

TEENS WHO LONG TO FLY

Noticing Possibilities



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The Rhythm of Teens Who Long to Fly

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Introduction — What does it mean to fly?

Most people think of flying as going somewhere else.

Higher.

Further.

Away.

But there is another kind of flying.

It does not require wings.

It does not require courage in the usual sense.

And it does not take you away from your life.

It brings you more deeply into it.

This story is about four friends.

Spark.

Lena.

Rosa.

And Milan.

At first they simply meet around a campfire.

They talk.

They listen.

They notice things.

Small things.

Ordinary things.

The kind of things most people hurry past.

And gradually they discover something surprising.
The more attention they give life, the more life reveals.
The more they listen, the more they hear.
The more they notice, the more there is to notice.
And little by little, the world becomes larger than they thought.
Not because it changes.
Because they do.
Or perhaps more accurately:
because they begin to see more of what was already there.



This is not a story about learning special powers.
It is not a story about becoming someone else.
It is a story about curiosity.
About friendship.
About paying attention.
About discovering that the first answer is not always the whole answer.
And about finding the freedom to explore what else might be possible.

Perhaps that is what longing to fly really means.
Not escaping the world.
But meeting it with open eyes.
Open attention.
And an open sense of wonder.

If, while reading, you begin noticing things a little differently...
Then perhaps you are already flying.

Chapter 1 — Stepping Outside

Spark pulled the front door shut behind him.

Immediately he took a deeper breath.

The tightness that always seemed to fill the house stayed on the other side of the door. Out here, the evening air felt fresh and open. He stretched his shoulders and started walking.

By now he knew the feeling well.

The moment he stepped outside, his head became clearer.

His thoughts stopped bumping into each other.

And somehow, without even trying, he was already at the old factory.

Not really, of course.

His feet were still on the sidewalk.

But in his mind he could already see the place.

The broken windows.

The rusted metal beams.

The clearing where nobody was supposed to be.

And tonight...

Tonight there would be a campfire.

A grin spread across his face.

He could almost smell the wood smoke already.

Could almost see the flames flickering in the darkness.

Could almost hear the crack of a branch giving way to the fire and the tiny sparks shooting upward toward the stars.

There was a lot going on lately.

Not the kind of things you talked about with just anyone.

The kind of things you carried around for a while, turning them over in your mind from different angles.

Maybe he would bring some of it up tonight.

Maybe not.

He kicked a pebble off the sidewalk and watched it skip ahead.

There was no rush.

The evening was young.

Just before he turned onto the narrow path leading toward the factory grounds, a large bird burst from a nearby tree.

“Caw!”

Spark jumped.

The bird swept across the path in front of him, black wings flashing in the fading sunlight.

For a moment he stared after it.

“Well,” he said, “you seem enthusiastic.”

The bird disappeared into the distance.

Spark nodded solemnly.

“So, you agree with us.”

Then he laughed.

The sound echoed through the quiet evening as he continued toward the old factory.

Somewhere ahead, three friends would soon arrive.

And if everything went according to plan, there would be a campfire, stories, questions, and a long evening under the stars.

Spark grinned.

That sounded just about perfect.

The factory appeared between the trees.

Every time Spark saw it, he had the feeling that it was pretending to be abandoned.

The windows were broken.

Parts of the roof had collapsed.

Rust covered almost everything.

Yet somehow the place never felt dead.

It felt as if it was waiting.

“For what?” he asked aloud.

The factory, as usual, did not answer.

“Thought so.”

He slipped through a gap in an old fence and headed toward the clearing.

Someone was already there.

Lena.

She was sitting on a fallen concrete block with a backpack beside her and a pile of sticks at her feet.

“You are talking to buildings again,” she said.

“They listen better than most people.”

Lena nodded thoughtfully.

“That could actually be true.”

Spark laughed.

That was one of the reasons he liked Lena.

Most people immediately rejected unusual ideas.

Lena picked them up, turned them around, and looked at them from several angles.

A moment later a voice called from behind them.

“Move.”

Milan emerged from the trees carrying an armload of wood that looked far too heavy.

Neither of them moved.

Milan stopped.

“You could at least pretend to help.”

“You look like you had everything under control,” said Spark.

“I did.”

A branch slipped from the pile and landed on his foot.

Lena burst out laughing.

“I saw that.”

“No, you didn’t.”

Before she could answer, Rosa appeared.

She carried a small bag and looked slightly out of breath.

“You started without me.”

“We haven’t started anything,” said Milan.

“We are having a highly productive argument,” said Spark.

“About what?”

“We haven’t decided yet.”

That earned him three different looks.

Lena smiled.

Milan rolled his eyes.

Rosa shook her head.

The familiar reactions made Spark unexpectedly happy.

For a little while they gathered wood, cleared a safe spot, and argued about the best way to build the fire.

Mostly Milan argued.

A few minutes later the first flames appeared.

Everyone leaned forward.

The fire crackled.

A thin ribbon of smoke curled upward.

Then the flames caught properly.

“Ha!” said Spark.

“I told you.”

Milan folded his arms.

“It was always going to work.”

“That is not what you said five minutes ago.”

“It is exactly what I said.”

“It wasn’t.”

“It was.”

Lena held up both hands.

“I have an idea.”

The others looked at her.

“Let’s agree that the fire exists.”

The argument ended immediately.

The four of them settled around the growing warmth.

For a while nobody spoke.

The flames danced.

The sky slowly darkened.

Then Lena frowned.

“That’s strange.”

Three heads turned toward her.

“What?” asked Rosa.

Lena pointed.

“Your jacket.”

Spark looked down.

“What about it?”

“The button.”

Spark blinked.

The top button of his jacket was missing.

“So?”

Lena pointed at Milan.

“Milan’s too.”

Milan inspected his jacket.

“Huh.”

Rosa looked at hers.

Then she stared.

“Mine too.”

For a moment nobody spoke.

Lena slowly looked at her own jacket.

The button was gone there as well.

The silence lasted two seconds.

Then Spark grinned.

“This is clearly the beginning of an international missing-button conspiracy.”

“No,” said Milan.

“It clearly isn’t.”

“But all four?”

Rosa looked around the circle.

“That is odd.”

Lena leaned forward.

“Wait.”

The curiosity in her eyes had appeared.

The others recognized it immediately.

“When did it happen?”

“What?”

“The button.”

Nobody knew.

Spark thought for a moment.

“I noticed mine this afternoon.”

“Mine yesterday,” said Rosa.

“Might have been this week,” said Milan.

Lena sat back.

“Different days.”

“Different schools,” said Rosa.

“Different places,” said Milan.

Spark looked from one face to the next.

The fire crackled softly.

Something about it felt bigger than a missing button.

Not important exactly.

But interesting.

The kind of interesting that stayed with you.

Lena was still thinking.

Finally she asked:

“What made us choose these jackets tonight?”

Nobody answered.

Rosa pulled her jacket a little closer around herself.

“I almost didn’t,” she said.

Lena looked at her.

“Didn’t what?”

“Wear this one.”

Rosa glanced down at the missing button.

“I had another jacket in my hand first.”

The fire gave a sharp little crack.

Spark leaned forward.

“And?”

Rosa shrugged, but her voice had changed.

“I don’t know. I just put it back.”

“Why?”

“That’s the thing.” She looked around the circle. “I don’t know why. But when I grabbed this one, it felt important.”

Nobody laughed.

Even Milan stayed quiet.

For a few moments, the only sound was the fire.

Spark looked down at his own missing button.

Then at the others.

“Okay,” he said at last.

“Now that’s weird.”

And for once, nobody disagreed.

Chapter 2 — Something Changed

For a while nobody spoke.

The fire crackled softly between them.

Above, the first stars had appeared.

Rosa was still looking at her jacket.

Not all the time.

Just every now and then.

As if she expected it to tell her something.

Lena noticed.

Of course she noticed.

“Rosa?”

“Hmm?”

“You keep looking at that button.”

Rosa smiled a little.

“There’s no button.”

“Exactly.”

Spark laughed.

“Good point.”

But Rosa did not laugh.

Not immediately.

The others waited.

Finally she shrugged.

"I don't know."

Nobody said anything.

The fire popped.

A shower of tiny sparks spiraled upward.

"I know it sounds silly."

"Then it's probably interesting," said Lena.

That earned her a smile.

Rosa looked down at her hands.

"I keep thinking about that other jacket."

"The one you almost wore?" asked Spark.

Rosa nodded.

"It was almost on."

"What made you change?" Lena asked.

"I don't know."

She was quiet for a moment.

"That's what bothers me."

Milan tilted his head.

"Maybe you just changed your mind."

"Maybe."

"But that's not what it feels like," said Lena.

Rosa looked up.

"No."

For a moment the two girls simply looked at each other.

Then Rosa shook her head.

"It sounds strange."

“Good,” said Spark.

“We’re having a strange evening.”

That finally made her laugh.

She pulled her knees closer.

“When I picked up this jacket, it felt important.”

The words hung in the air.

Nobody rushed to explain them.

Nobody rushed to dismiss them either.

The fire crackled.

A breeze moved through the trees.

Somewhere in the distance, a bird called.

Milan poked at a piece of wood with a stick.

“Important how?”

Rosa opened her mouth.

Closed it again.

Then she laughed softly.

“I have absolutely no idea.”

For some reason that answer felt right.

Not complete.

Just honest.

And somehow everyone relaxed.

The mystery remained.

The question remained.

But nobody seemed in a hurry anymore.

Spark stretched his legs toward the fire.

“You know what I think?”

“That aliens stole our buttons?” said Milan.

“That is still a possibility.”

Milan groaned.

Lena smiled.

Rosa shook her head.

And suddenly the evening felt lighter again.

Yet something had changed.

Not in the jackets.

Not in the missing buttons.

In them.

Without realizing it, they had stayed with a question a little longer than usual.

Long enough for it to become interesting.

Long enough for it to feel alive.

Chapter 3 — Wider Than Before

The next morning, Rosa stood in front of her closet longer than usual.
Not because she cared that much about clothes.
She didn't.
Mostly.

But now every jacket seemed to be looking back at her.
She reached for the blue one.
Stopped.
Reached for the green one.
Stopped again.
Then she laughed.
“This is ridiculous,” she told the closet.
The closet offered no opinion.
In the end she took a sweater.
No buttons.
That felt safer.



Milan noticed it during math.
Not the missing button.
The question.
It arrived in the middle of an equation and sat there as if it belonged.

What made us choose those jackets?

He frowned at his notebook.

There was probably a normal explanation.

There was always a normal explanation.

Maybe they had all seen the same weather forecast.

Maybe jackets with missing buttons were more common than people realized.

Maybe people noticed patterns only after someone pointed them out.

That last one felt sensible.

He wrote it down in the margin.

Then he stared at it.

Why did that not end the matter?



Lena called Spark that afternoon.

"I need Noah's number," she said.

"Hello to you too."

"Hello. I need Noah's number."

"Why?"

"Because I need to ask him something."

"That is usually why people need phone numbers."

There was a pause.

Then Lena said, "Have you been thinking about the button thing?"

Spark grinned into the phone.

"I wondered how long it would take you."

"You have?"

"Of course."

"And?"

“And I still think aliens are underrated.”

“Spark.”

“Fine.” He leaned back on his bed and looked at the ceiling. “I keep thinking about Rosa.”

“Me too.”

“Not the button?”

“No,” said Lena. “Rosa.”

Spark was quiet for a moment.

“She said it felt important.”

“I know.”

“And nobody laughed.”

“I know that too.”

For a while neither of them said anything.

Then Spark said, more softly, “That was nice.”

“It was,” said Lena.

And somehow the phone call felt different after that.



Two days later, Milan saw Rosa near the corner shop.

She was standing outside with a paper bag in her hands, looking at the traffic as if she had forgotten where she was going.

“Rosa?”

She turned.

“Oh. Hi.”

“Hi.”

For a second they stood there awkwardly.

They were friends, of course.

But usually the four of them were friends together.

Milan and Rosa was different.

“How are you?” Milan asked.

Rosa looked surprised.

“I’m fine.”

“Good.”

Another silence.

Milan nearly left.

Then he didn’t.

“Have you thought about it again?”

Rosa knew immediately what he meant.

“The jacket?”

“Yes.”

“A little.”

“Same.”

She looked at him more closely.

“You?”

“Obviously for scientific reasons.”

“Obviously.”

That made them both smile.

Rosa shifted the paper bag to her other arm.

“I keep thinking about how nobody made it weird.”

Milan frowned.

“It was weird.”

“No, I mean...” She searched for words. “Nobody made me feel weird.”

Milan looked down at the pavement.

Then he nodded.

Only once.

But Rosa saw it.

“Yes,” he said.

That was all.

But later that evening, Milan sent her a message.

Maybe the interesting part was not the button.

Rosa read it three times.

Then she typed back:

Maybe.



The next time all four of them met, it was not at the factory.

It was by the canal, because Spark had suddenly decided fishing was the perfect activity for people who had no idea what they were doing.

Milan said that made no sense.

Spark said that was exactly why it was perfect.

Lena brought sandwiches.

Rosa brought a blanket.

Nobody brought fish.

“Just to be clear,” said Milan, watching Spark attach something that was probably not meant to be attached to a fishing line, “have you ever done this before?”

“Once.”

“When?”

“When I was seven.”

“Did you catch anything?”

“A shoe.”

Lena looked delighted.

“That counts.”

“No, it doesn’t,” said Milan.

“It came out of the water.”

“It was a shoe.”

“Still.”

Rosa sat on the blanket and smiled.

For a while they tried to fish.

Mostly they talked.

About school.

About a movie Lena wanted them to see.

About whether Spark’s mascot had a name.

It did.

He refused to tell them.

Then, without anyone planning it, the conversation turned.

Rosa looked at Milan.

“I got your message.”

Spark immediately looked interested.

“What message?”

“Nothing,” said Milan.

Which, naturally, made everyone more interested.

Lena turned to Rosa.

“What did he say?”

Rosa glanced at Milan, asking without words if it was okay.

Milan shrugged.

“He said maybe the interesting part wasn’t the button.”

Spark stopped pretending to fish.

Lena became very still.

Rosa looked at the canal.

"I think he's right."

Milan blinked.

"I didn't say I was right."

"You almost did."

"I said maybe."

"That is Milan for yes," said Spark.

Milan ignored him.

Lena leaned forward.

"What do you think the interesting part was?"

Rosa pulled a loose thread from the edge of the blanket.

"I don't know exactly."

Nobody interrupted.

That helped.

"It stayed with me," she said. "Not just the button. The way we talked about it."

"The way we didn't solve it?" asked Spark.

"Maybe."

"The way we didn't laugh?" asked Lena.

Rosa nodded.

"That too."

Milan looked at the water.

"The way we stayed with it," he said.

Everyone looked at him.

He looked annoyed.

“What?”

“Nothing,” said Spark.

“You just sounded wise for a second.”

“I take it back.”

“No, too late,” said Lena. “It happened.”

Rosa laughed.

The canal moved slowly beside them.

A duck floated past as if it owned the afternoon.

Spark watched it go.

“So the button was not the whole thing.”

“No,” said Lena.

“And the jacket was not the whole thing.”

“No,” said Rosa.

“And we still have no idea what the thing is.”

“Correct,” said Milan.

Spark nodded.

“Excellent.”

Milan stared at him.

“How is that excellent?”

“Because now we have something to notice.”

For a moment, nobody said anything.

Then Lena smiled.

Rosa looked at the water.

Milan picked up a stone and turned it over in his hand.

And Spark, who still had not caught a fish, felt strangely satisfied.

The canal was ordinary.

The afternoon was ordinary.

Four friends sat on a blanket with sandwiches, no fish, and no answers.

And somehow, that was enough to make the day feel wider than before.

Chapter 4 — Being Careful

The following Saturday, the four of them met near the old factory.

Not because they had planned to.

At least, not very well.

Spark had sent a message that simply said:

Factory?

Lena replied:

Probably.

Rosa replied:

Okay.

Milan replied:

That is not a plan.

Yet somehow they all arrived.

They were sitting on an old concrete platform behind the factory when Lena said:

“My brother asked me something.”

That immediately caught Spark’s attention.

“Did he finally admit I’m fascinating?”

“No.”

“Then I’m not interested.”

“You will be.”

Spark sighed dramatically.

“Continue.”

Lena smiled.

“He asked why I spend so much time with you.”

There was a brief silence.

Then Rosa nodded.

“My sister asked me something similar.”

“Really?” said Lena.

Rosa nodded.

“She asked what we actually do.”

Milan laughed.

“Good question.”

Spark pointed at him.

“You see? This is why you’re here.”

“To ask difficult questions?”

“No. To make me look wise by comparison.”

Milan threw a leaf at him.

Spark considered this a victory.

Lena looked around the group.

“So?”

“So what?” asked Spark.

“What do we do?”

Nobody answered immediately.

The wind moved through the trees.

A bird called somewhere in the distance.

Finally Spark shrugged.

“Interesting things happen.”

Lena immediately shook her head.

“Interesting things happen everywhere.”

Spark opened his mouth.

Closed it again.

“That’s annoyingly true.”

“Thank you.”

“No, really. It is.”

Rosa smiled.

Milan looked thoughtful.

“We talk.”

“Lots of people talk,” said Lena.

“That’s also annoyingly true.”

“Thank you.”

For a while nobody spoke.

Nobody seemed bothered by the silence.

Finally Rosa said:

“We stay with things.”

The others looked at her.

Milan frowned.

“People stay with things all the time.”

Rosa considered this.

Then shook her head.

“Not like this.”

“Like what?” asked Lena.

Rosa searched for words.

Spark waited.

Lena waited.

Even Milan waited.

The silence stretched comfortably between them.

"I don't know," Rosa admitted. "The button thing."

"What about it?" asked Spark.

"We could have laughed and forgotten it."

"We did laugh."

"You know what I mean."

They did.

Rosa looked down at her hands.

"Most people would have moved on."

Lena slowly nodded.

Milan picked up a small stone and rolled it between his fingers.

Spark looked out toward the trees.

Nobody was rushing to answer.

Nobody was rushing to leave the question behind either.

A smile appeared on Rosa's face.

"There."

"What?" asked Lena.

"That."

Rosa pointed around the circle.

"We're doing it again."

For a second nobody understood.

Then Milan did.

His eyebrows rose slightly.

"Oh."

Lena laughed softly.

Spark looked confused.

"As usual, I have no idea what's happening."

"You're participating in it," said Lena.

“Excellent. Carry on.”

Rosa laughed.

“I mean this.”

She gestured around the group.

“We don’t rush.”

The words settled quietly between them.

Milan looked at the stone in his hand.

“Maybe.”

“Maybe?” said Spark.

“That’s practically agreement.”

Milan ignored him.

“Most people seem in a hurry.”

“A hurry for what?” asked Lena.

Nobody answered immediately.

The question lingered.

“The next thing,” Rosa said at last.

“The next answer.”

“The next video,” said Spark.

“The next distraction,” said Lena.

Milan nodded.

“The next certainty.”

That one landed.

Even Spark grew quiet for a moment.

A breeze moved through the trees.

The afternoon felt unhurried.

“Maybe most things don’t get enough time,” Rosa said.

Nobody spoke.

Not because they disagreed.

Because they were feeling into it.

Questions.

Ideas.

Friendships.

People.

Even themselves.

Lena looked around the circle.

"I think we're careful."

Milan stared at her.

"Careful?"

"Yes."

"Spark climbed onto the factory roof last month."

Everyone laughed.

Including Lena.

"Not that kind of careful."

Spark looked relieved.

"Good. I was worried."

Rosa was still smiling.

"I know what she means."

"So do I," said Milan.

That surprised him more than anyone else.

Lena leaned forward.

"Careful with questions."

"Things we notice," said Spark.

"People," said Milan.

The word hung there.

Simple.

True.

For a moment nobody added anything.

They didn't need to.

Spark looked at his friends.

At Lena's curiosity.

At Rosa finding words.

At Milan turning things over until they made sense.

And suddenly he knew what he wanted to say.

"When I'm with you," he said slowly, "I can say the things I notice without everybody looking at me funny."

There was a brief silence.

Then Milan nodded.

"We still look at you funny."

The laughter came immediately.

Even Spark laughed.

"Fair."

When it faded, something remained.

Not the joke.

The truth beneath it.

Spark could be Spark.

Lena could keep asking questions.

Rosa could say what she felt.

Milan could challenge everything.

And somehow all of it belonged.

The factory stood quietly behind them.

The afternoon drifted on.

And for reasons none of them could fully explain, being there together felt good.

Not exciting.

Not dramatic.

Just real.

As if they had stumbled upon something worth taking care of.

Chapter 5 — What Stayed

A few days later, Spark was sitting at the kitchen table while his younger cousin talked.

Normally Spark would have interrupted at least six times by now.

Not because he was rude.

Because ideas kept arriving.

Ideas tended to arrive in groups.

His cousin was explaining a problem with a friend at school.

Spark had three possible solutions already.

Then four.

Then a completely unrelated idea involving a zip line.

Instead, he listened.

His cousin kept talking.

After a while she stopped.

“That’s it?”

Spark blinked.

“What?”

“You’re not going to tell me what to do?”

“I don’t know what you should do.”

His cousin stared.

“Who are you and what have you done with Spark?”

Spark grinned.

“No idea.”

But later, walking home, he realized something.

The conversation had been interesting.

Not because he had solved anything.

Because he had stayed with it.



Lena was helping a classmate with a science project.

Or at least that was the official plan.

After ten minutes she noticed something.

Her classmate kept saying:

“I don’t get it.”

The words were always the same.

The tone wasn’t.

Lena put down her pencil.

“What part don’t you get?”

“The graph.”

Lena waited.

Something felt off.

“Are you sure?”

Her classmate looked away.

After a moment she sighed.

“No.”

Lena nodded.

“What is it then?”

The answer arrived immediately.

“I don’t think I’m smart enough.”

There it was.

The real question.

An hour later, walking home, Lena smiled.

She hadn’t planned to ask that.

The question had simply appeared.

And somehow it had been the right one.



Milan sat on a park bench with a notebook on his lap.

The page contained a single sentence.

What makes something interesting?

He stared at it.

Normally he would have crossed it out by now.

Too vague.

Not enough information.

Impossible to measure.

Yet there it was.

Still alive.

He looked around.

A dog chased a stick.

Someone cycled past.

Nothing remarkable.

And yet the question remained.
Not demanding an answer.
Just waiting.

To his own surprise, Milan closed the notebook without writing anything else.
The question could stay.
That felt strangely satisfying.



Rosa was standing in line at a bakery.
The woman in front of her kept looking at the cakes.
Then at the price list.
Then at the cakes again.
Rosa recognized the expression.
The woman wanted one.
But wasn't going to buy one.

Without thinking, Rosa smiled.
"The chocolate one looks really good."
The woman laughed.
"I know."
Neither of them moved.
Then the woman shook her head.
"Maybe next time."

Something happened inside Rosa.
Very small.
Very clear.

“No,” she heard herself say.

“Maybe today.”

The woman looked surprised.

Then she looked at the cake.

Then she bought it.

Rosa walked out of the bakery smiling.

Not because of the cake.

Because she had said something.

A month ago she probably wouldn’t have.



The following Saturday they met again.

This time by the canal.

Spark arrived last.

As usual.

“You’re late,” said Milan.

“I prefer unexpectedly delayed.”

“That’s just late with extra words.”

Spark sat down.

“Fair.”

For a while they talked about ordinary things.

School.

Teachers.

The world’s continuing refusal to make sense.

Then Lena looked around the circle.

“You’ve changed.”

Three faces looked back at her.

“What?” said Spark.

“All of you.”

“That’s a terrifying thing to say,” said Milan.

Lena ignored him.

“You have.”

Rosa smiled.

“A little.”

Spark picked up a stick.

“I listened to someone for almost ten minutes.”

The others stared.

“No.”

“Yes.”

“Voluntarily?”

“It was an accident.”

Milan laughed.

Then he told them about the notebook.

Lena told them about the question she hadn’t expected to ask.

Rosa told them about the bakery.

When she finished, nobody spoke for a moment.

Not because they were surprised.

Because they recognized something.

Spark was the first to find words.

“It’s like…”

He stopped.

“Uh-oh,” said Milan.

“He’s thinking.”

Spark threw the stick at him.

It missed completely.

Then he tried again.

“It’s like things got bigger.”

Nobody laughed.

Not even Milan.

Because they knew exactly what he meant.

The canal moved quietly beside them.

A bird landed on the water.

The afternoon stretched ahead, unhurried.

Lena looked around the group.

“What stayed?”

The question settled among them.

And for the first time, none of them hurried to answer.

Chapter 6 — Something Different

A week later, Spark's cousin stopped him in the hallway.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Always."

She narrowed her eyes.

"You're different lately."

Spark grinned.

"I know. I've become even more fascinating."

"I'm serious."

"So am I."

She stared at him.

"See? That's exactly what I mean."

Spark blinked.

"What do you mean?"

His cousin leaned against the wall.

"When I talk to you, you actually listen now."

Spark looked mildly offended.

"I listened before."

"No, before you waited for your turn."

"That's listening."

"It really isn't."

Before Spark could defend himself, she walked away.

“Think about it!”

“I won’t!” he called after her.

But he did.



The next day, Lena’s classmate sat down beside her during lunch.

“You were right.”

Lena looked up.

“About what?”

“The question.”

Lena searched her memory.

“I ask a lot of questions.”

“The weird one.”

That narrowed it down surprisingly little.

Her classmate laughed.

“The one where you asked, ‘Are you sure?’”

Lena frowned.

“About the graph?”

“Yes.”

Now she remembered.

“What about it?”

Her classmate picked at the edge of her sandwich.

“Nobody ever asked that before.”

Lena waited.

That seemed important somehow.

Finally her classmate smiled.

“It felt good.”

Then she stood up and left.

Lena sat there for a while, staring at her sandwich.



Rosa was helping an elderly neighbor carry groceries upstairs.

Halfway to the second floor, the woman stopped.

Not because she was tired.

Because she wanted to talk.

Ten minutes later they were still standing there.

The groceries had been forgotten entirely.

When Rosa finally reached the apartment door, the woman smiled.

“Thank you.”

“For carrying the bags?”

The woman shook her head.

“No.”

Then she disappeared inside.

Rosa stood there for a moment.

Then smiled to herself.



Milan was paired with another student for a school assignment.

An arrangement he generally considered unfortunate.

His partner explained an idea.

Milan immediately spotted three problems.

Possibly four.

Normally he would have pointed them out.

Instead he heard himself ask:

“Why do you think it would work?”

The other student looked surprised.

Then excited.

Then started explaining.

Five minutes later Milan realized something unsettling.

The idea wasn't bad.

Not perfect.

But not bad.

If he had interrupted earlier, he never would have known.

That evening he wrote a single sentence in his notebook:

Maybe the first answer isn't the whole answer.

Milan stared at the sentence.

For a moment he wondered whether the real difference had been that he had actually listened.

Then he frowned.

That sounded suspiciously like something Lena would say.

He closed the notebook.



The four friends met beside the canal.

The weather was warm.

Spark was late.

Again.

Nobody seemed surprised.

After a while, the conversation drifted toward their week.

Spark told them about his cousin.

Lena shared the story about lunch.

Rosa talked about the groceries.

Milan reluctantly admitted what had happened during the school assignment.

The others listened.

Then a silence settled over the group.

Not an awkward silence.

A thinking silence.

Lena was the first to speak.

“That’s strange.”

“What is?” asked Spark.

“All of it.”

Milan nodded.

“It does seem connected.”

Rosa pulled her knees closer.

“It feels connected.”

“That’s not evidence,” Milan pointed out.

“No,” said Rosa.

“But it’s still true.”

That earned a reluctant smile from Milan.

Spark looked from one friend to another.

“So what’s connected?”

Nobody answered immediately.

The canal moved quietly beside them.

A duck drifted past.

Completely unconcerned with the discussion.

Then Rosa said:

“I think people notice.”

“What?”

“When they’re being listened to.”

The words settled gently into the circle.

Lena nodded first.

Then Spark.

Even Milan.

“They really do,” said Lena.

Spark thought about his cousin.

Milan thought about the assignment.

Rosa thought about the groceries.

For a moment nobody spoke.

Then Lena said something so quietly they almost missed it.

“Maybe people like being seen.”

The breeze moved across the water.

The others sat with the thought.

Not rushing.

Not analyzing.

Just allowing it to be there.

Finally Milan nodded.

“I think everybody does.”

No one laughed.

No one added anything.

They didn’t need to.

The afternoon stretched around them.

Ordinary.

Quiet.

And somehow larger than before.

As if they had just discovered a doorway.

Not a doorway to somewhere else.

A doorway into something that had been there all along.

Chapter 7 — What Came With Them

If you spend enough evenings around a campfire, something begins to travel with you.
Not the smoke.
Not the warmth.
Something else.

The friends didn't notice it immediately.
Life continued as it always had.
School.
Homework.
Family dinners.
Football practice.
Walking the dog.
Waiting for buses.
The ordinary rhythm of ordinary days.

And yet, now and then, one of them would catch themselves looking at something differently.

As if the way they were together around the campfire had quietly come with them.

A few days after their last meeting, Milan was sitting in class.

A student raised his hand.

The teacher pointed at him.

"If that's true," the student asked, "why doesn't it always work that way?"

The teacher smiled.

"Good question," she said.

Then she immediately started explaining.

The student lowered his hand.

Milan watched him for a moment.

The teacher answered the question.

Yet somehow it felt as if she had missed something.

The lesson moved on.

The student didn't raise his hand again.

For some reason, it stayed with him.

That evening he opened his notebook.

Interesting things reveal themselves when people finish talking.

He looked at the sentence.

Then added a new line.

Interesting things reveal themselves when I start listening.

He read it twice.

Then closed the notebook.



At a small shop, Rosa was waiting in line.

An elderly woman was telling the cashier about her missing cat.

She spoke slowly.

The people behind Rosa shifted impatiently.

One person checked the time.

Another sighed.
But the cashier simply listened.
Not pretending.
Not hurrying.
Just listening.
The story took less than two minutes.
When the woman finally left, her shoulders seemed lighter.
Rosa smiled.
Nothing had been solved.
Yet something had changed.



One afternoon, Lena was walking home with her younger cousin.
The girl was talking about a drawing she had made.
At first Lena only half listened.
Then she remembered the campfire.
The pauses.
The space.
“Tell me more,” she said.
The girl’s face lit up.
For the next ten minutes she explained every dragon, every cloud, every impossible flying machine in the drawing.
By the time they reached home, Lena knew far more about the picture than she ever expected.
And strangely enough, it had felt easy.
Not effort.
Not patience.
More like opening a window.



Spark noticed things too.

One afternoon he was sitting near the football field, watching people pass by.

A boy from another class walked past.

Nobody seemed to notice him.

Except Spark did.

The boy was carrying a small homemade model airplane.

Most people would have missed it.

Spark didn't.

His eyes followed the plane until the boy disappeared around a corner.

A thought came to him.

Maybe the things he noticed weren't random.

Maybe they were worth noticing.

The thought felt surprisingly good.



The friends began noticing things like this everywhere.

How people interrupted.

How people hurried.

How often someone revealed more when given a little space.

Not advice.

Not solutions.

Just space.

And after a while, something else began to happen.

The more they noticed the world around them, the more they noticed themselves.

Not what was wrong with them.

But what had been right all along.

Spark began to see that the things he noticed were often worth noticing.
Lena discovered that her questions sometimes opened doors that answers could not.
Rosa realized that feeling deeply was not the same as being fragile.
Milan found that looking carefully at what was actually happening often revealed more than jumping to conclusions.

None of them became someone else.
They simply began to appreciate qualities they had hardly paid attention to before.
And that made them curious.

Because if something this simple had been there all along...
If they had overlooked these things in other people...
If they had overlooked these things in themselves...
What else might be waiting to be discovered?

Not somewhere far away.
Not hidden behind effort.
But right here.
In the middle of ordinary life.
Waiting for someone to notice.

Chapter 8 — What Reveals Itself

The next time the friends met at the old factory, something felt different.

Not bigger.

Not more exciting.

Just different.

As if each of them had quietly brought something special back from the days between their meetings.

The fire crackled softly.

For a while they simply sat together.

Watching the flames.

Listening to the evening sounds.

Then Spark picked up a small twig and stirred the fire.

“I’ve been noticing something,” he said.

The others looked at him.

“That’s not exactly news,” Milan replied.

Everyone laughed.

“No, really,” said Spark. “The more attention I give something, the more of itself it seems to reveal.”

The laughter faded.

Because they all knew what he meant.

Rosa nodded first.

“I think I’ve noticed that too.”

“With what?” asked Lena.

Rosa thought for a moment.

“People, mostly. Sometimes someone seems ordinary at first. Then you spend time with them. You listen. And suddenly there’s so much more there.”

Milan poked at a piece of wood with his shoe.

“Not just people.”

The others waited.

“I started paying attention to what actually happens during conversations.”

“And?” asked Spark.

“And it’s weird.”

“Good weird or bad weird?”

“Interesting weird.”

Spark grinned.

“The best kind.”

Milan nodded.

“The more I pay attention, the more I notice. Things I completely missed before.”

Nobody spoke for a moment.

The fire shifted.

A few sparks drifted upward.

Then Lena said quietly,

“Maybe things are always revealing themselves.”

The others looked at her.

“What do you mean?” asked Rosa.

Lena watched the sparks disappear into the dark sky.

“Maybe we’re just usually too busy to notice.”

The group fell silent.

Not because they had run out of things to say.

Because the thought felt worth sitting with.

The more attention they gave something, the more of itself it revealed.

Not only people.

Not only conversations.

Almost everything.

Questions.

Dreams.

Ideas.

Places.

Even themselves.

Spark thought about the model airplane he had noticed.

Rosa remembered the woman in the shop.

Milan thought about his notebook.

Lena thought about the drawing her cousin had shown her.

Small things.

Ordinary things.

Yet somehow they no longer felt quite so ordinary.

As if life itself contained more than they had assumed.

Spark suddenly sat up.

"I think I know what it feels like."

The others waited.

"It's like..."

He paused.

"It's like life is talking all the time."

Milan raised an eyebrow.

"Talking?"

"You know what I mean."

"Not really."

Spark laughed.

Then he grew serious again.

"It's like life is always showing us things. But most of the time we're looking somewhere else."

Nobody made fun of the idea.

Because they had all experienced something similar.

The fire crackled softly between them.

And for a moment, each of them wondered the same thing.

If life revealed more of itself when it was noticed...

What else might be waiting?

Not hidden.

Not secret.

Simply unnoticed ...

Waiting for someone to meet it.

Waiting for someone to pay attention.

And perhaps, waiting to begin a conversation.

Chapter 9 — The Missing Button

The fire had almost burned down to glowing embers.

Nobody seemed in a hurry to add more wood.

The quiet was enough.

Spark picked up a small stone and rolled it between his fingers.

“I’ve been thinking about something.”

Milan smiled.

“That usually means we’re going home later than planned.”

Everyone laughed.

Spark looked into the fire.

“Do you remember the button?”

“The missing one?” Rosa asked.

“The one that started all this?”

Spark nodded.

For a while nobody spoke.

It seemed strange that something so small had stayed with them for so long.

“I thought it was just a funny coincidence,” Lena said.

“So did I,” Milan replied.

“But now...”

He didn’t finish the sentence.

“Now what?” asked Rosa.

Milan looked around the circle.

“I think it wasn’t really about the button.”

Spark smiled.

“I was hoping someone would say that.”

Rosa tilted her head.

“Then what was it about?”

Spark thought for a moment.

“I think...”

He searched for the words.

“It was the first time we stayed with something instead of rushing past it.”

Lena nodded slowly.

“And because we stayed...”

“...it kept revealing more,” Milan finished.

The words settled quietly between them.

No one tried to improve them.

No one needed to.

After a while Rosa spoke again.

“I’ve noticed something else.”

The others looked at her.

“I don’t have that restless feeling as much anymore.”

“What restless feeling?” asked Spark.

She shrugged.

“The one that keeps whispering that something important must be somewhere else.”

Nobody answered.

Not because they didn't understand.

Because they did.

Milan looked thoughtfully at the glowing embers.

"I don't think it's gone."

"No?" asked Lena.

He shook his head.

"I think it changed."

The others waited.

"It used to feel like I was searching for something I couldn't find."

"And now?" Spark asked.

Milan smiled.

"Now it feels more like I'm curious about what I'll discover next."

Spark leaned back.

"That's it."

"The longing didn't disappear."

"It learned how to fly."

The words hung in the evening air.

No one laughed.

Not because they were serious.

Because they felt true.

The fire gave one last quiet crackle.

Spark looked into the glowing embers.

"Maybe flying was never about leaving the ground."

"What then?" Rosa asked softly.

He looked around at his friends.

“Maybe it’s what happens when life becomes bigger than a single way of seeing it.”

Nobody replied.

There wasn’t much to add.

Beyond the old factory, the evening carried on exactly as before.

A breeze moved through the grass.

Somewhere in the distance a dog barked.

The stars slowly appeared, one by one.

The world hadn’t changed.

Yet none of them could quite see it the way they once had.

And somehow, that felt like the beginning of another adventure.

Chapter Ten — An Unexpected Visitor

The evenings were becoming cooler.

The friends pulled their chairs a little closer to the fire.

For a while they said very little.

Nobody seemed to mind.

The crackling wood filled the spaces between their words.

Then they heard footsteps.

Not hurried.

Steady.

Someone was walking toward them.

A flashlight swept slowly across the old factory walls before its beam settled on the campfire.

A man stepped into the circle of light.

He wore a dark jacket with the word SECURITY stitched across the front.

The friends looked up.

The man looked from one face to the next.

Finally he spoke.

“What are the four of you doing here?”

Silence.

Not the awkward kind.

The kind that waits before answering.

Spark smiled.

“We’re talking.”

The man looked around.

“For this long?”

“Sometimes longer,” Rosa said.

He frowned slightly.

“I’ve walked past this place a few evenings now.”

“We’ve seen you,” Milan replied.

The man looked surprised.

“You have?”

Milan nodded.

“You always slow down near that old oak tree.”

For the first time, the man smiled.

“I suppose I do.”

He glanced at the fire.

“I should probably tell you this isn’t really a place people are supposed to gather.”

Nobody argued.

Nobody defended themselves.

Spark simply moved a log a little farther from the flames.

“There is room,” he said.

The man looked at the empty chair.

He hesitated.

Then, almost against his own expectations, he sat down.

“My name is Jim.”

“I’m Spark.”

“Lena.”

“Rosa.”

“Milan.”

For a while they watched the fire together.

Jim seemed unsure whether he had made a mistake.

“So...”

he said at last.

“What do you usually talk about?”

Spark looked at his friends.

“Whatever we notice.”

Jim laughed softly.

“That sounds... unusual.”

“It probably is,” Lena said.

“What did you notice today?” Jim asked.

Nobody answered immediately.

Not because they had nothing to say.

Because they were choosing.

Finally Rosa spoke.

“I noticed a little girl explaining something to her grandmother.”

“What about it?”

“The grandmother stopped what she was doing and really listened.”

Jim nodded politely.

“And?”

Rosa smiled.

“The little girl seemed to grow while she was talking.”

Jim looked into the fire.

He wasn’t sure why that sentence touched him.

Milan broke the silence.

“What did you notice today?”

Jim looked up.

“Me?”

“Yes.”

Nobody had asked him that question in a long time.

He searched for an answer.

“I noticed...”

He stopped.

Then laughed quietly.

“I don’t usually notice what I notice.”

The friends smiled.

Not because it was funny.

Because they understood.

Jim looked at the glowing embers.

“My evenings are usually all the same.”

He shrugged.

“I walk around.”

“I check doors.”

“I make sure everything is where it’s supposed to be.”

“And tonight?” Spark asked.

Jim looked around the circle.

Then at the old factory.

Then back at the fire.

“I think...”

He paused.

“I’ve never really noticed this place before.”

Nobody replied.

Because they sensed he wasn't finished.

"It always felt abandoned."

He looked at the warm circle of light.

"Now it doesn't."

The fire crackled softly.

After a while Jim stood up.

"I should finish my round."

He smiled, almost shyly.

"I'll probably see you again."

"We'll probably be here," Spark said.

Jim took a few steps.

Then turned around.

"You know..."

he said.

"I think tonight I noticed more than I expected."

"So did we," Spark answered.

Jim laughed.

Then continued walking into the darkness.

The four friends watched until the beam of his flashlight disappeared.

Nobody spoke.

There was nothing to explain.

Somehow they all knew that something had happened.

Not because they had changed Jim.

Because they had met him.

The fire burned quietly between them.

Beyond its warm circle, the night stretched wide and still.

And for the first time, it seemed to them that every stranger carried a story...
waiting for someone to notice.

One More Thing

The old factory was quiet again.

The fire had long since become part of the earth.

The chairs were gone.

The laughter had drifted into memory.

The evenings continued.

The seasons continued.

The wind still moved through the grass.

If you had walked past that place, you probably would not have noticed anything unusual.

And perhaps that is exactly the point.

Because the story was never really about an old factory.

Or a campfire.

Or even four friends.

It was about noticing.

About discovering that life quietly reveals more of itself when we truly meet it.

Perhaps you have noticed something too.

Not because someone explained it.

Because something in these pages felt familiar.

A conversation.

A question.

A moment.

A feeling.

A possibility.

If so, there is nothing you need to remember.

Nothing you need to practice.

Nothing you need to become.

Simply notice.

Notice what catches your attention.

Notice what quietly asks to be explored a little longer.

Notice what reveals a little more of itself when you stay with it.

You may discover, as four friends once did around a campfire, that the world is much larger than it first appears.

Not because the world changed.

Because your way of meeting it did.

And perhaps, one ordinary day, someone will ask you,

“What are you doing?”

You may smile.

Because you don’t quite have the words.

Not yet.

Or perhaps you do.

“I’m noticing.”

And somehow...

that will be enough.



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in cost
and in spirit.