

[WISH]

[by Damon Brown and Allen Robertson]

[Music and Lyrics by Allen Robertson]

[Version 2.0]

[01052018]

CAST NOTES:

All the characters in "Wish" are intended to be played by 6 actors (3 female and 3 male) with a breakdown of roles as follows.

Girl 1: Samantha "Sam" Major

Girl 2: Grace Strickland

Girl 3: Patience (Ideal), Lt. Stone (Fort), Sailor (Riverboat), Annie Cannon (Train)

Boy 1: Tom Major, Captain Twiggs (Fort), Thomas Edison (Riverboat), Engineer (Train)

Boy 2: Colt, Harold (Ideal), Conductor (Train)

Boy 3: Mayor (Ideal), The Agent (Riverboat, Train), Von Stein (Fair)

There are also passengers, townspeople, and narrators that are variously played by available cast members.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

"Wish" is intended to be performed as story theater, so the actors will often narrate portions of the action to the audience and drop back and forth through the fourth wall.

The epic scene settings are created by the actors using available items on the stage. A length of rope becomes the edge of a ship's railing. A canvas tarp, some poles, and a large pair of lanterns become a sea monster. Crates, chairs, and luggage become a train.

Likewise, the actors (with possible exceptions of SAM and GRACE) are generally attired in non-descript, timeless earth-tones. Those who play multiple roles will simply add jackets, hats, aprons, sashes, props or beards onstage to visually indicate when they are playing a different role.

The goal should be to include the audience as active participants in the story through the narration and engage their imagination through innovative staging.

MUSICAL NUMBERS AND CUES:

Scene 1
The Cave - Underscore

Scene 2
Patriotic Polka - Mayor, Patience, Ensemble
Patriotic Polka - Underscore

Scene 3
Wish - Colt, Ensemble

Scene 4
Shooting Star - Underscore
The Bridge - Sam

Scene 5
Soldier Song and Underscore - Lt. Stone

Scene 6
Riverboat - Underscore
Walt's Waltz - Colt, Sam
The Leviathan - Underscore

Scene 7
Wabash Cannonball and Underscore - Ensemble
Top of the Train - Underscore

Scene 8
The Sequoias - Underscore
If I Never Knew You - Sam

Scene 9
The Gates of the Fair - Underscore
Memory of Flight - Sam, Grace

Scene 10
Wish/Epilogue - Ensemble

SCENE 1

The stage is strewn with boxes and crates, odds and ends, various lengths of rope, perhaps a phonograph or a fringed lamp or a painting of a friendly dog. There's definitely a sturdy hat rack. Near the back of the area is a large chalkboard - the spinning type with two sides one might find in a classroom or laboratory.

The light is broken and hazy as though we've poked our heads into someone's gloriously dusty attic and are preparing to sift through trinkets and treasure in search of adventure.

There is a thunder of drums, then a cavernous expulsion of silence. Everything goes dark as if our last candle has been extinguished.

Hope is not lost! A lantern appears the darkness and a figure approaches. It is SAM MAJOR. The stage has not physically changed, but music creeps back in and the story has begun! SAM cautiously begins a treacherous rope descent into an inky cavern, narrating as she goes.

SAM

An ancient cavern, deep beneath the southern side of Niagara Falls! I travelled underground twisting through tunnels 'till there's no turning back. Across the treacherous, swaying strands of a suspended bridge and BELOW? (*she slips!*) A deep, dark, bottomless pit.

SAM continues narrating, but her friend GRACE has entered, half hidden in the darkness.

GRACE

Sam?

SAM

(Still lost in her story. Music swelling)
That's how I found myself in a chamber forgotten by man... forgotten by woman... forgotten by time. A great hall filled with flickering spirits who stand watch over a mysterious treasure! (*She imagines it in front of her. A lantern is carried downstage*) An magic lamp that will grant your every wish!

GRACE

Sam, it's almost dark!

SAM

A CURSE ON ALL WHO SEEK ITS POWER FOR GAIN!

GRACE is right beside SAM, now.

GRACE

(dryly)

Are you coming with me, Aladdin?

SAM

Grace! *(still in "Adventure Character")* The story doesn't end this way.

GRACE

Are we playing now, or are you ready to celebrate?

SAM

(clutching her made-up "lamp treasure," half-kidding)
I wish I didn't have to go to this party.

GRACE

And I wish we lived in a town where we didn't already know everyone, but wishes don't work that way.

SAM

How do you know?

GRACE

I'm leaving your "ancient chamber" now. You will soon be forgotten, or eaten by bears, or whatever. *(She starts to exit. As she goes)* Plus, your dad is asking where you went.

SAM

Dad?! *(remembering)* Arg, I'm supposed to be helping him!

SAM and GRACE both dash off into the crowd. What crowd, you ask? Why, the group of townsfolk merrily approaching as music kicks into high gear! We're transported without delay to...

SCENE 2

The stage is arranged to bring to mind a beautifully whitewashed small-town square. Dusk is just on the horizon as a holiday parade begins!

ALL

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY
HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY
HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

MAYOR

I THINK I'LL START A TREND AND SAY

PATIENCE

IN A MOST RESPLENDANT WAY

ALL

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

MAYOR

ILLUMINATIONS LIGHT UP THE SKY
WE'RE NOT UNDER ATTACK
IT'S JUST THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY
GREAT ZEUS! IT'S INDEPENDENCE DAY
THE BRASS BAND IN ATTENDANCE PLAYS

PATIENCE

SO IN A MOST TRANSCENDANT WAY
LET'S ALL MAKE AMENDS AND SAY

ALL

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

SAM

(addressing the audience)

Welcome to Ideal, North Carolina! My home town.

PAPER BOY COLT

(walking through the celebration)

Extra! July Fourth, nineteen-eleven, Extra Edition! Read all about the World's Fair in Cal-ee-forn-eye-ay!

GRACE gets a newspaper.

SAM

(still to the audience)

I'm Samantha, but everyone calls me Sam.

GRACE

They only call you that because I did.

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SAM

Grace is my best friend. We met when we were kids. It went something like... *(reliving the moment)* Hi. I'm Samantha.

GRACE

(Also reliving. Unimpressed)

Ok, Sam.

SAM

I like your hair. Did you know my dad is an inventor?

GRACE

(still not connecting)

Ok, Sam.

SAM

Do you... want to play with fireworks?

GRACE

(now, I'm interested)

Oh-kaaay... Sam!

SAM

Ok!

ALL

WE'RE CELEBRATING
OUR COUNTRIES BIRTH
WHICH IS THE GREATEST COUNTRY
GOD HAS EVER PLACED UPON THIS EARTH
SO WE SING HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

MAYOR AND PATIENCE

IN HARMONY WE BLEND AND SAY

ALL

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY

MAYOR AND PATIENCE

WE'LL DANCE AS HOURS WEND AWAY
AND TRY TO MAKE THE END DELAY

ALL

OF THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY

MAYOR

(addressing the townsfolk)

Ladies and Gentlemen! It will soon be time for the celebratory nocturnal patriotic illuminations. Fireworks! Designed by our own catastrophically under-qualified Tom Major.

He's joking. Kind of. PATIENCE surreptitiously smacks

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him in admonition.

MAYOR

Remember, here in Ideal... everyone's an "Idealist!"

SAM

(to the audience)

That's Mayor Fillmore, and his wife, Patience. They're nice enough, but I don't think they appreciate my dad the way I do.

TOM MAJOR has popped out of the crowd, looking for SAM.

SAM

That's him! Tom Major, local fireworks expert and science enthusiast. *(greeting him)* Dad!

TOM

Hello, Sam. I actually... wait...why are you here?

SAM

You want the existential answer or - ?

TOM

(interrupting)

You're supposed to be checking the final display array, out in Bailey park.

SAM

You mean the fireworks?

TOM

Of course! Isn't that what I...

The MAYOR and PATIENCE come dancing by and stop when they see TOM and SAM in discussion.

MAYOR

(greeting them)

Samantha. Tom. Wait... why are you here?

SAM

Popular question.

PATIENCE

You look lovely, Sam. Very...

SAM

Disheveled?

PATIENCE

(kindly)

Bohemian.

MAYOR

I just expected you both to be preparing your fireworks. Goodness! We wouldn't want a repeat of last year.

He laughs nervously as he dances off with PATIENCE.

TOM

That wasn't my fault, I clearly told Shelby his hat was too tall!

PATIENCE

Don't worry. We're all Idealists, Tom!

MAYOR

(to PATIENCE)

You DO like my town slogan idea!

SAM

(Cutting them off, the music stops and time freezes. To the audience)

No one in town takes my dad very seriously. No one except me, I guess. *(Calling to GRACE)* Grace! Remember 5th grade report day?

GRACE

(To the audience)

We all had to give reports that week. But Sam's was the most interesting.

They both run upstage. The chalk board is flipped around revealing the words 5TH GRADE REPORT DAY. SAM and GRACE each extend two fingers, like a "scout's honor" sign and then lock their fingers in agreement before they enact the moment from the past.

SAM

(a little nervous)

My report today - *(Laughter. She recomposes herself)* My report today is about my dad. Tom Major.

She pauses for a moment, gathering her courage.

TEACHER PATIENCE

(Helping. To the class)

You all know Samantha's father. He likes to experiment with fireworks and other science things?

The class murmurs with some awe.

SAM

My dad is a very famous inventor.

GRACE

Like Edison?

SAM

(actually energized by the idea)

Yes! Exactly like Edison! My dad has created all sorts of very useful inventions, but he is most famous for inventing the FOREVER LANTERN! *(a murmur among the kids)* I came up with the name. Because it's a lantern, you see, that never goes out. No oil, no wires, it lights up the night FOREVER!

GRACE

How did he learn to invent that?

SAM

If I tell you, you ALL have to promise never to reveal the secret. Promise?

They all nod assent.

SAM

Ok. He drew the plans while riding a MAGIC TRAIN!

HAROLD

That's not true! Your dad's never even been out of this town and neither have you.

SAM

I've been to a beach! *(trying to get her "story vibe" back)*
It was the coldest, windiest beach ever -

HAROLD

You've never even been across the bridge!

SAM

(to the audience, referring to the kid who keeps challenging her)

Harold Pilkey. He never liked me. But I never liked him, either. I guess you could say he was my nemesis as a kid. *(back in the moment. To HAROLD)* All right, Harold Pilkey. If my dad's never been anywhere, how did he become a famous inventor?

HAROLD

He's not! He never invented any forever lantern, you made that up

PATIENCE

Ok, let's stop...

SAM

No, he has the plans in his notebook. All he has to do is build it!

HAROLD

All YOUR dad has is an old warehouse full of rusty junk and a notebook full of FAIRY TALES!

An uncomfortable silence. SAM runs to her dad. The school day is over.

SAM

Daddy! I wanted to punch Pilkey right in his big pie-shape face when he said that. But I didn't.

TOM

I glad you didn't punch him. Words are your weapons, Sam. You use words better than anyone I know.

SAM

He didn't even believe we went to the beach at Kitty Hawk.

TOM

Oh, I remember that. It was cold!

SAM

Are you ever going to build the Forever Lantern?

TOM

Someday.

Sam runs off

TOM

Sam? *(The memory is over and the music resumes. TOM spots PATIENCE leaving the stage and follows her)* Mrs. Mayor... have you seen Sam?

SAM has gone looking for GRACE. She finds her dancing with older HAROLD and tries to pull her away to talk.

SAM

Hello, *(coldly)* Pilkey.

HAROLD

(his voice breaking, not at all intimidating)
Hi, Sam-ANtha.

SAM

(To GRACE)
I need your help.

GRACE

No, you need to get out more. See the world!

SAM

Well, THIS isn't the world, this is just Ideal. Please come with me to check on dad's fireworks. I want everything to go right for him.

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GRACE

Five minutes. (*extending two fingers*) Promise?

SAM

Four.

GRACE

Done.

They lock their fingers in agreement.

SCENE 3

The party fades upstage as SAM joins her father downstage. He's returned, carrying a box of supplies.

TOM

How about we both go out to Bailey park for the final check. We can watch the stars come out?

SAM

(to the audience)

I think my dad knew every star in the sky. He tried to teach me their names.

TOM

That's Vega, it used to be our North star but planets move around more than you think.

SAM

So where's the magic one?

TOM squints at her, not comprehending.

SAM

You know, the star where I make a wish?

TOM

Are you referring to those distant balls of flaming gas as magic?

SAM

(joking)

Can you at least let me have SOME wonder in my childhood?

TOM looks at her askance.

SAM

Ok, "young adulthood."

TOM

Almost dark. We should check the fireworks.

They stop downstage and sit on a crate to look up at the darkening sky as music starts. The cast sings from the shadows on the edge of the field.

NARRATOR COLT

WHEN THE NIGHT IS CRISP
AND CLEAR AND COOL AND SILENT
JUST THE WAY IT IS TONIGHT
IT RENEWS THE POSSIBILITY OF MAGIC
FROM A DISTANT POINT OF LIGHT

SAM

(looking up at the stars)
Polaris, right?

TOM

Right. Our current North star.

SAM

And that?

TOM

(busy checking something)
Maybe it's yours.

NARRATOR COLT

A STAR'S BEEN GUIDING MEN AROUND FOR AGES

SAM

(playing along)
I have a star?

NARRATOR COLT

TO BETHLEHEM OR SAFELY HOME FROM SEA

TOM

Of course.

NARRATOR COLT

AND THOUGH I'M NOT A WISE MAN OR A SAILOR
THAT STAR IS GUIDING ME

TOM

(in a surprising moment)
That's the one you wish on, Sam.

TOM AND NARRATOR COLT

MAKE A WISH
WANT SOMETHING ENOUGH
TO MAKE A WISH
HAVE A DREAM YOU' RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO WISH
AND THEN THAT STAR MIGHT LEAD YOU TO
THE PATH TO MAKE THE WISH COME TRUE

SAM

(to TOM)
Are you admitting you believe in wishes?

TOM

I guess some come true.

SAM

Ok. Explain?

TOM

I have you don't I?

SAM is a little taken aback by her father's sentimental mood. The stars slowly begin to come out. TOM gives SAM one end of a wire and they begin to wind it up, coming closer together as they do.

NARRATORS MAYOR AND PATIENCE

IF EVERY STAR'S A WISH THERE MUST BE MILLIONS
OR IS A STAR A WISH WE DIDN'T MAKE?
AND IT FLOATS THERE IN THE SKY AS A REMINDER
OF THE ROADS WE DIDN'T TAKE

NARRATORS GRACE AND COLT

ARE WE HERE TONIGHT JUST WONDERING AND GAZING
MESMERIZED AND FROZEN AND RESIGNED

ALL EXCEPT TOM AND SAM

OR DID WE COME HERE FOR A PURPOSE MORE AMAZING
THAT WE'RE JUST ABOUT TO FIND?

TOM AND ENSEMBLE

IF WE MAKE A WISH
WANT SOMETHING ENOUGH
TO MAKE A WISH
HAVE A DREAM WE'RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO WISH
AND THEN A STAR MIGHT LEAD US TO
THE PATH TO MAKE THE WISH COME TRUE

SAM finds a notebook in the crate of supplies. As she moves things, the notebook falls and a larger piece of paper falls out of the book onto the ground.

SAM

Your notebook?

TOM

So it is. Always keep losing it.

SAM

(picking up the extra paper and seeing it for the first time)

This is your lantern drawing! You should be more careful, your plans are in here! Are you finally going to build the Forever Lantern?

TOM

Someday.

SAM

(starting to open the journal)

What about today?

TOM

(quickly taking the journal away and putting the drawing inside)

Not yet. I'm not ready.

SAM

Sorry, I just want... I want everyone to see you like I see you.

TOM

That WOULD be magic.

SAM looks at him, uncertain.

TOM

Sam, all I want is to do good where ever I am.

He puts the journal back in the box.

SAM

Ok, I'm ready to make a wish.

She stands downstage and looks up at the sky.

TOM

Anything happening?

SAM

I don't know... *(she closes her eyes)* maybe.

NARRATOR MAYOR

TOO MANY PROMISES ARE BROKEN

NARRATOR PATIENCE

TOO MANY WISHES DON'T COME TRUE

NARRATOR COLT

TOO MANY THINGS WE JUST DON'T KNOW

NARRATOR GRACE

BUT GREAT DREAMS NEVER HAPPEN
WITHOUT A WISH TO MAKE THEM GROW

ALL

SO MAKE A WISH
WANT SOMETHING ENOUGH
TO MAKE A WISH
HAVE A DREAM YOU'RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO WISH
AND THEN A STAR MIGHT LEAD YOU TO
THE PATH TO MAKE THE WISH COME TRUE

NARRATOR COLT

YES THERE'S A PATH TO MAKE THE WISH COME TRUE

TOM

(looking up at the sky)
See all those shapes and constellations, Sam? People just made them up. There are no pictures in the sky, just in our minds. *(indicating her brain)* Everything starts up here. Stories, great ideas... why not yours?

SAM

What if, someday, we unlock all the secrets of science?

TOM

We'll find a new challenge. *(with pride)* We're human beings! We learn to walk, to run and eventually, we'll learn to fly.

There is a cracking sound offstage and a flash of light and smoke!

TOM

I'll check it out. You stay here. I need you to throw the switch when it's time to...

SAM

Light up the sky?

TOM

You got it.

TOM leaves.

SCENE 4

SAM looks up at the sky. Music begins. There's something in the air, tensed and waiting for the story to take a turn.

SAM

(identifying stars, again)
Vega, Polaris and... Mine. Sam's wishing star. Did you get the message, I wonder?

There is a streak of light in the sky accompanied by an unearthly sound.

SAM

Shooting star?

Another star falls.

SAM

Two in a row.

Another, then another, then the air is filled with stars like fireflies, buzzing around Sam's head!

SAM

Dad!

There is a final burst of light and the stars scatter!

COLT

(speaking from the darkness)
Don't call him back! I've been waiting forever for him to leave.

SAM

Who are you? Where are you?

COLT steps into the light. He's a rustic-looking yet non-threatening man of no determinate age dressed like a late 19th century cowboy. He also has a large sword strapped to his back - for some reason.

COLT

You already know my name, Sam.

SAM

(she cocks her head with a sudden thought)
It's Colt.

COLT

That was easy. Where? I'm... in North Carolina about nineteen-fourteen I'm guessing?

SAM

It's nineteen-eleven.

COLT

You'd think I'd have a better handle on the year. So close.

SAM

Don't come any closer! I'll go get my dad.

COLT

You could. I wouldn't blame you, personally. Strange, armed man approaching you at sunset. I'd have probably shot me already if it was, you know... me.

SAM

You make no sense.

COLT

True. What were you imagining when you thought up a cowboy with a sword, anyhow? Kind of a down-home, Lancelot kind of thing?

SAM

When I thought up...?

COLT

You don't think I just popped into existence without your help, do you?

SAM

You're not real?

COLT

You want the existential answer or - ?

SAM

I want the truth and I want you to keep your distance!

COLT

I can't hurt you Sam, you created me. In fact, I'm only here to -

SAM

I warned you!

SAM picks up a large stick and takes a swing at COLT who has been amiably following her around the stage refusing to "keep his distance" as ordered. As she swings there is a sudden return of the same unearthly sound that heralded the falling of the stars earlier. The lights shift and SAM and COLT are both moving in slow motion. She's still swinging at him, but she also narrates the next part to the audience adjusting her actions as she speaks.

SAM

(to the audience)

The first thing I thought was, I'm going to klonk him good on the head and then run for it, but as I swung, the strangest thing happened. I could hear myself telling the story. Just like I'm doing right now. Talking to you. "What a curious feeling," I thought. And also said out loud, apparently. Of course by then, I realized I was getting close to the Cowboy's noggin. I kind-of closed my eyes but, let's be honest, I peeked just enough to see the stick pass right though his body! LIKE HE WAS A GHOST!

Suddenly they are back to regular speed.

COLT

Wow, good arm. That would have hurt if I were, you know, NOT a story.

SAM

Are you a ghost?

COLT

I don't know, Sam, you tell me. You made me up.

SAM

I don't understand any of this.

COLT

You know how, after you read a really good story - one where the characters and the adventure seem SO REAL - after you read it, you're a little sad when it's over?

SAM nods.

COLT

That's me. You wrote me, in your head.

SAM

So you're only in my imagination?

COLT

Well, that depends on how you tell the rest of this story, Sam. Like I said, I'm here to help you.

SAM

How do you know my name?

COLT

You made a wish, tonight?

SAM looks at him, not responding.

COLT

Got it. Keep it a secret, good idea. I'm here to grant your wish.

SAM

Are you some sort of genie?

COLT

Yes, absolutely.

SAM

(genuinely surprised)

Really!?

COLT

No, genies are a myth. I'm some sort of high-noon sword-slinger.

SAM

Here to grant my wish.

COLT

Now we're getting there.

SAM

Are we? You don't even know what I wished for.

COLT

Not necessary. You already have a plan. *(he moves back to the chalkboard and illustrates his points on it)* Step one. Cause a major distraction. I'm thinking something with explosions. Step two. Sneak out of town over the bridge. Step three...

SAM

(picking up the thread)

I have to go to California.

COLT

Now you're getting it!

SAM

But what's in California?

GRACE

The World's Fair!

GRACE has been hiding in the shadows ever since the "plan" was introduced. She now pops out.

SAM

Grace! How long have you been there?

GRACE

Long enough to know you're running away to California and you're going with -

SAM

(interrupting)

I know it's crazy! I mean he looks like some bizarre mix-up between the Wild West and some stuff he stole off of King Arthur's knights, right?

GRACE

(after a heartbeat)

What?

SAM

(blinking)

Sorry, what?

GRACE

That what I said.

SAM

You -

COLT

She can't see me. Only you can.

SAM

You... were saying?

GRACE

You're running away to the World's Fair in California and I'm going with you. Step three!

She takes a piece of newspaper she's been holding and slaps it up on the board. It clearly shows a drawing of a lantern.

SAM

That's... that's Dad's forever lantern. How...

GRACE

(reading)

Doctor Proctor Von Stein -

COLT

Doctor Proctor? Sounds like a fake name.

GRACE

(continuing)

He intends to premiere HIS latest and greatest invention at the World's Fair in San Francisco. An Eternal Flame. A LANTERN which, through the magic of SCIENCE, will burn never needing oils, or wires...

SAM

To light up the night, forever.

GRACE

This Von Stein STOLE your dad's invention!

COLT

Rude.

SAM

That's not possible. Dad's plans... they're right here in his journal!

She runs and gets the little book from the crate.

COLT

Papers can be copied. Ideas are stolen all the time.

GRACE

We have to go. You can stop him and your dad will finally be famous.

COLT

He deserves at least that much, don't you think?

SAM

The Fair is in three days, we'll never make it all the way across the entire country in time.

COLT

I can help with that. Here to "grant your wish," remember?

GRACE

Sam, we have to try. Didn't I just say you needed to get out, see the world?

SAM

I didn't know you meant tonight.

COLT

All you have to do it make it across the bridge right there that leads out of town. I can help you after that. Meet me over the bridge!

COLT runs off.

GRACE

Write your dad a note. I'll leave it on your door and meet you over the bridge.

SAM

You heard that?

GRACE

Heard what?

SAM

Never mind.

She starts writing as she hastily collects her own thoughts.

THIS SIDE OF THE BRIDGE - FAMILIAR
THAT SIDE OF THE BRIDGE - UNKNOWN
THAT SIDE OF THE BRIDGE - ADVENTURE
THIS SIDE - HOME
THIS SIDE OF THE BRIDGE IS FATHER
THAT SIDE OF THE BRIDGE IS ME?
MAYBE IT'S JUST BEST TO WAIT AND SEE

*She's finished with the note and gives it to GRACE,
extending her fingers.*
On the other hand?

GRACE

(locking her fingers with SAM for a moment)
There is no other hand. *(she runs off)*

SAM

THIS SIDE OF THE BRIDGE I'M CERTAIN
THAT SIDE OF THE BRIDGE I'M LOST
BUT WHAT GOOD IS A BRIDGE UNLESS YOU GO ACROSS?
BUT WHAT IF YOU GO ACROSS AND FIND
IT'S NOT THE WORLD YOU HAD IN MIND
WHEN YOU CROSS BACK TO THIS SIDE IS SOMETHING
LOST?
YOU TOLD ME NOTHING IN THE WORLD
WOULD BE BEYOND MY REACH
NO HIDDEN PLACE A COMPASS CAN'T REVEAL
BUT MAYBE THOSE ARE WORDS
A FATHER FINDS ARE EASY WORDS TO TEACH
BUT HARDER FOR A DAUGHTER'S HEART TO FEEL
A BRIDGE IS JUST A TOOL YOU MAKE
TO TAKE THE RISK YOU HAVE TO TAKE
JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES AND WALK ACROSS
YOU'RE ON THE OTHER SIDE
IF THIS TIME YOU DECIDE TO WAIT
THE BRIDGE BECOMES A PRISON GATE
AND YOU LIVE REGRETTING THAT YOU NEVER TRIED
MAYBE EVERYTHING I EVER DREAMED IS WAITING THERE
MAYBE ONLY DISAPPOINTMENT'S THERE INSTEAD
BUT REALLY DREAMS AND DISAPPOINTMENT
FIND YOU ANYWHERE
HAVE COURAGE, CROSS THE BRIDGE AND FORGE AHEAD
SO TAKE THE GIRL I WAS REPLACE HER

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NOW SHE IS A RAINBOW CHASER
SHOW HER ANY BRIDGE AND PLACE HER ON THE OTHER
SIDE
I MADE A WISH I HAVE TO FOLLOW
TO FIND IT I'LL EMBRACE TOMORROW
BECOME THE GIRL I KNOW I'M MEANT TO BE
JUST CROSS A BRIDGE AND THEN ANOTHER
LIVE A DREAM AND **SAVE** A FATHER
IT ALL AWAITS ACROSS THE WATER FOR ME

*SAM runs downstage and flips the switch that starts
the fireworks display and the rest of the cast, who
have assembled on the edges of the stage, are
distracted long enough for SAM to leave unseen!*

SCENE 5

Crickets, night time, moonlight. SAM and GRACE enter. SAM has her satchel and GRACE now carries a non-descript backpack. They walk for a moment in silence.

GRACE

So... how long have we been walking?

SAM

I don't know. The bridge was 5 or 6 miles back - maybe two hours?

GRACE

And how far to California?

SAM

Three thousand miles.

GRACE

Ah. *(a beat)* So how long will it take to get there by, you know... walking?

SAM

(almost under her breath)
Wishes work in mysterious ways, apparently.

GRACE

What was that?

SAM

All I know is he's supposed to meet us over the bridge.

GRACE

"He," who?

SAM

(nervously, covering with noise)
He, who? He, who?

GRACE

(getting caught up in it)
He, who! STOP! We sound like a couple of donkeys! Just... tell me you have a plan.

SAM

Of course I... do... have a plan. You think I'd come all the way out here without -

GRACE

Ok, so, step one?

SAM

Step one is... we stop here. Until I can, you know, FULLY

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explain step two.

GRACE

I see. Campfire, then?

SAM

Great idea! We just need some wood, I guess little pieces on the bottom, right? And then bigger pieces up top. and then we pile them in kind of a little pyramid shape.

As SAM is speaking, GRACE - unseen - has actually arranged wood for a campfire.

SAM

Then I guess we have to rub some sticks together to create friction to light the - OH, we need KINDLING!

GRACE

(has lit the campfire using matches from her pack)
Or we could use matches.

SAM

That... also works.

GRACE

(kindly)
Good thing one of us thought to bring a backpack, eh?

SAM nods.

GRACE

I'll go look for more wood. You work on your plan.

GRACE walks off.

COLT

Maybe your plan is better than mine?

SAM jumps! How did COLT manage to get here?

SAM

Where have you been?

COLT

Just waiting for you to clear your thoughts. Sometimes a nice walk in the night air helps.

SAM

How am I supposed to get all the way across the USA in three days? This is the worst!

COLT

I admit it's not the strongest start, but you can still save this story by the end. It's really all up to you.

SAM

Where do I start?

COLT

I'd suggest starting with what you know.

SAM

I know I'm out in the woods in the middle of the night.

COLT

Good! Mysterious.

SAM

I've never been this far outside of town by myself.

COLT

Better! Dangerous. What do we think about that spooky old fort up ahead?

SAM

That deserted ruin? I don't think it even has a name. Or a roof.

COLT

All places have names. What about... Fort Spooky?

SAM

A little too on-the-nose. Fort... *(an idea)* Fort Foreboding.

COLT

I still vote for "Spooky."

SAM

Got it! The Lonely Fort. Fort Lonesome.

There is a soft echo of the unearthly sound that heralds SAM'S story telling. It reverberates into the night.

COLT

Now we're getting somewhere. What happened at Fort Lonesome? Tell the story, Sam.

LT. STONE

HOME FROM THE MEADOWS
AND HOME FROM THE MOUNTAIN
SOLDIERS AND HEROES
WE ALL WILL COME HOME
HOPING TO FIND HER WITH LANTERN STILL SHINING
SOFTLY REPEATING WE'LL NE'ER AGAIN ROAM

SAM

Deep in a murky Appalachian wood stands Fort Lonesome - forgotten for two-score and twelve years. Overgrown with

vines and memories. Manned by ghostly soldiers still fighting a war that ended long ago.

LT. STONE

HOPING TO FIND HER WITH LANTERNS STILL BURNING
SOFTLY REPEATING WE'LL NE'ER AGAIN ROAM

A cannon fires! COLT has faded into the darkness. SAM is alone now, weaving the story and watching it unfold.

SAM

High on the battlements of Fort Lonesome, the ghosts guard an ancient treasure. Firing a cannon every hour to keep their long-forgotten enemies away.

The soldiers are visible now on the battlements. CAPTAIN TWIGGS, a grizzled civil war era battle veteran, and his long-suffering LIEUTENANT STONE are peering into the distance. Their uniforms are reminiscent of the American Civil War, but just looking at them it's hard to determine which side they fought on. LT. STONE is young and wears a set of earmuffs. CAPTAIN TWIGGS is almost completely deaf from cannon-fire.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

The air smells of battle, Lieutenant. Battle, and destiny. The hour is at hand. Fire the cannon.

LT. STONE

(getting right in front of TWIGGS so he can see his face)

It's done, sir.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

I heard nothing!

LT. STONE

(gently reminding him of his hearing loss)

You CAN'T hear anything, Captain Twigg. Remember?

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

That's what I said, man! I remember hearing nothing. Fire the cannon!

LT. STONE

Already done.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Protect the treasure!

LT. STONE

We've been through this.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Fire!

LT. STONE

Sir -

CAPT

FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!

LT. STONE

(shaking the cannon a little and also pulling at TWIGGS' shoulder to jostle him.)

BOOM!

A beat.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

(looking back at STONE)

Did you - ?

LT. STONE

(cutting him off)

Yes sir, just as you ordered.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Good. That should keep the invaders at bay. At ease, Lieutenant Stone. Until the next hour has passed I shall keep watch over the treasure.

SAM

Inside that treasure chest was... the next piece of the puzzle. The item that would allow Sam and Grace to continue their journey.

GRACE

(has entered to hear SAM'S narration)

Step two! Let's go get it!

She starts towards the battlement.

SAM

Grace, wait!

LT. STONE, relaxing by the edge of the wall, sees GRACE first.

LT. STONE

(concerned)

What are you doing here?!

GRACE

I'm going up to see what's in the chest.

LT. STONE

Are you crazy, you can't be here! The Captain will see you!

GRACE

Who's going to stop me? You?

LT. STONE

(genuinely wondering)

Am I?

GRACE

(to SAM)

Is he?

SAM

(creating the story)

Turns out, yes he is!

STONE grabs GRACE and restrains her. At that moment, TWIGGS wheels around and sees the intrusion.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

What, ho! A spy?

LT. STONE

I don't think so, sir.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

I'm glad you think so, but I already said that.

GRACE

What's wrong with him?

LT. STONE

Mostly deaf. Cannons are extremely loud.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Where there's one, more will follow. Show yourself, intruders!

SAM

(coming out into the light)

Alright, okay, just don't hurt my friend.

LT. STONE looks shocked as if he would never consider such a thing!

GRACE

I can take care of myself.

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CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Enough of this mumbling! I give the orders here! On which side do ye fight?

SAM

We're... we're... (*hissing at STONE*) Which side are YOU guys on?

LT. STONE

(*shrugging his shoulders in confusion*)
It's been too long.

GRACE

We fight for the truth!

SAM

Yes! And destiny?

GRACE

Truth and Destiny!

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

(*to STONE*)
What are they saying?

LT. STONE

They're on our side, sir.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

I see. That is... JUST THE THING A SPY WOULD SAY!

TWIGGS draws a cutlass and faces down GRACE and SAM.

SAM

Wait, wait! The war is over! It ended more than fifty years ago!

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

I can't... is she saying something about my "nifty ears?"

SAM

Wouldn't you like to go home?

LT. STONE

Home?

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

You said "home!" I got that one! (*back to business*) This is our home, now.

LT. STONE

Are you saying we can go home?

SAM

Yes! Yes. Just let us take care of the treasure for you.

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You've... done your duty.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

I am your commanding officer, sir and I say we remain! Tie up these two and fire the cannon!

LT. STONE

Again?

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Why is everyone still standing about? Fire!

He marches forward raising his sword.

LT. STONE

Get ready to run.

In a swift motion, STONE jumps forward with his rifle and blocks the downward swing of TWIGGS' sword. There is a noise again and everything drops into slow motion.

SAM

I saw the Lieutenant step forward and block the Captain's blow. The two ancient ghosts were locked together in a fight they never expected. (to GRACE) Get the chest!

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

(to STONE)

Fire the cannon!

GRACE breaks free, grabs the box and runs towards SAM. TWIGGS breaks from STONE long enough to grab the box as GRACE runs by. Spun around by the action, GRACE bumps up against the cannon accidentally aiming it at the inside of the fort.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Wait, actually DON'T fire the - !

LT. STONE fires. The blast rumbles the entire building. TWIGGS is stunned and drops the box. LT. STONE retrieves it, handing it to SAM. She turns to leave.

LT. STONE

(to SAM)

Hey! You said... you said I could go home?

SAM

(lost for narrative, unable to come up with an idea)
I thought... I mean, suddenly -

There is another rumble, as though the building is

preparing to demolish itself.

GRACE

Sam!

SAM

(to STONE)

I'm sorry! I don't know how to finish this story!

GRACE

We have to go, the walls are collapsing!

TWIGGS rushes at SAM and Grace but LT. STONE again blocks his way. LT. STONE holds the CAPTAIN at bay.

LT. STONE

(to SAM)

Go! I'll hold him here.

CAPTAIN TWIGGS

Traitor! I will never release you from your duty. You will stay here, forever!

SAM

Wait, I can think of something!

LT. STONE

He can't hear you, anyway.

GRACE

SAM!

Sam turns to the audience.

SAM

I was out of ideas. So I ran! And the fort -

There is a rumble and a dull, roaring crash as SAM and GRACE run out of the fort. GRACE is swept backwards! SAM turns and grabs GRACE, pulling her clear as the fort collapses in the darkness.

SAM AND GRACE TOGETHER

- collapsed behind us!

SAM

Smoke and dust were blowing all around. It looked like the end of a mighty battle. The last battle Fort Lonesome would ever see.

COLT has entered next to SAM.

COLT

That didn't go as planned?

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SAM

I don't know what happened. Maybe they couldn't hear the story?

COLT

Maybe they didn't want to. Wishes work in mysterious ways.

SOLDIERS

HOME FROM THE MEADOWS
HOME FROM THE MOUNTAIN
SOLDIERS AND HEROES
WE ALL WILL COME HOME
HOPING TO FIND HER WITH LANTERN STILL SHINING
SOFTLY REPEATING WE'LL NE'ER AGAIN ROAM

LT. STONE

SOFTLY REPEATING WE'LL NE'ER AGAIN ROAM

COLT

What were they fighting for?

GRACE opens the treasure chest.

GRACE

Sam! It's tickets. Tickets for a Riverboat!

SCENE 6

We hear a jaunty showboat underscore and colorful lights isolate the center leaving the edges of the stage awash in watery blue.

SAM

(holding the tickets which include a flyer)
That's how we found ourselves on the S.S. Clemens, a luxury paddleboat, floating on music up...

EVERYONE

The mighty Mississippi river!

GRACE

Two thousand five hundred and thirty miles long and sometimes more than ten miles wide!

SAM

Rushing to its destiny in the dark.

COLT

Carrying truth and mystery in its wake.

EDISON

And a celebrity passenger.

GRACE

(grabbing the ticket flyer to read it)
Thomas Edison?! The famous inventor?

PASSENGER PATIENCE

Everyone! Edison's on the promenade deck!

PASSENGER MAYOR

He's going to show us how his phonograph works!

The group rushes off, leaving SAM. COLT brings up the rear and stops by her.

COLT

Cheer up, Sam. It's a new night. New story.

SAM

I couldn't save those soldiers.

COLT

That story didn't end well, so write a better one next time. You know how many times Edison failed to invent things?

SAM looks at COLT.

COLT

A lot... I bet.

SAM

I made a silly wish and look where it got me.

COLT

You mean, "riding on a magical steamboat with famous people?"

SAM

What do you know about it?

COLT

(comparing)

Wishes - your stories - they're like the difference between magic and science. One takes faith, the other takes hard work.

IT SOUNDS LIKE A DREAM
BUT I PROMISE IT'S REAL
I'VE TRAVELED LIKE LIGHTENING
SO SWIFT IT WAS FRIGHTENING
ON RAILS MADE OF STEEL
I'VE SEEN CITIES THAT SPARKLE
ALL LIT UP AT NIGHT
I'VE HEARD PHONOGRAPHS, TELEPHONES
SEEN MOVING PICTURES
AND MEN TAKING FLIGHT
ANY DREAM THAT YOU DREAM
YOU CAN MAKE IT COME TRUE
IF IT HAPPENED FOR EDISON
WHY CAN'T IT HAPPEN FOR YOU?

I mean what does Edison have that you don't?

SAM

Smarts?

COLT

You've got that.

SAM

Heart?

COLT

You've got that, too - bursting out all over!

SAM

Faith.

COLT

I see. Do you believe the sun will rise in the morning? A caterpillar is just a butterfly in disguise? All you need... is a wish.

SAM

Big talk from an invisible figment of my imagination.

COLT

You can see me. Why not other people? Write the story, Sam.

Slowly, some other riverboat passengers are starting to gather.

SAM

I can make my own wish come true?

COLT

You start with a wish, then you have to work. You just need something to wish on.

A STAR THAT IS FALLING
OR A DANDELION BLOWN
SOME FOLKS WILL TELL
OF AN OLD WISHING WELL
WHERE A COIN CAN BE THROWN
START WHEN YOU'RE LITTLE
DON'T STOP WHEN YOU'RE GROWN
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
DID HIS WISHFUL THINKIN'
ON CANDLES ALONE
THERE'S MAGIC OUT THERE
YOU JUST HAVE TO GO FISH
IT'S YOURS FOR THE TAKING
IT ALL STARTS BY MAKING A WISH
WITH A WISH AND A SMILE YOU'RE WITHOUT A CARE
FOR A MAN WITH A WISH IS A MILLIONAIRE
IF YOU WANT TO FLY
KEEP AN EYE TO THE SKY
MAKE A WISH AND YOU'LL SOON BE THERE

Now everyone is gathered, and a dance breaks out!

ALL

WITH A WISH AND A SMILE YOU'RE WITHOUT A CARE
FOR A MAN WITH A WISH IS A MILLIONAIRE

COLT

CLOSE YOUR EYES
SPIN AROUND
AND LOOK WHO YOU FOUND
MAKE A WISH AND HE'LL SOON BE THERE

GRACE

(skeptical)

Abraham Lincoln's actual birthday candles?

COLT

That's right!

GRACE

What did Lincoln wish for? Understanding? Peace?

COLT

Well, at the time I think he wished for a bigger hat. He was only 8 years old.

GRACE

Do they still work?

COLT

That is a good question. Wanna try?

GRACE

Not very scientific.

COLT

Then I insist. Sam?

COLT flicks the candle to life and hands it off to SAM as if to say "you got this." SAM takes it over to GRACE as everyone watches intently.

SAM

I think... you should close your eyes, tug your ear twice... and wish.

As SAM holds the candle at arm's length, GRACE closes her eyes tightly while tugging her ear and... blows the candle. The candle light suddenly glows brighter and flies up away from the candle, hovering in front of them for a moment. SAM hands the candle to GRACE and takes over the song.

SAM

WELL LOOK WHAT YOU DID
MIRACULOUS LIGHT
IT FLICKERS AND FLIES
A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE
AS IT LIGHTS UP THE NIGHT
MIGHT SEEM UNIMPORTANT
BUT SEARCH AND YOU'LL FIND
THE WISHES THAT CHANGE THE WHOLE WORLD
OFTEN START JUST BY CHANGING A MIND
IMAGINE THE BLISS
ALL THAT WE COULD ACHIEVE
SO LET'S ALL TAKE A LEAP
MAKE A WISH AND BEGIN TO BELIEVE

ALL

WITH A WISH AND A SMILE YOU'RE WITHOUT A CARE
A MAN WITH A WISH IS A MILLIONAIRE

COLT

WHEN THE JOURNEY SEEMS LONG
JUST REMEMBER THIS SONG
MAKE A WISH AND YOU'LL SOON BE THERE

The dance begins again! COLT asks SAM to dance.

SAM

They can all see you!

COLT

Only because you do.

SAM

What if I can't figure out how to end this story?

COLT

Could be bad. Or it could be good, who knows? Best you can do is try.

SAM

Do good where ever I am.

COLT

BUT THE BEST THING TO DO
IS TO GRANT WISHES TOO
AND YOU'LL FEEL LIKE YOU'RE FLOATING ON AIR
KEEP AN EYE TO THE SKY
WHEN A STAR'S FLYING BY

ALL

MAKE A WISH AND YOU'LL SOON BE THERE

GRACE has been dancing with a mystery man. She brings him over to meet SAM and COLT.

GRACE

Sam! I'd like you to meet Mr. Thomas Edison.

EDISON

I hear your father is an inventor, as well?

SAM

Mr. Edison! Yes... I mean, he's always had a great interest in stories about science. I actually have his notebook, here if you -

EDISON

I'm on my way to the World's Fair in San Francisco. You should bring your father out there. Wonderful innovations.

SAM

As it happens -

THE AGENT (posing as a Passenger) has overheard SAM talking about the notebook. He casually interrupts SAM.

THE AGENT

(to EDISON)

Mr. Edison, will you show us how your phonograph works, now? I don't want to "miss the boat," y'know?

COLT

Sorry we interrupted with our little... whatever that was.

EDISON

Nonsense! "Whatever that was," was delightful. *(to SAM)* You have quite a gift at stories, young lady.

He exits. THE AGENT follows with a glance over his shoulder at SAM as he goes.

COLT

(To SAM)

Edison likes your work!

GRACE

(To COLT)

Sorry, who are you again?

As COLT and GRACE shake hands in introduction, there is a low rumble. Only SAM hears it and she walks toward the edge of the deck.

SAM

(an idea forming)

I know what happens on the riverboat.

COLT

Oh, good! I was wondering when we'd get back to the story. *(He hands his sword to Sam.)* I'll see you again... later on down the line.

He exits.

SAM

(narrating)

Deep under the mighty Mississippi, down where no light can find him, lives the Leviathan.

GRACE

Leviathan? I thought sea monsters were a myth.

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Something bumps the boat loudly! Everyone staggers.

SAM

Sometimes it's only a "myth" because you haven't seen it, yet.

GRACE

What bumped... something ran into our boat!

SAM

For a thousand years he slept under the waves, the sound of steamships passing in the night never waking him until the night he heard the music - from this boat. Tonight!

Another bump, bigger this time. Everyone on deck cries out and staggers, again.

GRACE

There it was again! Something's down there!

SAM

(completing her narration)

Soon, he would rise. *(To GRACE)* Grace, any rope in your pack?

GRACE

What kind? I have twine, jute - ?

SAM

Doesn't matter. Hurry!

GRACE

Of course it MATTERS! Hello, "tensile strength?"

SAM

He's almost up!

GRACE

(continuing)

Are we tying a package or climbing a mountain or - ?

SAM

Oh, for crying out loud, REGULAR "ROPEY" -

There is an unearthly sound again, followed by the sound of something large and growly emerging from the river beside the boat.

GRACE

(interrupting and pointing behind SAM)

What's THAT!?

SAM turns and sees the "sea monster."

SAM

Hello, Goliath! Did you get lonely down there?

GRACE

He's going to eat the boat!

SAM

(telling the story)

I could smell the fishy smell of a hundred feet deep. I looked into his ancient eyes and saw the look of a thousand years of darkness. He almost broke the boat in two right there, but he saw me and in that moment he paused... and crashed back beneath the river!

GRACE

A sea monster named Goliath? Like in the story?

SAM

He'll be back. Time for us to play "David."

GRACE

(has found some sturdy rope in her pack)

Is this "ropey" enough?

SAM

Glad you brought the pack. Tie one end around my waist.

She does.

SAM

Now hold on, and whatever you do...

She pauses, as though the next part is obvious.

GRACE

What?! "Whatever you do," what?

SAM

Don't let go! I thought that was -

GRACE

(interjecting)

Makes sense.

SAM

- obvious. *(calling out)* Anyone near Edison's phonograph?

SAILOR

Here!

SAM

Start the music! Let's bring Goliath up one more time!

GRACE

You're calling him back?

SAM

We need him. He needs us. Music!

The scratchy sound of a phonograph tune crackles to life. There is a moment.

GRACE

Are you sure you know how this story goes?

SAM

We're about to find out.

There is a rumble and suddenly Goliath emerges again! He crashes around the ship and rears up above them. SAM runs forward to the edge of the deck towards him but is swept back. GRACE holds fast to the rope, swinging SAM back into position.

SAM

(narrating her action)

Goliath reared his head again and in that moment, I knew what I had to do. I saw his eyes, lonely and dark. I saw his expression, asking me to set him free. I saw the giant chain and lock around his neck. His long, long neck that swayed toward me as he prepared to sink us once and for all! *(to everyone, in the moment)* I know what I have to do!

SAM raises COLT'S sword above her head... and swings! There is a terrific crash!

GRACE

I thought you were going to cut his head off!

SAM

I cut the chain. The chain that was keeping him imprisoned here.

GRACE

He's headed for the ocean!

SAM

(pointing out over the water)

He's going home.

There is polite applause from the passengers. They pass by SAM as they exit, thanking her. Sam wraps COLT'S sword in a piece of material and slings it over her shoulder. A SAILOR discovers what looks like a stubby length of copper pipe with a mouth-piece and brings it with him as he speaks to SAM.

SAILOR

That was incredible, miss! I thought things like that only

happened in stories.

SAM

They do.

SAILOR

(holding out the metal pipe)

Beg pardon, but what do'ye make of this? It fell on the deck off that sea creatures' chain.

SAM

It's a train whistle. Thanks for finding it!

GRACE

Must be quite a train.

SAM

(feeling confident, now!)

Oh, it is. Watch!

She blows the whistle and a great train blast is heard as though a locomotive is about to steam its way down from the rafters!

SCENE 7

SAM'S storytelling powers are reaching a peak. The entire cast is engaged and SAM directs everyone as they set about the business of creating the elements of the train, arranging seats and stowing luggage.

TRAVELER PATIENCE

Suddenly, through the steam and fog...

TRAVELER MAYOR

...through the shuddering earth...

SAM

A train appears!

SAM and GRACE come sweeping through the group, up the aisle of the train followed, at a distance, by THE AGENT who walks with a cane.

GRACE

(glancing behind her, suspiciously)

Sam, is that guy following us?

ENGINEER

(continuing the train narration)

700 cars long! Originally built, so they say, to carry the souls of dying wanderers to their final reward.

CONDUCTOR

Travelling so fast she arrives -

ALL

Before she departs!

CONDUCTOR

Tickets! Tickets, please. Take your seats! Welcome aboard the Cannonball!

SAM and GRACE make their way up the aisle avoiding THE AGENT and as they move the train transforms around them, ever-increasing in length.

TRAVELERS

THE UNDENIABLE FEEL OF THE WHEELS ON STEEL
HEAR THE JINGLE AND THE RUMBLE AND ROAR
OF THE FINE AND LEAN LOCOMOTIVE MACHINE
THAT'S DOIN' WHAT NO ONE'S EVER DONE BEFORE
SHE'LL CROSS THE LAND
FROM THE WOODLANDS TO THE CANYONS
WE'RE HEADED TO THE HEART OF IT ALL
FROM TRACK NUMBER SEVEN
TRAVEL ALL THE WAY TO HEAVEN

["Wish" - working revision - for review only - 01052018]

ON THE WABASH CANNONBALL
SHE'S THE WABASH, WABASH CANNONBALL WABASH,
WABASH CANNONBALL
WABASH, WABASH CANNONBALL
WABASH, WABASH CANNONBALL

SAM and GRACE have temporarily given THE AGENT the slip. They pause.

GRACE

It's the same guy! He IS following us.

SAM

I didn't want to say anything until I knew for sure.

GRACE

Why is he on the train?

SAM

He's an agent, Grace. Sent by Von Stein.

GRACE

The inventor? From the World's Fair?

SAM

(holding her satchel closer)

I saw him on the river boat. He knows I have dad's "Forever Lantern" plans in here.

GRACE

But, Von Stein already stole them.

SAM

He must be here to destroy the evidence!

GRACE

But that also means - ?

SAM

(finishing the thought)

No witnesses. We have to run.

They take off!

TRAVELERS

SHE'S THE WABASH, WABASH CANNONBALL WABASH,
WABASH CANNONBALL
WABASH, WABASH CANNONBALL
WABASH, WABASH CANNONBALL

The train passengers settle in for the journey. SAM and GRACE dash up the aisle.

SAM

In here!

GRACE

That's a private compartment!

SAM

Well aware!

They duck into a compartment and shut the "door" just as THE AGENT runs by. He pauses for a moment by the door... and then continues down the length of the train, exiting.

ANNIE CANNON

Well, that looked very exciting!

SAM and GRACE jump! They didn't notice the compartment was already occupied by ANNIE CANNON, a kind-looking woman sitting in one of the seats.

GRACE

Sorry! We didn't know -

SAM

(peeking out the compartment door)
We're hiding from someone. I think our lives may be in danger.

ANNIE CANNON

Sorry, dear, I can't hear you unless I can see your face.

SAM turns to ANNIE with a puzzled look.

ANNIE CANNON

That's better. I'm somewhat deaf, you see.

GRACE

How did it happen?

ANNIE CANNON

Scarlet fever, I believe. Wish I had a better story. I'm Ms. Cannon.

GRACE

Pleasure. I'm Grace, Ms. Cannon.

ANNIE CANNON

Oh, please. Call me Annie.

SAM

Annie Cannon? Your name sounds familiar.

ANNIE CANNON

I think I'd remember if we met. I have quite the memory, miss...?

SAM

Major. Sam Major.

ANNIE CANNON

Now, Sam, Grace, where are you ladies headed in such a hurry?

GRACE

Someone is trying to -

SAM

(cutting her off, slightly suspicious)
- steal our tickets!

ANNIE CANNON

You're already on the train.

SAM

(still worried THE AGENT might return)
Our tickets to the World's Fair. That's where we're going.

ANNIE CANNON

Fascinating! In San Francisco? I'm heading there myself. I just love seeing all the new inventions. I'm hoping they've improved telescopes on offer this year. Would make my job much easier.

GRACE

You have a job? What is it?

ANNIE CANNON

How shall I put it? I count the stars.

SAM

(interested)
The stars?

ANNIE CANNON

I count each and every one. Then I write down their location in my journal.

GRACE

So you made a catalog? A star census?

ANNIE CANNON

(impressed with GRACE)
Yes, very clever.

SAM

My father knows the name of every star up there. He even found one for me to wish on.

ANNIE CANNON

Indeed!? I'd like to meet him. Perhaps we could compare notes. My mother was the first one to teach me about the stars. Sounds like we have something in common, Sam.

GRACE

Your mother must have been quite a woman.

ANNIE CANNON

No argument. You know, I still remember those nights we spent, gazing up at the sky and writing down every star we could see in her old recipe book. Without her support, I don't know where I'd be. Yet, look at me now. A Master's degree in Physics and Astronomy and riding the Wabash Cannonball with thoughtful, modern young ladies.

She makes the ASL signs for "I believe in you."

SAM

What was that?

ANNIE CANNON

Something else mother taught me. Very useful for people like me who are somewhat deaf. Also works for passing secret messages!

GRACE

A language with your hands?

ANNIE CANNON

(demonstrating)

This one means "I," "believe," "in you."

SAM

How would you say, "do good?"

ANNIE CANNON

(demonstrating)

Like this. "Do good... wherever you are."

SAM

Are you sure you never met my father?

ANNIE CANNON

I think the most important thing a parent can do is teach us how to *(signing as she speaks)* "tell our story," don't you?

There is a moment... broken by a pounding on the compartment door! ANNIE is not fazed. She produces her camera.

ANNIE CANNON

(To SAM and GRACE)

Do you mind if I take your photograph?

GRACE

Sam! Someone's banging on this door! Is it - ?

SAM

We really should go.

Pounding on the door!

ANNIE CANNON

Won't take a moment. Smile!

Of course, it's a very early 20th century camera, so it takes, you know, a while.

ANNIE CANNON

Hold it. *(pounding)* One more moment. *(BAM! BAM! BAM!)*
And... got it!

GRACE

It was a pleasure to meet you, Annie.

ANNIE CANNON

Likewise. I'd leave through the window... if it were my adventure.

The pounding is so unbelievably intense, like... an intense... pounding... thing!

ANNIE CANNON

(calling to the door)

Sorry, I can't hear you over all the pounding! *(To SAM)*
Keep wishing on stars. There's plenty of them!

SAM and GRACE turn and crawl though the train window. There's an unearthly sound again and everything shifts into slow motion as the cast rotates the chairs and train "interior" set to reflect a windy train "exterior."

SAM

(narrating to the audience)

And THAT'S how we found ourselves on the roof of a train! I could feel the wind blasting us and I turned just in time to see Grace -

GRACE slips! SAM catches her hand!

SAM

- almost fall over the side! *(to GRACE)* We have to get to the end of the train!

GRACE nods and they start moving towards the right, hopping across sections of the train the cast puts in place as they progress. SAM narrates, again.

SAM

I could see the caboose up ahead and I turned to Grace to

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tell her, (*she does*) "We're going to make it," but that was a mistake!

THE AGENT crawls up into their path as *SAM'S* head is turned. *GRACE* tries to signal, but *SAM* turns too late. *THE AGENT* grabs *SAM'S* satchel and there is a short back and forth before it comes free and *SAM* is spun towards the right. Now *THE AGENT* stands between *SAM* and *GRACE*, satchel and cane in his hands.

GRACE

(*To THE AGENT*)

Von Stein DID send you!

THE AGENT

Did he?

GRACE

(*Looking at SAM*)

Did he?

SAM

I say he did! (*she pulls out COLT'S sword and rushes forward*) Give me back my father's -

THE AGENT extends his cane and blocks two of *SAM'S* blows - knocking *SAM* back and almost pushing her over the edge! *SAM* manages to cling to the edge of the roof, but she has a tenuous grip.

GRACE

Sam!

SAM

I'm okay!

THE AGENT

Are you? Who's in charge of the story, now? Looks like I'm "holding the bag" and your story is about to go "off the rails!"

SAM

You're not even using those idioms properly! You sound ridiculous!

THE AGENT

At least I "have a grip" on reality. (*he moves in to knock her fingers from their hold on the edge*) Which is more than I can say for -

GRACE

Wait! (*THE AGENT* pauses) Have you... have you ever seen one of Abraham Lincoln's birthday candles?

GRACE pulls one of the candles from her pack.

THE AGENT

You're going to light a candle on the roof of a moving train?

GRACE

Don't think I can?

THE AGENT

I absolutely KNOW you cannot.

GRACE

Bet?

THE AGENT

What?

GRACE

Make me a bet!

THE AGENT

Fine. Light that candle and I WON'T push your friend off this train to her doom.

GRACE steps forward and there's a heartbeat of a pause in the relentless wind. She closes her eyes and the candle winks to life!

THE AGENT

Impossible.

GRACE

Interesting hypothesis. (she holds the candle toward his face) Real world analysis?

The flame, as before, flickers and flies up and away from the candle. It hovers in front of the agent for a moment, hypnotic, then suddenly it flies around his head like a bee. GRACE takes advantage of his confusion and grabs SAM'S satchel. She squeezes past THE AGENT and pulls SAM back onto the train. THE AGENT runs at them, but SAM manages to pick up the sword and deflect a couple of his blows in a sword/cane fight! They break.

SAM

Grace! I never told you about step two, did I?

GRACE

Maybe? It was really fast and way back at the beginning...

SAM

Trust me. (she holds out her hand. They link fingers.) Step two?

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GRACE

Yeah?

THE AGENT rushes at them one final time.

SAM

JUMP!

They leap off the back of the train as the unearthly sound again sends the world into slow motion as the train speeds off stage and SAM and GRACE fly into the darkness.

Blackout.

SCENE 8

Lights up on SAM, sitting by herself looking up at the sky. TOM walks in and sits beside her.

TOM

You remember which star is yours?

SAM

(pointing up)

That one?

TOM

Right there in the tail of Draco, the Dragon. Between the Big and Little Dipper. Good thing Hercules is up there to protect us, see? Monsters and heroes all battling it out in the night sky, eh? Just waiting for someone to tell their story. Could be you.

He walks out. COLT enters from the other side to join SAM.

COLT

How's that wish coming along?

SAM

Not sure. We just jumped off a train and I don't know if we survived.

COLT

So why are you here?

SAM

You want the existential answer?

COLT shakes his head. SAM looks back up.

SAM

Ever learn the constellations?

COLT

Uh, sure. There's uh, Sagittarius... the guy with a bow... so that represents you shooting at me over there the helpless... raccoon or badger or something.

SAM

Creative. Look, two most important stars up there. *(pointing)* Mine... and the North Star. One's for wishing, and one's for showing you the way back home.

COLT

You know, I can't come with you for the rest of your journey.

SAM

Wishes work in mysterious ways.

She holds up her hand. They link fingers in SAM and GRACE'S pledge.

COLT

What are we doing?

SAM

Saying goodbye.

ONCE
FROZEN IN TIME
TRIED TO STAY OUT OF SIGHT
SAW A LIGHT
NOW
THAT I'VE FACED THE UNKNOWN
I COULD GO HOME AND FEEL
IT REALLY IS IDEAL
IF I NEVER KNEW YOU
I WOULDN'T KNOW I COULD CHANGE
WHICH MAKES IT NOT QUITE SO STRANGE
WHEN OTHERS DO
IF I NEVER KNEW YOU
I WOULDN'T BE HERE AT ALL
COULD NEVER HAVE BRAVED THE FALL
IT'S TRUE
I THOUGHT THE WORLD WAS SOMETHING
THAT I HAD TO FIGURE OUT
SOMETHING THAT I WANTED TO CONTROL
BUT NOW I SEE THAT'S NEVER BEEN WHAT LIFE IS ALL
ABOUT
SOMETIMES YOU FIND THE TRUTH BY LETTING GO

COLT

I kind of wish I could stick around for the end of this story.

SAM

You will. (*touching her heart*) In here, always.

IF I NEVER KNEW YOU
WOULD I BE HALF AS STRONG?
IT COULD HAVE ALL GONE SO WRONG
ALONG THE WAY
IF I NEVER KNEW YOU
I WOULDN'T SEE MAGIC THERE
YOU SHOWED ME IT'S EVERYWHERE

You have stars in your eyes, Colt. How did I not notice that before?

COLT walks into the darkness and the lights fade as

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SAM sinks back to her seat. We hear GRACE calling out.

GRACE

Sam! SAM! WAKE UP!

SAM turns to see GRACE above her with bandages and the lights stabilize.

SAM

We jumped off a train!

GRACE

(genuinely excited)

I know! I thought you DIED! Isn't it great you didn't?

She puts away her medical kit.

SAM

Grace, I thought I knew who you were. Back home. You'd do things like have great hair, or dance with all the boys, or run away from town just to make our parents mad.

GRACE

I sound so shallow.

SAM

I never knew you were the type of person to... you know... bring a backpack full of really useful equipment.

GRACE

I am finding out all sorts of things about myself, too. (a *shocking secret!*) I might go to college!

SAM

You'd be great.

GRACE

Shall we get you to the Fair? The gates are just over that hill, and we have an evil genius to thwart.

SAM

I couldn't have written it better!

SCENE 9

The scene is transformed. The lights are like a fantasy world. The stage is cleared of all the extraneous material and the cast brings in a string of lights to hang across the back.

FAIRGOER PATIENCE

A World's Fair!

FAIRGOER EDISON

A sprawling city of the future dedicated to science, art, human progress.

SAM and GRACE pass through on a mission continuing their conversation.

SAM

Is he even THAT?

GRACE

You mean Von Stein?

SAM

I KNOW he's evil but can he really be a GENIUS if all he does is steal ideas from smart people?

FAIRGOER COLT

(narrating)

All on the westernmost coast of the United States, like a city facing the sunset but turning toward the dawn.

SAM

What could he do with a lamp that never goes out? What's next? Power a city? Power an army?

GRACE

We have to stop him. If he's willing to steal your dad's idea, he's willing to do anything for power.

SAM

And that's how we found ourselves -

ALL

At the end of the story!

Doctor VON STEIN sits in a chair facing away from the audience. The chalkboard bears his name in bold lettering. SAM and GRACE keep a good distance as SAM calls out across the stage.

SAM

Von Stein! I've travelled across the United States, faced many dangers, escaped your Agents and now... I'm here to stop you. Admit you stole my father's work! Admit you're a

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fraud! The Forever Lantern is Tom Major's creation!

No reaction. He's still in his chair. SAM looks at GRACE. GRACE shrugs.

SAM

You can ignore me, but you can't ignore the truth! A CURSE ON ALL WHO SEEK THE LANTERN'S POWER FOR GAIN!

Nothing. They creep closer.

SAM

Doctor? Excuse me? Are you Doctor Proctor... Von Stein?

As they get right up behind him, VON STEIN casually turns around and sees them - and jumps in shock!

VON STEIN

Whoah!

SAM

(jumping back as well)

Sorry!

VON STEIN

Wow -

SAM

I know -

VON STEIN

That was -

SAM

I know, I KNOW, RIGHT?

VON STEIN

No, I almost -

SAM

I feel bad . . .

VON STEIN

(he's so polite!)

Not at all! *(he was wearing a set of headphones)* My fault entirely. I was trying out these new "head-phones," -

GRACE

You can hear through those?

VON STEIN

Fellow named Baldwin makes these in his kitchen. Try it! I was listening to my radio wave detector -

GRACE

(trying them on)

I just hear a tone, kind of a screee - !

VON STEIN

Just radio noise. Maybe it will amount to something in the future?

GRACE

If it were small, and PORTABLE!

SAM

Hey!

VON STEIN

I have completely forgotten my manners. I am Doctor Proctor
-

SAM AND GRACE

(finishing for him)

- Von Stein! We know!

SAM

I'm Sam Major. My father is TOM Major! Ring any bells?

VON STEIN

I'm sorry, have we met?

SAM

Don't play cute! You stole the plans for your lantern from my father. Does THIS look familiar?

She produces the notebook.

VON STEIN

Stolen! I would NEVER consider such a thing! My lantern, it is the product of my own imagination, and twelve long years of hard work.

SAM storms over to the board, flipping open her father's book and taking a couple of folded papers from inside.

SAM

Your lantern! *(She slaps the newspaper article up on the board.)* My father's design! *(She slaps up a second paper featuring the drawing of a lamp that looks very similar.)* They look the same to me!

VON STEIN

Uncanny! I have heard of such things, ideas running in parallel. Has your father built his?

SAM

He... no. Not exactly.

VON STEIN

(genuinely disappointed)

Oh. I should like to have asked him how he did it. The challenges he may have faced. It was not easy for me, I assure you. *(he gestures towards the journal)* May I?

SAM

You've already taken everything, why not?

She hands the book to VON STEIN.

GRACE

Are you sure about him, Sam? He seems NOT... you know... evil.

SAM

There's the proof, Grace! How often has my dad talked about that very invention, and there it sits!

VON STEIN comes over to SAM.

VON STEIN

Ms. Major? I have looked at your fathers notes and they are, most creative. He has some very interesting conjectures about the movements of the stars.

GRACE

He knows all their names.

VON STEIN

Indeed? Does he utilize a telescope? I would find it so painful to count without one.

SAM

Stop changing the subject!

VON STEIN

I... I must tell you there are no plans for a Forever Lantern in here.

SAM

(grabbing the book back and flipping through it)

What?

VON STEIN

There is an idea, a story he has written about such a lantern, but it is only that. A story about a lantern that runs forever. And, of course, the name.

SAM

(reading)

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"Sam came to me today with a name for my invention if I ever figure out how to make it. 'Call it the Forever Lantern,' she said. 'Just like your fireworks it'll light up the night, but it will never go out.' She has a gift."

VON STEIN

He sounds like a very good father. He appears knowledgeable about many things.

SAM

I owe you an apology, Doctor. I have wasted your time. You too, Grace.

GRACE

Don't say that.

SAM

I made a wish. I wanted everyone to know my father like I know him. But it would seem I don't know him at all.

She turns to leave. VON STEIN holds out the headphones and speaks, stopping her.

VON STEIN

Listen. (*holding the headphones up to SAM'S ear*) Noise, yes?

SAM nods.

VON STEIN

Not noise. Radio waves. The language of energy. To you, maybe noise. To me, it is communication. To someone else, it becomes music. Your father, he sees stories in the stars but you - you see stories everywhere. I am about to unveil my invention to the world. I would like you to tell everyone here about your father, first.

SAM

(looking toward the front of the stage)
Up there?

VON STEIN

I would very much appreciate it.

SAM walks downstage. She pauses. The lights focus in on her and we hear the sound of a crowd growing silent.

SAM

(summoning her storytelling style)
So, I found myself in San Francisco, on the other side of the country, at a World's Fair. I crossed over a bridge to get here. Made my way through an ancient fort, had a duel

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on a train, and even freed a sea monster and now... there's no turning back.

The "Forever Lantern" has been brought downstage for display and placed in front of SAM.

SAM

I saw in front of me the dream my father had when I was just a little girl. A lamp that would grant your every wish. So I made one. I made a wish and here I am to tell my story.

She looks back at GRACE. GRACE silently signs "I believe in you."

SAM

My father is Tom Major. He knows all about the stars and constellations, he knows how to create an amazing fireworks show, and he inspires me. He believes in the future, and he believes in me. He...

She pauses, uncertain.

GRACE

He took you to the beach!

SAM

That's right. Kitty Hawk!

JUST A WEEK 'TIL CHRISTMAS
JUST A WINDY BEACH
A FATHER AND A DAUGHTER
AND SOMETHING OUT OF REACH
I'M NOT SURE WHY WE WENT THERE
I'M NOT SURE WHAT WE'LL SEE
I'M JUST GLAD THAT HE'S THERE WITH ME
SO GLAD THAT HE'S THERE WITH ME

Can you imagine it?

GRACE

I imagine its freezing.

SAM

We went there to see a flying machine! Try to picture it.

WIRE, SPRUCE AND MUSLIN
AND A DREAM OF FLIGHT
NO ONE THINKS THEY'LL DO IT
FATHER THINKS THEY MIGHT
THE BROTHERS HAVE A VISION
FATHER UNDERSTANDS
AND THE MOMENT THAT THE PLANE LEAVES THE SAND
HE GRABS MY HAND

AND THE WORLD CAN SUDDENLY BE
EVERYTHING YOU DREAMED IT COULD BE
AND ONLY THE FEW OF US HERE ON THIS BEACH BELOW
EVEN KNOW
THAT WHAT NO ONE THOUGHT OF BEFORE
HAS THROWN OPEN SOME MAGICAL DOOR
AND WE DON'T KNOW WHAT LIES IN STORE
BUT WE KNOW THAT WE'LL GO

He taught me that the future is happening right now.

GRACE

We played with fireworks!

SAM

We did! Remember how they lit up the night?

GRACE

Your dad taught me that science can be color and
explosions!

SAM

The Wright Brothers have a story, he has a story, someone
just has to...

GRACE

"Has to" what?

SAM

Someone has to tell it.

FATHER HAD HIS OWN DREAM
~~FATHER'S GONE FOR GOOD~~
NO ONE THOUGHT HE'D MAKE IT
BUT I KNEW HE WOULD
WE BOTH HAD WITNESSED MAGIC
A MAN UP IN THE SKY
HOW COULD HE WATCH AND NOT TRY

GRACE AND SAM

FOR OUR WORLD CAN SUDDENLY BE
EVERYTHING WE DREAM IT TO BE
AND WHAT NO ONE THAT CAME BEFORE US COULD KNOW
WE WILL KNOW

GRACE

YES OUR WORLD CAN SUDDENLY BE

SAM

WE CAN FLY

GRACE

EVERYTHING WE DREAM IT TO BE

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SAM

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

BOTH

AND WE'LL BUILD A PALACE FOR JUST YOU AND I
IN THE SKY

AND WE'LL CROSS EVERY OCEAN
TO SHARE WHAT WE'VE FOUND
PROMETHEUS THAT NEVER TOUCHES THE GROUND
LIGHTER THAN AIR AND FASTER THAN SOUND
ON A STAR

SAM

YOU CAN SEE SO FAR

SAM signs to the audience as she speaks.

SAM

"Do good, where ever you are." (*turning to GRACE*) Let's go home.

SCENE 10

The lights dim on SAM and GRACE. Soft music wafts out of the silence. TOM walks towards us through the darkness as stars float about, gradually fading as the lights warm.

TOM

WHEN THE DAWN IS BREAKING OVER THE HORIZON
TO SEPARATE THE MORNING FROM THE NIGHT
IT CARRIES ALL THE MEMORIES OF MAGIC
FROM A DISTANT POINT OF LIGHT
THE STARS DON'T REALLY LEAVE US IN THE DAYTIME
THE BRILLIANCE OF THE SUN JUST HIDES THEIR GLOW
AND OUR FAITH THAT THEY ARE THERE
WILL HELP REMIND US
THAT WE NEVER WALK ALONE

SAM joins him.

TOM AND SAM

IF WE MAKE A WISH
WANT SOMETHING ENOUGH
TO MAKE A WISH
HAVE A DREAM WE'RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO WISH
AND THEN THAT STAR WILL LEAD US TO
THE PATH TO MAKE THE WISH COME TRUE

The cast has reset the stage and loveable Ideal, North Carolina fades back into view. It's dawn.

MAYOR

Welcome back to Ideal, North Carolina where we're still working on a town slogan.

PATIENCE

(to MAYOR)

You should ask Sam for ideas.

SAM

(narrating to the audience)

My dad was upset that I left without saying goodbye. But I DID come back and technically, I'm not a child anymore.

TOM

I can live with "young adult."

SAM

Even Harold Pilkey grew up. I guess we're friends, now.

HAROLD

I'm helping your dad with the fireworks!

SAM

Grace decided to study science and eventually went to Wellesley College.

GRACE

Like Annie Cannon! I even got a new camera!

SAM

What can I say? It's the 20th century. We're "centennials!"

TOM

She started out playing with fireworks, just like you all did.

SAM

You knew about that, too?

TOM smiles.

SAM

My dad never made a lantern that burns forever, but he taught a lot of kids in my home town about the stars. He got a lot of them, like Grace, interested in science and you know... he did good - right where he was. Me? I became a writer, of course. Wrote stories... just like this one I'm telling you now. Plus, stories about cowboys, and knights, and monsters.

COLT enters in anticipation!

SAM

Maybe even one or two about - (*she leans in like it's a secret*) "Love."

COLT

Wishes work in mysterious ways.

SAM

I won't lie, wishes are hard work. I'm glad they're a little bit magic, too!

SAM

IF EVERY STAR'S A WISH THERE MUST BE MILLIONS
ALL OF THEM ARE WAITING TO COME TRUE
AND THEY'RE MADE OF DREAMS
AND HOPE AND OUR DESIRE
TO FIND THE THING WE'RE MEANT TO DO

TOM, COLT, GRACE AND SAM

WE'RE NEVER SATISFIED JUST WONDERING AND GAZING
MESMERIZED AND FROZEN AND RESIGNED

ALL

BECAUSE WE CAME HERE FOR A PURPOSE MORE AMAZING

THAT WE KNOW WE'RE BOUND TO FIND
IF WE MAKE A WISH
WANT SOMETHING ENOUGH
TO MAKE A WISH
HAVE A DREAM WE'RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO WISH
AND THEN A STAR MIGHT LEAD US TO
THE PATH TO MAKE THE WISH COME TRUE

SAM

YES THERE'S A PATH TO MAKE THE WISH COME TRUE

The cast has removed all their special character costumes and are now attired in the basic clothes in which they started. They gather at the front of the stage and GRACE snaps a photo of the audience as the song, and the play, ends.

Blackout.

The End