

Shooting Stars in Heaven (Iris Gale)

I looked up at my friends and saw the people that I had traveled with, the people that I shared memories with. I noticed that I would rather travel with them than earn any treasures or status or power. The real treasure wasn't the chest we found or the castle we now own, but the friends we made to achieve those things.

An alarm rang on my phone and I put my book down to turn it off.

Wow, what a letdown, I thought as I checked my phone. There was a text message from Ila. There's gonna be a party at Valor's house wanna go? Can't, I typed, I have to do hw at the library Oh come on it's Saturday homework can wait Dude my moms gonna kill me if she finds out I ditched again Then she doesn't need to find out lol no, if my grade goes down my moms gonna take my phone One night out won't kill you. You need to have some fun Nah im gonna miss this one tell me how it is Fine good luck dealing with FOMO

I put my phone into my tote bag and threw the book in there too, might as well return it now. I throw in my computer, some random textbooks, and a bunch of study materials. I grab my keys and drive over to the nearby library. I parked my car, sat at my usual table, and grabbed my computer out of my bag. I put it in front of me, and I start typing and clicking on my computer and absentmindedly answer some questions-occasionally grabbing a textbook and flipping through the old pages. After a couple of hours, I closed my laptop and decided it was time for a snack break. As I was getting ready, I heard a voice next to me.

"Hey, you're reading *Shooting Stars in Heaven*! I love that book. How far have you gotten?"

"Oh, I finished the book, the ending sucked," I admitted.

"Really?" She said, looking surprised.

"Yeah the whole, *'it's the friends you made along the way'* thing was kinda sad and a letdown."

"Oh, you haven't finished the book yet, there's I think another chapter."

"There is?"

"Yeah, it's not super obvious- it's after the acknowledgments- but it's a plot twist kinda thing it's-" she stops herself. "Well, I won't spoil it for you, but once you read it, come find me, tell me if you like it. I'm here basically every day." She laughs to herself.

"Alright, thanks." As a couple more hours passed, I was working on my argument essay when I heard a buzz come from my phone. I pick it up and see it's an unknown number. I ignored it and put my phone into my bag. The buzz eventually stopped and I continued to write. *Bzz, bzz, bzzt. Bzz, bzz, bzzt. You've gotta be kidding me.* I checked the number again. Similar, maybe the same number. *Wrong number*, I thought as I put my phone back in the bag. The buzz stops echoing around the quiet library and immediately starts up again. I quickly grab my stuff, walk out the door, and accept the call.

"I'm sorry but I think you have the wrong number."

"This isn't Lyra?" The lady on the other end asked. "This was the number in my daughter's contact," It was hard to hear her as there was chaos in the background and her voice was shaking.

"Oh!" I said, alarmed. "Hi, yeah that's me."

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She sounded relieved. "This is Ila's mom," Why was her mom calling me? Ila was seventeen, if she needed something she could call me herself.

"Does Ila need something?" I asked.

She sniffed on the other end of the phone and her voice shook. "Ila was killed at a house party a couple of hours ago." I felt the blood drain from my face. "She was-" she sniffed. "She was shot in the head, and she bled out and died. I think most of the kids there were killed," there was silence; stunned silence for me because the house party I had been invited to was a death trap and my friends had been caught in it. Sad silence for Ila's mom as she lost her only child. "I knew both of you were really important to each other. I'm so sorry we didn't tell you earlier."

"No, no, no, no, it's fine, thank you for telling me," I whispered as I slowly sank into a bench, "Thank you." I hung up on her and pulled my knees up to the bench. I rested my head on them and started to sob. All my friends were at that party. It was at one of my best friend's houses, and everyone would always go to his parties. Who lived? Who died? I could feel people's eyes on me, but I didn't care. I quickly got up, searched for my keys, and walked to my car. The keys jingled like wind chimes as I locked the door and drove home. Once I got there, I parked it in the garage and went to my room.

I need a distraction. I grabbed *Shooting Stars in Heaven*. I open the book to my bookmark, flip past the acknowledgments, and sure enough I see the last chapter.

"Wow, what a letdown," you think as you close this book and go on your phone.

"But wait!" I yell at you through the page. "Don't go yet! I have some explaining to do!"

Now that I have your attention back, I would like to ask you something. How many times have you appreciated your friends and family? If you thought that the ending was corny or a letdown, it partially was, but on the other hand, it isn't. People are one of the things that you don't think to miss before they are gone. You don't understand how hard it hits you until it has already hit you. So cherish the moments while you can. Take silly pictures, sing karaoke, go camping, whatever you do, be with the people who bring you joy. Be with the people that you want to be remembered by for the rest of your life.