

## A wish.

If I wanted to, I could stand up and grab the sword off Orion's belt; but I'm just fine right here for now. I think I'm still in denial – I don't have a history of being delusional, but everything up here is just so much larger than life, and the scale is what's hard to believe. I close my eyes, and take another slow, deep breath. The tranquil mountain air is clean and crisp, with a homey hint of hardwood smoke, probably coming from a burn pile miles away. It is almost silent but for a soft breeze gently rustling through the oak trees' leaves. I hesitantly open one eye, then cautiously open the other, and sure enough, everything is still here. The Milky Way winds a trail of stars out into the horizon, and I can only imagine how Dorothy felt looking down the Yellow Brick Road for the first time. I've been picking out bright stars and connecting the dots to make constellations, filled with the same curiosity and wonder that must have been with man since the beginning of time. A meteor, the third one tonight, flashes across the sky. As kids, we were always told to make a wish if we saw a shooting star, and it's second nature to me now (I blame Disney), but there is nothing in particular rolling off the tip of my tongue. I'll think about it; I wonder if there is a time limit on these things anyway.

There's a long story behind how I ended up on top of the barn at 1:30 in the morning. Okay, it isn't that long – I climbed up here because I wanted to get a better view of the sky, and the roof is taller than most of the trees around here. Considering that shingles aren't exactly designed for sitting on, I am remarkably comfortable because I've got my old leather welding jacket which, despite its pitted scorch marks and countless battle scars, makes for a surprisingly good pillow. The whole rest of the world is

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asleep, so it is just me and the stars. Come to think of it, I'm pretty sure this is just about as good as it gets, and I don't think there is anywhere else I'd rather be.

I hate to think that this will be all over in a few hours. I guess I could wish that it'd never end, but I figure *that* would be a sure way to waste a wish. I'm willing to bet that even if a well thought out wish was made on every single star tonight, that'd only slow the sun down for an hour, or two at most. Nope, I decided, there will have to be a tomorrow; after all, I still have to till the last half of the cornfield.

Now this wouldn't normally take more than four hours, except that the tiller is broken. It wasn't entirely my fault, see, these giant bluestone rocks come up out of nowhere, and will throw themselves mercilessly into various particularly important spinney bits on the tractor when you're not looking. It hard to say what's wrong exactly, I'd guess that a couple of teeth snapped off, but there wasn't enough twilight left to get a good look before the sun went down. Hopefully, the shear bolt did its job, then eighty nine cents and a quick jaunt over to the Kubota dealer will be enough to get up and running again. One can always hope, eh? More likely, there will be welding involved, which roughly translates to "lying down underneath a rusty, thirty year old tractor that's leaking hydraulic fluid, getting showered in globs of dirt, sprayed with shards of red hot metal and razor sharp chips of slag, lying in a pool of burnt gear oil, all while enveloped in a cloud of noxious, toxic, fumes." Actually, I don't particularly mind any of that - and as long two or three teeth were the extent of the damage, I'll be alright. Now if something in the gear box is busted, that's a whole 'nother story...

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Wait just one second. I caught myself - what did it matter anyway? I am all for hard work, planning, and responsibility, but there is nothing I can do about it now; and there is also something to be said for taking things one day at a time, and not burning yourself out. I look back up, trying to stop my thoughts from spinning round in circles, and refocus into deep black night sky. Something just off to the left of Venus catches my wandering gaze - a dark patch, unusual only because it's alone, with a twinkling light dead in the center. As I'm wondering what it is, maybe a satellite, quasar, or just air pollution, a faded melody floats in on the country air. Almost as if there's an old scratchy thirty-three-and-a-third playing, the chorus of an old Chris LeDoux song softly drifts back to me. He said:

"Sit tall in the saddle, Hold your head up high  
Keep your eyes fixed where the trail meets the sky  
Live like you ain't afraid to die  
And don't be scared, just enjoy your ride."

I'm pretty sure I get it now, or I've got a pretty good idea anyway. Problems like world peace, the cure for cancer, and getting the Colts back to the Superbowl aren't going to be solved over night. It is way too easy to get caught in the future; you do the best you can, but there is only so much that can get done today. When it comes down to it, it's not where you're going that's important, it's how you get there. So there really isn't anything to wish for after all, because I already have it.

I wish that I'll remember tonight forever.

Epilogue.

[three months later]

Summer flew by – my carefree days out on the farm came and went faster than I could hold on to. September turned warm summer nights into nippy winds and shivers, driving around the tractor to not driving much of anywhere in rush hour gridlock, and beautiful rolling countryside into an endless maze of stoplights and blacktop. I guess I've changed a lot, too, maybe even more than I'd care to admit. Now that schools started, I had to trade in my boots and hat for a shirt and tie, and give up hours of front porch sitting for make room for a busy schedule. It's all okay by me – after all, this is my home, and has been my whole life. Nothing this year in Vienna is too different from last, except maybe my perspective.

I pause for a second to collect my thoughts as I get out of the car. It sure has been a hell of a week, I don't think I could even tell you why, it's all just such a blur. There is a nip to the air, and I can see my breath condensate in the chilly air. Looking up, I can barely see a flickering Orion some millions and millions of long, cold miles away, fading in and out against a grungy backlight suburban sky. When I close my eyes, though, he is silhouetted just as bright now as on that magical summer night. One thing has stayed the same though: Tonight, I, for one, am going to enjoy the journey.