

Word Count: 453

My family was really superstitious growing up. More than just avoiding black cats or carrying around a rabbit's foot for good luck. Mirrors were kept covered at night, certain numbers were avoided, salt was thrown over your shoulder after spilling it. Nothing too out of the ordinary, albeit strange.

I used to get chastised for forgetting about some things when I was little. A gentle nudge to cover the bathroom mirror before bed. A firm telling me not to come home, even if I think I've forgotten something after leaving. A frantic reminder to knock on wood after tempting fate. Most were never the biggest deal if I forgot, just some supposed bad luck and a scolding from parents. But there was one rule I was never, under *any* circumstances, allowed to break: making a wish.

Making wishes was forbidden. Wishing on stars, wishing on coins thrown down the well, we couldn't even make a wish on our birthday candles. A bit extreme to an eight year old, but as I've gotten older, it makes more and more sense. My family was trying to keep me safe.

You never know the cost of a wish until it's too late.

Some costs were small enough for those who don't know them. Wishing on stars is a debt to the universe. She is kind, and doesn't take more than is asked, if she even grants your request at all. The universe doesn't need much from us, outside of time. It's not like you'll miss 30 minutes here or a few hours there anyway.

Wishing on wells, or water in general, is a debt to anything that lurks below. Things that wish to take your place, or to
drag

you

down

below

to

be

with

them.

Things that will almost always cause you harm. Some settle for blood, but most want more.

Birthday candles or a wish on a specific day, are a debt to the Earth. They take more than the universe, but less than those that live in water. The debt is never clear, they only send you signs for you to interpret. And you'd better pray that you interpret them correctly. We live and die by the Earth, and they are not afraid to pull you down before your time is up.

However, the worst wish you could ever make is that of a wishbone. A debt of bone. Something you can never pay back, and survive to tell the tale. Despite the risks, the reward is beyond your imagination. Whatever you ask for, you get back tenfold. A reward so tantalizing that even those who know about the danger test their luck alongside the desperate.

And I am one of the desperate.