, I think we’re quite similar, you and I. You have no smile, I have no name - and no one to wish upon me in the night. It’s lonely out here, in space. You look like you know a bit about loneliness yourself, isn’t that right?”

She supposed she did. She had spent years traversing the skies on her own, occasionally chatting with a lone comet or asteroid as they flew side by side. But it wasn’t the loneliness that she minded, it was the suffocation. She’d expected loneliness to feel empty, to be free, but all it was was full of her - her thoughts and the dark where her mind dwelled. Instead of voicing her thoughts out loud, she only nodded in response.

“Maybe we could help each other, you and I. I’ll help you find your smile and you’ll help me find a name and a wish to grant. What say you?”

It’s not like she had anything to lose, so why not? “Sure thing. It’s a deal.”

After that, they set off. They had no idea where they were headed and even if they had, it wouldn’t have mattered since they didn’t know where they were to begin with, so they just traveled where their intuition led them.

It was unbearably uncomfortable at first, the girl found out, to have company. The star hadn’t seemed like much of a talker at first but it soon became apparent that it could talk for days at a time if something caught its fancy. And what things those were! Anything from colors to metaphysics, from the meaning of life to the purpose shoelaces. The flow of speech was incessant and it made her head pound. There were other things, too, like the way the star always wanted to know her opinion and how, begrudgingly, she, too, had to consider what it thought.

The star’s lack of worldly knowledge was troublesome, as well. There was one particular occasion when it had gotten into a long and, unbeknownst to it, highly offensive conversation with a giant cephalopod on the topic of commercial squid ink harvestation. The cephalopod, a highly industrious squid that worked for the Ministry of Mollusk Rights and had been happily married to an octopus for 20 years, did not take kindly to this. It had, its face positively livid - or as livid as a squid face could be, threatened to have them thrown in jail for treason. Needless to say, they

would not be welcome on that planet anytime soon. On another occasion, it had asked a newly formed string of DNA, quite seriously, what it wanted to be when it grew up. The string didn't answer, of course. It was a string of DNA, it couldn't talk.

All in all, it was all more trouble than it was worth and yet, after some time, the girl found she rather liked it. Though she would never admit it, the star's animated chatter had grown on her and its brightness no longer bothered her sleep. Perhaps, somewhere deep down, she even looked forward to their little adventures, caused by the star's lack of social skills, and perhaps she even found its awkwardness a tiny bit endearing.

And maybe, just maybe, the star liked her a tiny bit, too.

There came a day when, many light years after they had set upon their journey together, the two came across a certain place in time and space and decided to rest there for the night. To their surprise, they soon realized something quite odd. It was the very place where they had first met.

Another realization followed. They had spent so much time together, traveled so far and so wide, lived through so many adventures and enjoyed quiet nights, that they had long since forgotten about the journey's objective. What was it that they had wanted, so many years ago? It seemed strange, thinking back to those days, and realizing how little those dreams meant to them now.

And as they sat there, for do not be fooled, one can sit around a campfire even in space, if one so desires, thinking of the past and of each other, they clasped each other's hands and held on very, very tight. They looked into each other's eyes, their surrounding but a blur of mist and light, dreams forgotten and forged, and they knew.

They knew that nothing else really mattered. Because she was the star's. Because the star was her's. Because they belonged to each other - belonged together. And the world spun around them, all lights and goosebumps, all dazzling drunkenness and sparkling eyes, as if they were children on a merry-go-round for the first time, so exhilarating and so very, very fast. Their cheeks stung and their fingers were numb. Their hair whipped around their face and their chests were so full of a feeling, they felt like they were about to burst. It was like a star combusting, or maybe being born, and they knew.

That she didn't need to wish upon a star. That she didn't need her smile. That the star didn't need a name.

The star was her wish and its name -? Its name was her smile.