

One Perfect Wish

Chapter One Preview

Paul Weter

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Preface

The Wish Collector

Inside an old wishing well was a silver necklace someone had discarded for reasons unknown. Passersby donated their pocket change over the years, and the necklace slowly absorbed the hopes and wishes attached to those coins. After all, it had nothing better to do. It didn't belong with the coins anyway.

Year after year, the wishes added up until the wishing well was finally opened. The necklace seemed to have no value, so it was given to a resale shop. The owner cleaned it and hung it up for sale. It took a long time before somebody bought it. The seller was glad to be rid of it, and the buyer was happy to find something affordable.

Necklaces don't have feelings, of course, but this one had a peculiar sense of purpose. Being freed from the wishing well, it wanted its stored wishes to be released too. And not in dribs and drabs, but in a big way. It should be the Big Bang of wishes. There was no urgency to this. The necklace had waited a long time to be released from the box. It could wait as long as necessary.

There was nothing inscribed on the pendant. The color wasn't as eye-catching as gold. Nobody would ever suspect that an extraordinary power was inside this ordinary piece of jewelry. That secret was known only to the necklace.

Chapter 1

Paths Intertwined

Kayli Martin rode her bike fast and recklessly on the sidewalk in front of her house. The spring wind made a mess of her long brown hair, but she didn't care. She was in a partly-happy, partly-not mood. It was her tenth birthday—a major milestone in a girl's life—but her mother had spoiled it by withholding the best gift because “it didn't seem like the proper time.”

Hmmph, Kayli grumbled. Mom was still angry about the trick she had played on her younger brother: replacing his pet fish with toy fish that floated. They looked real at first glance, lying on top of the water with glassy eyes staring vacantly.

Any fool with half a brain would realize that they were plastic, she thought. *If he had taken two seconds to look closer, he'd have realized it was a joke!* But her brother, Nathan, was not a simple fool; more of a fool extraordinaire. As soon as he saw the fish, he took off like a rocket, hollering for Mom. By the time Kayli jumped out to yell “fooled ya!” Nathan wasn't even in the room.

Mom didn't find it funny at all, due to the upset it had caused him. So Kayli would have to pay the price for her fun. She didn't hurt the fish, which she had safely stored in a pitcher of water. The real damage was to her brother's mood, and to her mother's peace of mind. And it was going to cost her.

This is so unfair, Kayli fumed. Her brother had played dozens of tricks on her. This was a mere fraction of what she owed him. It was just bad timing, taking advantage

of such a great idea on the day before her birthday. On no other day except Christmas would an opportunity for this type of punishment be so readily available. She made a mental note to check the calendar before future pranks.

Maybe instead of riding my bike around the block, I'll just stay on this street and keep right on going. She'd return home after dark, staying away just long enough to worry her mother. That would teach her a lesson. Then maybe Mom would reconsider and give her the final present.

As Kayli sped around the corner, she came upon a strange-looking boy standing right in the middle of the sidewalk. He was oddly dressed in what looked like outdated drab clothes, and was completely out of place. He seemed to be looking right at Kayli, yet had no sense of urgency or fear, even as she headed right toward him. There was something even more peculiar about his appearance: his fingers and feet were almost transparent.

She had to ride onto the grass to avoid hitting him because the boy made no effort to get out of the way. Kayli glanced back to give the boy a dirty look, but nobody was there. The boy was gone! *This is so bizarre. He couldn't have run away that quickly because there's no place to hide. It's like he just vanished.*

This thought didn't have time to linger, however, because she suddenly heard an engine. She whipped her head around and saw white—the white side of a plumber's van—coming fast down a driveway. Kayli was in the van's blind spot, and the driver hadn't noticed she was there.

Kayli screamed and slammed on her brakes, though she knew it was too late. *Crap! Where is my helmet when I need it?* All she could do was close her eyes and hope for the best.

In the instant that followed, time stretched like chewing gum, and into that vastness popped an idea.

It was absolutely clear that this was the time, this was the exact moment to use it. There was no time to shield her head with her arms, but there was just enough time for one action.

She lifted her right hand from the handlebar and placed it on the pendant hanging from her necklace. As she touched the silver star, the words flashed in her mind: One Perfect Wish. The star gave off a faint glow before everything went black.