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*To my first crush,*

*To Wherever You Are, I Loved You.*

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90210.

Unbelievable. In utter denial, I *don't* have a crush on Astrid Starr. I just can't get her out of my head, my heart, and or my eyes. I can't define this feeling as more than a beating heart bleeding. A double-edged sword metaphor. If your heart doesn't beat, you lay six feet under cold, but, if your heart keeps beating, it'll keep bleeding, filling your whole body with blood that would slowly kill you on the inside. No matter how it kills you, *it ends the same*. That is what my crushing crush is on Astrid Starr.

It is rather funny thinking about this metaphor. You wouldn't consider crushing to be the same as bleeding. At least, I couldn't figure that out until I met her.

We both live on the same street in front of each other. It is harder to ignore than to glance in each other's direction. One instance, I could be in the white windowsill reading a book by the rainy window to see she is looking out into the rain, staring gazing at the gray clouds with a heavy sigh. Weirdly, a smile would caress my lip.

There wasn't anyone else in this world that could move my heart but her, then again, she moves everyone's heart. Not in the way my heart bumps and thumps with an ache and break but rather in a soothing way. Her presence is calming and she can make anyone fuse with her radiant shine like when spring is blooming for the first time, it just fills you with life. Although, she gets sick when there is a change in season.

It will be the death of me when I hear she succumbs to sickness even if it turns out to be a fever or a cold or the sniffles. Imagine having chills all over your body that gave you frights or

shivers. Even a better depiction is just growing pale. A gulp later would send me a rollercoaster of thoughts trying to surface from my mind to my quivering lip. When they do come out, *nothing happens*. At this point, classmates would wonder why my mouth has a void in it. I couldn't handle placing my heart on my sleeves. It would ruin my sweater first of all and at the moment, the best I could do was to check on her when she was sick.

Checking on her when she is sick is a simple and easy task or so I thought. From the school to her house with a light jog. I could've just walked but something in my stomach was twisting, it might've been the guilt of not checking on her sooner. The scenery was nice. Passing a few prospering businesses, jumping over a creek, and completing my jog with a stop at her door. A gulp later and butterflies started to fly around in my stomach. I was surprised that they can fly when it feels like my stomach is still twisting. Raising my hand slightly, I knock on the red door lightly.

I wait patiently tugging on my gray sweater. Looking at myself now, I frown slightly. The gray sweater has a bronze symbol on my left chest with coal and a small creek running in front of it. My sweater has a white undershirt tuck out of my black dress pants and shoes with white running socks. I gave a light under-the-breath chuckle. This was the uniform for Coal Creek High. I didn't want to remind her that she missed school.

Too late.

The red door opened slowly to a caregiver, Astrid's mother. She was fairly young and the older version of her daughter. I was extremely embarrassed thinking it was Astrid for a moment. Her skin is light brown with dark brown eyes, the same as my hair that was sadly oily from

being, well, *just hair*. She leaned on the doorframe glancing at me with her eyes up and down in a rather judgemental way.

“Oh, November,” She smiled. “I didn’t recognize you for a moment.” She mentioned. I don’t recognize myself much lately either.

“It might be the fact you are wearing those colorless school clothes.” She continued with a smile.

I couldn’t speak for the life of me. Stomach twisting, butterflies rushing out of my mouth either to escape for their lives or to carry the words I would jumble and stumble up later, it didn’t matter.

“I wouldn’t worry about it. Astrid would love to see a friend.” Astrid’s mother leaned off of the doorframe and walked inside.

I took a deep breath. A glance down and I was standing on their green welcoming door carpet even in this, I could see little black dots picturing them as space itself. Astrid and her mother shared many similarities, not just beauty and smarts but their love for the stars.

I glance up as I exhale with a step inside. Closing the door behind me, the house felt quiet and still. Only the creaking footsteps of older Astrid walked through the house. I decided to place my gray backpack onto the ground near the door if I needed a quick escape if I stated anything wrong.

When I walked in, the stairs were just before me and I took my chances like many others and walked up the stairs. I have been in this household more often than I could remember like a habit, my body knew where Astrid was. However, this time was different. This time my whole body was feeling all kinds of chills running up and down my skin. I couldn’t tell if it was the

temperature in the house or the rush of guilt washing over me. My body shivered with each step I took and my neck started to strain, I felt like I was going to cry.

I rub my eyes when I reach the top of the steps. I glanced to my left and right, I could see on my left splatters of various bright colors singing to me with stars shooting across the colors. This was the only door in the whole household that had such youthful colors.

I walked over to the door and placed my hand on the rustic knob and turned it slowly. Light shined bright through the window onto the gray carpet floor. I could see through the window, my house, my window on the other side. This made me smile.

My gaze was broken, interrupted with a cough so hard it could blow down one of the three little pig's houses. My head turns to her, the Astrid Star. She was on a red ladder painting her room. The old paintbrush is in her left hand and the iron bucket stood at the top of the ladder. She was modest when she coughed into her arm.

As she coughs, I could see her artwork behind the ladder, through her, it brought wonders of the world to life. Soon my shivers disappear, my arms lock to my sides, and she turns her head to gently look at me, at my eyes with a soft smile. This is Astrid Starr, the only star bright enough for the world.

“Hold on, let me-” She trails off climbing down the steps of the ladder. She grabs the bucket on the way down. I awkwardly walk over to Astrid to help her down. My arms carefully reach themselves in front of her stomach and her back. They weren't touching, they were hovering around her like a hula hoop. She must've found it quite adorable.

“Thanks,” she responds with a giggle and a hop from the final step onto the ground. She sets down the paint bucket and starts to stretch.

I gulp seeing her stretch like that. From her looks to her smarts, she was the same as her mother instead of their hair-style and height. The girl I was under a spell for has short hair reaching just to her chin. Astrid is the same height as I am while her mother is just taller by one to three inches.

Astrid wore a white t-shirt with many different bright color splatters and jean shorts with a black belt around her waist. The t-shirt was longer than her perfect finesse and her shorts were just above her knees. What I saw, she would get in trouble with the school for her lack of clothing. My entire focus was on her and nothing else. The way she dresses at home describes her perfectly.

Adventurous and free.

I need to get my mind off of this, off of her. My eyes start to dart around the room for *anything* I could distract my gaze. My eyes landed on the ladder impeding the picture from its full glory. My hands curled into a fist to show confidence and walked over to the object. I could hear a cough from behind me, I felt her wondrous eyes staring at me, wondering what'll happen next. I wonder about what I should do next, where she wants me to put it, and how to put it but most of all, I wonder, what did she think?

The fold of the ladder closes and carries off to the side. A look back and she is looking at the painting on the wall, she was mesmerized by the painting. My curiosity peak was at its limit now. A couple of steps and stood right by her. I couldn't believe my eyes.

The whole universe is calling out for me and it seems to grab Astrid's attention as well. Stars were blowing out of the wall, enriching me with priceless sights. The stars shine through their bursts of limitless potentials. Falling stars, shooting stars, and stars shining brighter than

ever fill every inch of her wall. I felt I was in her world, in her galaxy. Pictures are worth a thousand words but I was speechless. My throat is the void of the galaxy, the black hole hoping to use something, someone's own words, and eat it up. The vivid image of her world stretches only to the bare white walls surrounding the room. I could see her vision, she was going to surround herself with the stars.

*"I know right."* She whispers, noticing my eyes trailing the cosmos. Her body moves closer to mine. I swore, we were at arm's length before.

I shook my head in agreement. My face starts to turn a light shade of pink. I could feel my heart beat faster than anything else in life. I could feel her presence smothering me, pressing against me, making my heart want to jump out of my chest and give her flowers. I couldn't stop my thoughts or my heart from caring for her. I couldn't stop her from holding my mind and heart hostage, capturing my eyes, and twisting my tongue.

Everything was swirling around. From her dreams to her ideas, it would be a crime to mistake her identity in this world. The smell of paint flourishing the room, the sights of the stars and Astrid fuel my eyes with wonders, my mind running dead ends in a maze, and finally, my heart. My heart felt like it was going to burst.

She coughs.

My mind reels out of existence and back into reality. I glance to see Astrid covering her mouth with her elbow. I haven't asked her about how sick she was or what kind of sickness she has.

I didn't feel like talking.

“Excuse me.” Astrid sparkles in my eyes again when she apologizes for her cough. It felt like she apologized about her and how she looks. We were at arm’s length again.

I didn’t respond but weirdly, my lip had a curve in it when she apologized. This made her regain the confidence that I never thought she lost. At least, I didn’t have to say anything. My tongue was twisting around in the void, it would be reasonable to call it *tongue-tied*.

After staring at a wall for a few minutes and laying out school work for Astrid, I wave goodbye to Starr. My steps were in a hurry, I didn’t want to be there any longer because I feel like I’ll swallow my tongue in the void of lost words. I grab my backpack with the thought, *I am out of my mind, right?*

I step outside and a gush of wind flush over and around me. I call it, “*Wind of Love*”. I look back and Astrid is at the top of the stairs looking down at me, she seems to notice my glance, and a faint pink blush is befallen her making her go back to the starry room.

The red door closes on me.

The door closing felt abrupt or that I forgot my hand was on the knob. I shook my hand loose from the knob and I started to wobble from her doorstep to the sidewalk. I took a deep breath and exhaled the love out of me. I figure that this moment we shared between each other, the embracing of her stars, was just a weird feeling and nothing more or I hope to confess myself to believe that theory later.

I simply walked back home into my room.

My room was different from Astrid’s spectacular living space. The room is boring while hers is a theater of stars dancing around the midnight sky. My room is still boring while hers is the star of the show singing a cheerful song about love. Mine couldn’t house more than four



people while her room could house an audience of adequate proportions! She is the ring mistress and I am the mime in a circus. Everything boils down to, I have a plain room.

I swing my backpack next to the old wooden desk by the windowsill. I felt tired to the point that I didn't bother changing clothes. I took a seat at the desk and pulled out all of my school work to finish for tomorrow. I press a switch and a yellow light flickers from the lamp. Looking at the lamp, it seems so faint but at the same time, it seems so important to me. I couldn't recall the last time I swapped it out. It was distracting and disheartening for me, it would be for anyone in my shoes. My hand guides itself towards the pull switch once again and with a quick session, the light turns itself off before I have the chance to disarm it.

Everything went dark but the moonlight cast through the window gave me enough visibility to finish the progress of my work. The sound of a passing car was heard, the still air coasting and coaxing people to drift off to slumber but the restlessness of my left hand swiftly scribbled on. My hand starts to trail off of the assignment and I couldn't help myself but blink a couple of times and yawn looking away. When the paper came back into focus, it felt strange, all of the letters started to take the shape of a heart. I dropped the pencil and rub my eyes to look at the heart again and to my realization, it was gone. I must be seeing things. This was too much for me.

Without another conscience talking down to me, I felt the need to fall victim to sleep. With a push out and a push on the desk, I stand before the windowsill looking across to the Starr household. There is a green light helping Astrid read through the night. She seems so peaceful and quiet, that the world wasn't a bother to her but rather the very thing that excites her. The world itself would freeze with each step or breath she took to suffice her existence, her reality in

the world. She holds a special place in people's hearts and to see her distraught would cause the world to turn into turmoil. For someone like her, she shouldn't hold that much expectation from the world, but she does and does it with a flawless effort. I could see her cough from time to time, even then, it still didn't phase her. The world was truly in her grasp but in the pitfall of my stomach, this tangle of messy feelings I hold starts to growl and grumble in unison. The feelings describe a certain uncertainty or perhaps it is a long night that I tore through.

I had to take a moment to look away with my thoughts describing the world for Astrid but when I looked back to the window, I couldn't see her anymore, she must've gone to bed but kept her green light on or she walked away. It didn't matter either way because I've spent too much time contemplating how the world is and how she affects it. A habit of me expecting too much from my thoughts and her.

With that, I slumber over to my cozy bed and the light snore ensues shortly after. My body was out of energy and my voice felt like it was going to crack. Face first into the pillow is all it takes for me to fall into a deep sleep-*or*-so I thought. I couldn't stop thinking about her. How she could throw all of my problems away and make the world a brighter place. I could feel butterflies escaping me again, escaping from the twist and turns of my stomach. The butterflies were words that form into sentences such as, "*I love you*" and "*Be my world*".

My hands crawl over my face with the pillow in tow to stop those words from escaping me ever again. After my thoughts quelled, everything went black.

I was fast asleep for now.

*Even the sky  
is falling.*