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Waiting On A Wishing Star

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Waiting On A Wishing Star

**Abstract**
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Let's go look for a wishing star!" She says, amber eyes lit up like the prophetic rogue that she wants to find.

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LANDERS: WAITING ON A WISHING STAR

Saturday, August 31st

"Let's go look for a wishing star!" She says, amber eyes lit up like the prophetic rogue
that she wants to find.

"Ok"" Hesitancy fills my voice. I don't know what a wishing star is.
"You do know what a wishing star is, don't you?" She says, apparently reading my mind.

"Not really"
"Not really? Is that a 'no'?" She asks, and raises an eyebrow the same way she does
every time that I say or do something truly ignorant.

"Yeah. That's a 'no.'"
I really don't care what a wishing star is. I'd go watch the grass grow with her if she
asked me to; if that would make her happy; if that would make her want to be with me.

"You're hopeless. Here, I'll show you." She grabs my hand, dragging me down the
stairs and out her front door. We both lay down on the driveway, side by side; hands intertwined.

"Ok" She says "What you do is ask the stars a 'yes or no' question. If you see a
wishing star, the answer is 'yes'. Get it?"

"A wishing star?"
"A comet!"
"Ohhh Ok" More hesitancy. I feel like an idiot, but that's ok. I'm willing to feel
like an idiot if that would make her happy.

"Ok" She says, "Ask a question."

"Ummm" I keep my mouth shut and mull for a moment. I know what I want to ask,
but I don't know how to ask it. And I think I'm scared that I'll either get a no or a yes or
that I'll actually believe what the stars tell me.

"You can't think of a question?" She asks, talking to me like the idiot that I
really am. "Just start with something easy."

"Why don't you start?" I ask "That way, I can think of a question while we're waiting
for your answer."

"Ok, fine." She says; hesitates less than a moment, then asks "Should I look into my
family lineage more? Should I try to find my step-brothers and sisters?" I look at her and, as if
to clarify to either me or to the stars, she elaborates. "My father's other children that I've never
met before." I nod. That's a good question.

Less than a minute later, we see something streak across the sky. A glimpse of hope. A
frozen opportunity. I utter an expletive in my head, because I still haven't thought of a question
to ask.

"Yay!" Mandy says 'yay' a lot when she's happy. "Ok. Your question"

"Ummm" I remain silent for a minute or so. All the questions that I want to ask
would sound so stupid. Why am I here? Do I have a pre-destined purpose on this planet? Am I
important? Do Mandy and I belong together? She breaks the silence.

"I'm freezing." She says. I take off my treasured navy hoodie and hold it out to her.
Now I'm going to freeze, but I'd gladly go through low-tech cryogenics if that would make her
happy.

"Thanks." She says, "You still haven't asked a question."

"I know Ummm"
"'Ummm ' is not a question."
"Ok, I've got one." I say and take a deep breath as if I'm about to dive into the ocean. "Is life going to get any easier?" We lay there for a minute. A few more; I fidget. "I guess that's a 'no,' huh?"
"Guess so." She says.
"Well that sucks..." Apparently that's funny. Mandy laughs, and I laugh in agreement. She sighs and puts her head on my shoulder.
"We really make a great couple." She says. My heart skips a beat or two, and then rushes to catch up. I wasn't aware that she considered us a 'couple,' but I'm sure as hell glad that she does.
"Yeah." I agree.
"I mean I still have feelings for John, but I think we would go really well together." I hate it when she brings up his name, but by now, I've learned to grit my teeth and take it like a man.
"Yeah." I reply "Well, I think we're really good for each other, too. But if you still have feelings for John, I guess you should probably see what's going on with that." A few moments of silence and, finally, she nods.
"I really want to be with you. But not yet. I don't know I'm really confused right now. You caught me at a very difficult time in my life."
"Take your time, Mandy." I say, "All I've got is time."
"Ok " she says "I'm going to ask another question."
"Alright." That's all I can say. She looks up to the sky and asks her question. "Should I abandon John and pursue this relationship with Dave?" Within a few seconds, another comet crosses the sky, a bold and definitive 'YES!' A smile crosses my face.
"Sweet " I say. That sums up everything that I'm thinking.
"Wow." She says, "That was a quick response."
"Yeah." "Okay You get one more question." I'm still scared as hell of asking the question that I really wanted to ask, but, after a minute of silence, I finally get the guts to say it. My eyes drop to the ground, inspecting one of the many cracks in Mandy's driveway.
"Well I was just wondering if we are meant to be together!" Before I can finish, she lets out one of those squeals that she vocalizes every time she is really happy. I look over at her and see that she is glowing.
"Holy shit, did you see that?!?" She exclaims, "It was huge! The wishing star went across the sky before you could even finish your question!"
"Wow I don't know what to say. "Rock on."
We lay there in silence, both of us happier than either had been in quite some time. Ten minutes passed in silence, and we just held each other. I had almost fallen asleep when she broke it with a whisper.
"I have to go in now. It's time for me to go to bed."
"K That's probably a good idea. I'm tired, too." "G'Night, Dave." She stretches out her arms and we hold each other. "Call me tomorrow, ok?"
"Sure." I say. We rock each other to the point of hypnotism. Neither of us wants to let go, but a few minutes later, we do. We hold hands for another minute, and then tear ourselves away from each other. It's not easy to do.
"Good night, Mandy. I'll talk to you tomorrow, ok?"
"Ok." She says "Good night." She crawls under the half-open garage door and hits the button to close it. I walk backwards to my car and open the door with a creak. A few seconds later, I'm driving home with a smile."

_Friday, September 20th_

"You don't know who Humphrey Bogart is?!!" Mandy exclaims in shocked bewilderment.

"Well " I defend myself "I've heard of him, but I've never seen any of his movies."

"I can't believe that! And you call yourself a movie lover?"

"Ummm We'll " Why is she yelling at me about Humphrey Bogart? "I like movies, but I never actually claimed to be a movie expert."

"But still " she trails off and just shakes her head. She looks down, breaking eye contact for the first time in five minutes. I'm glad that she does.

The past few weeks had been great between the two of us. We've had a few great nights out, a few great nights in, and some great conversations. Things were looking better than they ever had between us, but she's in a bad mood tonight. She and her mother had another fight earlier today. Unfortunately, I had already been too much of a wimp to ask her out several times, and I had convinced myself earlier that it was now or never. Tonight was the night that I would lose my single-ness. I'm too stubborn for my own good Mandy and I sit on her bed in silence for a few minutes.

"Hey, Mandy?" I ask.

"Yeah?"

"Ummm I have something I want to ask you, but I'm really, really nervous."

"What?"

"Well " I said "I wanted to ask you out tonight." She doesn't say anything, so I elaborate. "I mean, I think we're great together, and I really just want to be with you. You know? I care about you a lot."

"What?"

"This is me attempting to ask you out in my own weird way." Maybe she didn't get it the first time.

"Dave " she says, "I don't know " My proverbial jaw drops to the ground.

"Wow " I say, "That's not exactly the answer I was hoping for, but ok."

"Well what were you expecting?"

"Ummm We'll Amanda talked to me And told me that you told her you wanted me to ask you out. And Greg told me about your conversation about the same thing. I just kind of figured that since you told both your best friend and my best friend that you wanted to go out with me That you'd probably say 'yes.'"

"Greg told you what I said?!!?"

"Well, yeah. He's my best friend. It's his job to, isn't it?" We sit in silence once again.

"Hey " I say, "Can we go outside? It's a little warm in here."

"Yeah, sure." She says. We go downstairs and out the door, silent. Each of us preparing ourselves for anything.

"Wow. It got cold out here." She says. I nod, take off my treasured grey hoodie, and hand it over. "Thanks." She says.

"Yeah. No problem." We sit down on the driveway, the same driveway that gave me my first glimpse into a false future. She lays down, putting her head in my lap, and looks up at the stars.

"I wish things weren't so difficult." She says.

"I know exactly what you mean " An elongated moment of silence fills the air. I fight
to keep myself from shaking. It really is cold.
   "I'm going to ask again," she mutters.
   "Huh?"
   "Oh. Did I say that out loud? I just asked the stars if I should be with you, or if I should stay single."
   "This doesn't really seem like something you should leave up to the stars," I say.
   "I always ask the stars for help when I don't know what to do."
   "Oh, ok." More silence, but I don't mind. Silence can be cleansing sometimes.
   "Oh poop!" She says. I laugh. That sounds like something my mom would say.
   "What's the 'Oh poop' about?" I ask.
   "I just saw one," she says. "Right after I asked if I should stay single."
   "O h h h" That is an 'Oh poop' situation." I'm not laughing any more, and I really don't know what to say to show her that, sometimes, the stars can lie. Even wishing stars
   "I'm going to try again." She says, "Should I stay single?"
   Nothing.
   "Ok. Should I do what I want to or what I should do?"
   Nothing.
   "Maybe I need to be more specific." She says, "Should I go out with Dave?"
   A comet streaks across the sky after a moment of nothingness. My eyes are beginning to droop. I can feel the bags getting baggier. And Mandy squeaks.
   "Best two out of three, ok?"
   "Sure." I say.
   "Ok. Last question. Should I stay single or go out with Dave? If the wishing star goes "up," I go out with you. If it is going "down," I stay single." I don't know what to say. Plus, I'm starting to get really tired, so I keep my trap shut. Nothing crosses the sky; five minutes pass in silence.
   "Don't leave this up to me. Please," she says, desperation beginning to fill her voice. I look over at her. Desperation is filling her eyes, too. She sits up, and a tear drops from her eye. She sniffles and wipes her nose on my hoodie, but I don't mind. I'd be happy to let her use my most treasured possession as a snot-rag if that would make her happy. I reach over and wipe the tear away with my thumb.
   "Hey. It's ok, Mandy." She collapses into me and we hold each other. "Take your time, alright? I mean I really do want to be with you, but I don't need an answer tonight."
   "But still... I want to say yes." She says, "I just don't know if I can."
   "It's alright." I say. We rock for a while and, this time, it is I who breaks the silence.
   "Hey. It's three in the morning. I better take off."
   "Dave?"
   "Yeah?"
   "I'll come up with an answer soon, ok? And I'm going to come up with the answer that's best for both of us, ok?"
   "Ok." I say, "I really have to go."
   "Alright."

We hold each other for a while longer, exchange our final kiss, and part ways. As a man, I'm not allowed to look back, but I do; all I see is Mandy, fading into the distance; fate foretold by the stars. I drop my head and go home.