

Starmen Live in Stars

by Henry Arroyo

Giant stars are beautiful, when you stand directly in front of them.
But touching them, is a whole other story.

Junior had touched one.

A strong burning sensation flew through his arm and down his spine. A feeling of electrocution and burning at the same time. The vacant, deserted, construction lot was only bright because of the light it gave off. The light from the shooting star- A fallen star. A star that, now, Junior was absolutely sure was real.

The sensation in his body had come to a stop. He held his hand to his chest, Looked around, checking to see if anyone else was here, witnessing the same thing he was.

It was late. Way past his curfew. Staying over his friends house just to finish that last game probably wasn't the smartest thing to do. His mom always told him that things aren't safe at night where they lived. She was probably right, but it didn't matter. He was brave. Strong. All of ten years old, and proud of it.

He unchained his bike and hopped off. He had decided to take a shortcut through the old abandoned construction site. That was where he found the star. Sticking out of the ground like a giant claw.

It wasn't shaped how the storybooks and illustrations had shown it. Honestly it was much creepier. It was round at its bottom, and as it rose to the top of its head, the part that stuck out of the dirt, it opened into a mouth where sharp darts stuck out. It looked scary... It was scary.

But it was so bright. So beautiful. He needed to get closer to it. And that's when he touched it, and felt that feeling of burning and shocking and alienness.

He walked around the star, looking at it, trying to analyze it. But it was no use. It was weird enough that it was here, there was no way in hell he was going to figure it out. At least not tonight.

He decided it was already too late. The star would be here tomorrow. It had to be. No one ever came here anymore. This place

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was always deserted and avoided. He walked over to his bike, picked it up, then rode off towards home. It didn't matter if he was yelled at tonight. He had found something amazing.

And amazing indeed it was, because it was enough to fill his mind during and until the next night, when he returned to the vacant spot.

When he got there however, he had noticed that the star, by some miracle, had moved.

Not a lot, but just enough for him to notice it. He moved closer. It wasn't that he was afraid, he was intrigued. He wanted to touch it even more. He felt as though something was in his mind telling him - no - commanding him, to come closer. A small whisper beneath his innermost thoughts. A shutter of a sound of beckoning.

He did as he was told.

He hopped off of his bike. It was a bit earlier today, so he had enough time to spend with the star before he had to head back home. He walked closer, then took a seat right next to it.

It was bigger than he was. Even standing up, it reached the height of his forehead, considering he wasn't that tall to begin with, it still surprised him. Where exactly did this come from? Another dimension? A magical place where this happens all the time? He didn't know.

What he did know though, was that this star belonged to him, and only him. No body would ever take it away from him. Finder keepers. That was the golden rule. You break it, and bad things would happen.

Again he touched the star...This time, nothing happened.

It was just a soft touch. As if he had just gotten a new born puppy, like this thing was meant to be his, he couldn't stop grazing it. He slid his hand around its teeth. He wanted to bring it home, to keep it by his side at all times. In his sight and in his mind forever.

He decided he would do exactly that. Or at least try to, which he did, but to no avail. It was way too heavy and he couldn't even lift it more than a half of a quarter of an inch off the ground. Way too

heavy to even push that same distance. The most heavy thing he had ever tried to move.

And yet it did move...

Only an inch and while he wasn't even around.

Who could have moved it though?

Nobody but him knew about it.

Then he heard a sound.

A small sound... Like the sound of a sneeze... Except it was...Tiny.

He heard it again.

He jumped a bit then turned to where the sound had risen from.

It was inside the star. Where the teeth were.

He bent his head slowly to the opening gap where the teeth hung, then looked in. Behind one of the teeth, leaning against it, as if it had been on a long, tiresome journey, and decided to take a sudden rest, a small thing stood.

It wasn't anything Junior had ever seen before. Not in school text books, or the television channels on history and science his mom liked to watch.

This thing was just...Weird.

It had no face. It was just a small piece rock. Actually, it had looked like a piece of the star had fallen off, and formed its own being. A being with two arms, and two legs, just like Junior himself had. Except all it had on its body, where the arms and legs stuck out, was a giant wide mouth that reveled, even when closed, long sharp dagger teeth. And just above it, two miniature black holes. Junior assumed that was its nose.

"Whoa." Junior said. A whisper that echoed through the inside of the star and made the little thing jump. It darted away.

"No, no! Don't run! I'm your friend!" He said. Then he stuck his hand out gently and made a bridge from stone to arm.

The small thing looked out a bit, still afraid. Slowly creeping out, it was soon walking among Juniors arm, climbing to the top of his head. And Junior was ecstatic. This was something that only ever happened never. And never was definitely happening to him now.

"I guess you can't talk can you?" He said to the thing. Still on the top of his head, smelling little strands of his hair.

"I think i'm gonna name you. I'll call you Starman."

While the little thing stood atop Junior's head, sniffing his hair, different strands at different lengths, the star lit up, bright and beautiful. Junior looked at it. His eyes wide open in amazement.

Then the Starman, opening its mouth wide open, revealing large sharp teeth accompanying more large teeth behind the others, bit down hard into Juniors head.

He screamed in pain, then swung his head hard, causing the Starman to fly off and hit the fallen star, falling down to the floor. Junior felt the top of his head. Bringing the tips of his fingers down, little dabbles of blood could be seen.

The Starman rose to its feet, then charged at Junior. Its tiny legs carrying it as fast as it could.

Junior retreated.

The thing was faster than it looked. It was hot on his heels, before Junior had decided to turn around and swing his foot in its direction, the tip of his sneaker sending the little critter flying into the mouth of the star.

Junior ran back to his bike.

He hopped on and began to peddle as fast as he could. Then as he pushed, a tire gave out, sending him flying along with the loud echo of the tire exploding through the air.

It was painful as he landed to his side, but nothing that Starman hadn't made him feel. His head still hurt. And now, his whole side arm had been hurting too.

He looked behind him, then he began to panic and kick himself to his feet.

Behind, a whole miniature army of Starmen were chasing him, all of them, long sharp teeth, some sharper than others, and others looking more intense than the other. They all lunged from inside the bright star, onto the floor. Prey in sight.

He ran as fast as he could. He could feel their presence gaining on him., catching up to his hasty retreat. It was like they feed off of

his fear. They wanted him badly. And that made him even more scared.

A few Starmen had leaped on to his calf, and gnawed a bit of his skin off. Blood dripped from where they had clawed into him, then they fell off to the floor, rolling along the dirt.

The gate that separated the construction site from the street on the other side was just a few inches away now. He ran faster, then he leaped as high as his legs could lift him. Kicking himself over, feeling the small Starmen falling off of his sneakers onto the dirt beneath, he made it over the fence.

He hit the floor hard on his side again, but he felt no pain. The adrenaline was too high, he was too scared.

He ran and ran until he was completely away from that feeling of fear, not looking back once the whole time. It wasn't until he was in front of his house, that he had decide to look back to see if the Starmen were still chasing him.

They weren't.

They must have stopped chasing him after he made it over the fence...

His mom had a lot of questions for him that night. And the only thing he could think of to say was, "I want to move."

* * *

It was years later, and the day of Junior's family move, that he had finally decided to go back to where the star had fallen in the construction site.

From that day forward, Junior had been traumatized. He couldn't sleep some nights, and others he would wake in loud fits, screaming, and shaking, crying, and yelling nonsensical words and sentences, most of which had to do with the word, 'Starmen'. Junior had just started growing facial hair, developing into a young man. Whether by luck, or magic, or just fate itself, that Junior's mother had gotten a job across the country, was not something any normal human being could know. All Junior knew was that in another year, he would be gone from this forsaken place. A dim memory in his mind, soon to be erased forever.

Junior had gone the same way he had remembered going three years ago. He could never forget. He hopped over the fence. The same fence he had hopped over to escape the Starmen all those years back. Then he walked those few feet to where the star had been.

The only thing left in its place, was his old bicycle. Very much destroyed, but it was definitely his bike. He stepped closer. At his feet, was the trickster handlebar. Hollow on the inside, he could stick about two fingers inside its circular opening. He stuffed the handlebar in his pack, then left the site.

"So, it did happen." He said to himself.

He was on his way back to his house when he decided to take the handle bar from his bike out from his pack again. As he walked, as if not even noticing or feeling like he had any clue what he was doing, he let go of the handle bar. It clanked on the ground and rolled over to the side of the street as he kept on walking, not paying attention to it, as if he had never seen it, or even knew it existed.

There was a small sneeze from inside its cylinder ends.

He left a lot of things behind as he walked away. A lot more than he knew

