

## Trampoline Conversations

As a child, the night sky, its stars, in tangled constellations, was not a wonder to me, nor was the moon. The sky was a constant. I knew it would be there every night; give it an hour or so, and the expanse would be full of silvery dots.

Maddie did not know the night sky, or at least not like I did. Maddie, with her horoscopes and zodiac charts. Maddie, with her confusing conglomeration of religions, of Jesus and horoscopes and prophecy and luck. She could name every constellation, every moon cycle. She could tell you more about the night sky than I could about myself; it made sense to her.

The first time I saw Maddie after her parents' divorce, we spent the night on her grandma's trampoline in Boise. She'd moved there, for the time being. Her mom and sister stayed there too. Dominic, her mom's friend, was there a lot. She told me about it as we laid on our backs and stared up at open sky, frozen solid in mid-October.

"I miss the stars," she said. "The stars in Boise aren't as bright."

I nodded. I was more focused on the hairs on my arms standing stick-straight than the expanse of black above us. She didn't notice the numbness of her skin in the midst of autumn night, I didn't notice the patterns of the constellations or where Mars sat in the sky.

"My mom's a Scorpio," Maddie said as she opened her eyes.

"That's nice." I think my mom was a Scorpio, too.

"Her horoscope said she'd find great fortune."

"Did she win the lottery?"

"No, but she got rid of my dad."

My arms were dead. The trampoline beneath me was cold, air came up to my back from the miniscule holes carpeting it. The stars stayed stars.

"Maybe that's like winning the lottery." Maddie closed her eyes.

"Yeah, maybe," I said.

We stayed quiet after that. Her eyes stayed shut, but she didn't sleep. I tried to see the stars through her eyes. Squinting, I still couldn't connect Orion's Belt or find out where Aries was in the sky and how it correlated to how my life would turn out - fortune and mystical foretelling and all that. We were both silent for a while, or at least the cold made it seem like a while.

"Do you really think the stars can predict the future?" I asked her.

Maddie didn't respond for a second.

"I mean," I continued, "aren't they just, like, light?"

"I dunno." Maddie opened her eyes. "My mom says that the stars are parts of Jesus, just in the sky."

“Huh.” I did not know what to say. My mom would never say that. She sometimes called Maddie’s mom ‘out there,’ and maybe this is what she meant. Maybe that’s what being a Scorpio was - out there. My mom would then not be a Scorpio. She was not a believer in Jesus-stars.

“You think that’s weird.”

“No,” I lied, “I dunno. I don’t really look at the stars.”

“You’re missing out.”

“Yeah,” I took a deep breath in. “Yeah, maybe I am.”

My arms were still freezing.