

A MILLION STARS

written by

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Peter gazes out the window right next to the head of his bed. There's a view of the city; cars DRIVING down the street, people walking on the side walks, buildings opposite of Peter's; all with their lights on.

WE FOCUS on the sky which is extremely light polluted with not a star to be seen besides the moon.

Peter crawls out of his bed and heads towards his closet. He opens the door and pulls out a step stool from the bottom of the closet, which he hops on so he can reach a low ledge that is above his hanging clothes.

Peter raises to his tiptoes to retrieve a mason jar that is filled halfway with intricate glow in the dark stars.

Peter heads back into his bed with the jar, going beneath the covers and watching the stars glow. He shakes the jar, a tiny notecard folded up inside the jar, bouncing around.

Peter twists off the lid and shoves his hand in the jar, retrieving the notecard and unraveling it.

The card says "TO PETER. YOUR OWN GALAXY. -LOVE DAD." Peter folds up the note once more and puts it in the breast pocket of his PJs, closing the jar once more and holding it close to him.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Peter and Mother are in the quaint kitchen. Peter sits in front of a bowl of sugary cereal at the kitchen table. He is dressed in nice school clothing, a kids backpack sitting on the chair next to him.

He has a phone that he is watching a video on. Mother is dressed in a pantsuit, her briefcase laying on the table.

Mother is making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, the ingredients splayed about the kitchen counter. As she finishes the sandwich she puts it in Peter's lunch box.

PETER

(after eating a spoonful)

Mommy, why can't we go see the stars?

MOTHER

We're busy, baby.

PETER

But it's Friday.

MOTHER

And you still have school, and I still have work. Another time.

PETER

(impatiently)

I can't wait. Daddy would have taken me.

MOTHER

(sternly, sighing)

Don't make me tell you again. Did you pack up your homework?

PETER

No. I don't know where it is.

MOTHER

Well where did you do it?

PETER

(sassily)

You helped me with it, *remember?*

MOTHER

Have you checked my room? Hurry up, we're gonna be late. And make sure you turn off your phone, I don't want Mrs. Rowan calling me again about it going off during class.

Peter stands from the table and heads down the hallway to Mother's room.

INT. MOTHER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mother's bedroom is the biggest bedroom with a queen size bed and a luxurious comforter. It is made neatly, everything in the room clean and organized.

Peter's homework is on a bedside table. He looks around before opening up the top drawer of Mother's bedside table. Inside is small memorabilia of Mother's life including photographs, letters, movie stubs, a tie, etc.

Peter fishes through the drawer and pulls out an old train ticket, closing the drawer and heading back to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Peter grabs his school bag and his mother hands him his lunch box. He unzips his bag and puts in the box, his homework and the ticket.

WE SEE the jar of stars in his school bag as he zips it back up.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. DAY.

Peter sits alone in the corner of the playground. He is trying to hide his phone from the LUNCH MONITORS. The jar of stars and the train ticket are laid out in front of him.

Kids LAUGH and run around the pristine playground. Peter is searching up train times.

The ticket before him says "From: New York City To: Elizabethtown, PA," which he has inputted into the search bar. He picks out a time where the Amtrak leaves at 8:30 like on the ticket in front of him.

INT. NYC APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Peter, dressed in his PJs and a coat, has his school bag strapped to him. He is walking down the hallway from his room to the front door.

As he passes Mother's office WE SEE her TYPING away on the computer, immersed in work while TAKING a business call. Peter tiptoes to the front door and sneaks out.

EXT. NYC STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Peter exits his apartment and begins traveling down the street along with STRANGERS. He maps himself to Penn Station through Google Maps.

The sound of car HONKS and people TALKING grows loud while Peter examines the empty sky.

INT. PENN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Peter walks through Penn Station, holding the train ticket in his hand. He looks up at the changing signs above him and sees that the Amtrak to Elizabethtown is on track H, which is right before him. Peter begins running for the track, the time flashing 8:24.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT.

Peter gets on the train with a few others, the train itself being fairly empty. He goes deeper into the train, moving to an emptier train car.

He enters one of the first aisles and takes off his bag, sneaking under the seat. Peter curls up and hides, removing the jar of stars from his backpack for light.

After a moment a WOMAN, late 30's, snooty and tired, walks into the same car, going over to the seat that Peter is beneath and sits down.

Her foot BUMPS Peter's body and when she looks down she YELPS. The Woman stands from her seat.

WOMAN

(irritated)

What are you doing down there! You scared the living crap out of me.

Who's kid is this?

(grabbing him and taking him out from under the seat)

What's your name, son? I have half a mind to call the train attendant.

PETER

I-- I'm sorry, miss. Please don't get me in trouble.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

He's with me.

The Old Man sits a few rows behind them in the opposite side with a folded newspaper in his lap. He has a small cup of coffee and a bouquet of half dead and half alive flowers from the park sitting next to him.

He takes off his reading glasses and hangs them from his shirt. The train begins moving, scenery rapidly flying by from outside.

The Old Man pats the space next to him.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Come here, Peter. I'm sorry about my grandson. Won't happen again.

WOMAN

(bitter)

It better not. *Someone* needs to learn discipline.

OLD MAN
 (backhandedly, smiling)
 Ahh, yes. A few grandchildren of
 your own? Excuse us.

The Old Man goes back to reading his paper, putting his glasses back on and ignoring all retorts from the Woman.

Peter brings his stuff over to the seat next to the Old Man.

PETER
 (after a beat)
 Are you really my grandpa?

OLD MAN
 (snickering)
 Nope. But don't tell her that.

PETER
 Does that make you a stranger?

OLD MAN
 We've met before, don't you
 remember the park?

PETER
 Ohhhh, yeah.

OLD MAN
 I'm a friend of your mother's. She
 helped me a few years ago when
 times were tough... Which reminds
 me, where is she?

PETER
 She didn't come. She's busy.

OLD MAN
 So you're here alone?

PETER
 No! I'm with you. That's not alone.

OLD MAN
 (wagging a finger)
 And what if I wasn't here? Going
 off alone is very dangerous, Peter.

The Old Man rummages through the pockets of his over worn sweater and retrieves a blue flip phone. He scrolls through his contacts and pulls up Peter's Mother's phone number with a picture of her as the caller ID, showing Peter.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
See? Not strangers.

PETER
No! Please don't call her.

OLD MAN
I have to. Think about when she checks your room. She'll think you've gone for good.

PETER
But I'm coming back! I'm not leaving forever.

OLD MAN
Do you think she knows that? You can't just abandon the people who love you, Peter. It's not fair to them.

PETER
(lip quivering)
I'm sorry.

The Old Man dials the number, a ringing TONE is heard. Peter stares out of the train window with a sad expression. We do not hear the phone conversation.

When Peter looks back the Old Man has hung up and put the flip phone back into his pocket.

PETER (CONT'D)
Does this mean they stop the train?

OLD MAN
Afraid not. Your mom will be meeting us in Elizabethtown. The ride will give you some time to think.

PETER
(staying quiet, sadly)
I just wanted to see them.

OLD MAN
See what?

PETER
The stars. Like my dad use to.

OLD MAN
(clutching the flowers)
I'm sorry, Peter.

PETER
 (gazing at the flowers)
 Why are some of them dead?

OLD MAN
 (puzzled, then realizing
 he means the flowers)
 Oh. I pick one each day for a
 month. My wife-- she loved flowers.

PETER
 Where's your wife now?

OLD MAN
 She died. Your mom- she helped me
 out afterwards. Finding a burial
 site and what not.

PETER
 Oh. I'm sorry, mister... Do you
 still miss her?

OLD MAN
 Everyday. Y'know, Peter, sometimes
 we lose the people we love, and it
 hurts every time.
 (looking down and
 chuckling sadly)
 Also, it doesn't help that every
 flower I see reminds me of her.

Peter nods, looking down at the jar of stars.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
 What do you have there?

PETER
 My dad gave me this when I was a
 baby.

OLD MAN
 How old are you now?

PETER
 Nine.

OLD MAN
 (amused)
 Nine and already riding trains
 alone. Don't try and grow up too
 fast. When you're old like me
 you're going to wish you were young
 again.

The TRAIN ATTENDANT walks down the rows of seat ASKING for tickets. Peter looks behind him at the man.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
I don't suppose you have a ticket?

Peter goes into his bag and pulls out his old ticket, handing it over to the Old Man who CHUCKLES.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
2015, huh? Been a few years since then.

The Train Attendant comes up behind them and holds out his hand for the ticket.

TRAIN ATTENDANT
Tickets, please.

The Old Man reaches over and hands the Train Attendant his ticket. He then pulls out his wallet and takes out a credit card.

OLD MAN
I'll pay for his.

The Train Attendant nods and gets Peter a child's ticket from his device, leaving the ticket in the ticket clip.

PETER
Was it a lot of money?

The Old Man waved off his comment and returned the credit card back to his pocket.

OLD MAN
Don't worry about it. I never had grandchildren anyways, I've always needed someone to spoil.

PETER
Did you have kids?

OLD MAN
Nope.

PETER
Did you want to?

OLD MAN
Yes.

PETER
Well why didn't you?

OLD MAN
It's complicated. My wife and I
couldn't have any.

PETER
Did you love her?

OLD MAN
Yes. I did.

PETER
My parents use to be in love.

Old Man nods sadly, patting Peter on the head.

OLD MAN
Do you want me to take you to see
him?

PETER
Really?!

OLD MAN
Why not? We'll meet your mother
there, she can say her hellos too.

Peter yawns loudly and the Old Man CHUCKLES.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Past your bed time, isn't it? Take
a nap. I'll wake you when we get
there.

PETER
Okay.

Peter nods and curls up by the window seat, holding his jar
of stars tightly in his grip. The passing lights from outside
illuminate Peter's sleeping face.

Later, the Old Man shakes Peter awake. The sky is dark and
pristine outside. Peter stands and exits the train holding
The Old Mans hand.

SERIES OF SHOTS - OLD MAN AND PETER LEAVING THE TRAIN

- A) Old Man and Peter walk down from the train platform
towards a street with a church in the difference.
- B) They walk hand in hand to the church, heading past it.
- C) The two walk towards a graveyard that's besides the
church, Old Man calling Mother on the phone to tell her where
they are.

EXT. GRAVEYARD. NIGHT.

The two walk along a long path leading into the graveyard. It has both old and new tombstones that have moss beginning to grow on them. They venture through, winding up before a stone that says "LORELI RICHARDS 1951-2015."

The Old Man places down the flowers gently, pulling out an alive one. The Old Man walks Peter to a tombstone a few rows down and hands him the flower.

The stone before them says "Nicholas Peter Thompson 1989-2015." The Old Man pats Peter on the shoulder and goes back to his wives tombstone.

Peter places down his jar of stars and the flower before the stone. He sits down next to the grave, lying on his back. Peter pulls out the note from his PJ pocket and unfolds it, rereading it.

The note reads "TO PETER. YOUR OWN GALAXY. -LOVE DAD." but now a bit more crumpled. Peter's eyes begin welling with tears. He wipes one away with his shirt sleeve.

There are far off, muffled calls from his mother who we can assume is yelling his name.

Peter looks up, WE SEE a sky full of stars.

THE END.