Wishful Thinking
by u_andcloud

Summary

Athena suggests an Agency camping trip as a team-building exercise. Maybe Phoenix should have suspected that that wasn't all she had in mind, but he invites Edgeworth regardless.

Notes

Baby's first Narumitsu.... this fic exists because I consistently mis-type "trial" as "trail," and I ended up here. A working title of "Trails & Tribulations" was eventually abandoned because it got sappier than I expected. Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes.

Phoenix was very fond of the quiet days at the Wright Anything Agency.

Sure, it meant they didn’t have any cases at the moment, but the ebb and flow of business no longer worried Phoenix unduly. And it was nice, having both his employees in the office. Apollo was dutifully organizing files from their last month of cases, while Athena read through an article in a psychology journal while pacing a circle on the floor…it was moments like this when it struck Phoenix that he had actually made something of the office he had so suddenly and tragically inherited. He shared a nostalgic smile with Charley, then continued on his way to the coffee pot in the kitchenette.

“Hey, boss,” Athena piped up suddenly, as Phoenix started to return to his office with a full mug.
“You know what we need?”

Phoenix shook his head, and Athena brandished her periodical at him with a grin.

“We need some teambuilding,” she declared.

At this, Apollo looked up, one eyebrow raised. “Teambuilding?” he echoed, apprehensive.

“Yeah! You know, an experience to bring us all together! So we can work better as a unit!”

Apollo looked doubtful. “I think we’ve had enough experiences.”

“Some non-traumatic experiences,” Athena amended. Phoenix and Apollo couldn’t help but agree—but then Athena went on. “We should go camping!”

“Didn’t you just say non-traumatic experiences?” Apollo pointed out. “In what world would a camping trip with this office not be a disaster?”

“Oh, c’mon, Apollo, don’t be like that. It’ll be fun! I know some people we can borrow tents from, and there are campsites near the San Gabriels…we can just go for a weekend!”

Apollo turned expectantly to Phoenix, as if hoping he would put a hasty end to the idea. But instead, Phoenix was scratching his chin thoughtfully.

“Mr. Wright…” Apollo began, something like horror evident in his tone. “Don’t tell me…”

Phoenix could imagine catastrophic scenarios just as easily as Apollo could, but at the same time…it might be nice, he thought, to go on a normal trip for once, make some memories that he didn’t feel inclined to immediately block out.

Granted, most of those trips had started out as normal ones, too. But Phoenix wasn’t one to let the past dim his optimism.

“Oh, come on, Apollo, Athena’s right. This could be fun. Just for a couple days.”

Athena punched the air. “Yes!! I’ll take care of planning everything,” she assured them. “You guys just need to show up with your sleeping bags!”

~~~

“Hey, Edgeworth, I need your help.”

Instantly, Miles was on high alert. What was it this time? Hadn’t he just seen Phoenix at the courthouse yesterday? What misfortune could have befallen him in the last twenty hours?

“What’s wrong, Wright?” he asked urgently, but Phoenix just laughed.

“Sorry, nothing’s wrong. But, my subordinates—well, okay, mostly just Athena—have this idea that we’re going to take an Agency camping trip.”

“A camping trip?” Miles echoed.

Phoenix sighed. “Yeah. I know Apollo and Athena are technically adults, but it sort of seems like a recipe for disaster if it’s just me, Trucy, and them, y’know?”

Miles was still catching up to the idea of a camping trip, but he couldn’t deny that the concept
sounded risky on the surface. “So you want me to come?” He shook his head. “Wright, I’ve never
been camping in my life.”

“Yes, I kinda guessed as much,” Phoenix said. “But it’s not like we’ll really be roughing it. Just
one night up in the San Gabriels. Athena has all the logistics under control.” He paused. “Well,
except for a car, which might be the other reason I’m calling.”

“The five of us won’t fit in my car,” Miles pointed out. Phoenix paused.

“Ah,” he said finally. “Hm.” Miles sighed.

“I’ll figure something out,” he promised, against his better judgement.

“So…you’ll come?”

“If nothing else comes up,” Miles added severely.

“Okay, okay,” Phoenix said, laughing. Then he raised his voice. “Alright, gang, camping is a go,
but only if there are no crimes two weekends from now.”

Miles heard faint cheering, which he guessed was Athena and Trucy, and a groan, which probably
belonged to Apollo.

Once he hung up, Miles had to resist the impulse to call Phoenix back and rescind his offer. A
camping trip? When was the last time he had even been outside of a city? Did he even have clothes
for camping? But even as he considered redialing the number, he knew that even if the
prosecutor’s office was swamped with cases in two weeks’ time, he would still manage to make
himself available for the trip.

After all, he had never quite figured out how to refuse when Phoenix needed his help.

~~~

Phoenix was certain that every single article of clothing that Miles was wearing had been purchased
sometime in the past week. The button-down shirt had an unworn stiffness to it, and his hiking
boots didn’t have a speck of dirt on them. Phoenix might have made a joke about it, if he wasn’t so
cought off guard by the sight of Miles Edgeworth, Chief Prosecutor of the district, looking like he
was trying out for a role in Jurassic Park.

In place of his usual cravat, Miles had tied some sort of bandana. Phoenix had to stifle a snicker.

“I hope you broke those in, Mr. Edgeworth!” Athena said, eying the hiking boots.

Miles blinked. “I…”

Athena sighed. “Well, it’s okay. We aren’t going on a really long hike, anyway.” She hefted a
backpack and started towards the SUV parked by the curb.

“Whose car is this?” Phoenix asked, following her.

The SUV did not look new, otherwise Phoenix might have suspected that Miles had bought it along
with his entire outfit just for the occasion. The car was olive green, with several dents and what
seemed like a permanent coating of dirt.

“It belongs to the chief of police,” Miles explained. “He uses it for fishing trips. As far as I can tell,
it’s more reliable than it looks.”
Once everything was piled into the trunk, they started on their way. From the back seat, Athena explained their schedule.

“We’ll eat lunch and set up the tents when we arrive,” she said. “And after that, we should have plenty of time for a hike up to the nearby overlook. And then it’s dinner over the campfire when we get back, and we’ll pack up again sometime tomorrow.”

“Seems like a lot of effort for just one night,” Apollo remarked, without lifting his eyes from his phone.

Athena raised an eyebrow. “Oh, so you want to stay longer?”

Apollo looked up, a dark scowl on his brow. “Absolutely not.”

The drive wasn’t long, so Trucy wasted no time getting a game going. Edgeworth initially excused himself because he was driving, only to butt back in when he correctly guessed the word Apollo was suggesting after only two letters. From there, his natural competitiveness and extensive vocabulary helped him dominate the game, until Phoenix had to intervene to point out that it wasn’t exactly fair to toss around legal terms when not everyone in the car was a lawyer—even if Trucy just seemed happy that everyone was getting involved.

Athena took charge once they made it to the campsite, and under her direction they managed to set up the tents with surprisingly little difficulty. After a lunch of pre-packed sandwiches, Athena unfurled a map and pointed them all in the direction of the nearest trailhead.

Phoenix was just a little dismayed to find that the trail immediately started climbing uphill. He wasn’t the only one.

“Why didn’t any of Mr. Edgeworth’s employees get dragged along on this trip?” Apollo complained about twenty minutes into their walk, between slightly labored breaths. “It’s not really fair.”

“Do you really want to be out here with Simon?” Athena countered, without a hint of breathlessness. “Or with Klavier, for that matter. He gets pissy when it’s even slightly humid out.”

Apollo scowled, but he couldn’t exactly argue.

“Next time we should invite everyone!” Trucy proclaimed, and now Apollo rounded on her.

“Next time?”

Phoenix and Edgeworth trailed a few paces behind them, listening to their bickering in silence. It started to get repetitive after a while, so Phoenix turned to Miles.

“How are those shoes holding up?” he asked.

“They’re…fine.”

Phoenix didn’t miss the tension in his voice. He grimaced. “You’re getting blisters, aren’t you?”

Miles avoided his gaze. “I’ll be fine.”

“You know we’re not even halfway there, right?” Phoenix told him. Miles’ brows drew together, and Phoenix gave him a sympathetic look. Then he raised his voice. “Hey, guys?” he called. “We’re gonna take a quick breather, you go on ahead.”
Athena turned back. “Are you sure you don’t want us to wait?”

“Nah. We’ll keep in touch if we decide to turn around.” He held up his cell phone.

At the mention of turning around, Apollo looked up hopefully. “Hey, could I—”

“Polly! You promised we’d take a picture at the overlook!” Trucy scolded him.

Apollo muttered something, but soon the three of them started up the path again, while Miles and Phoenix settled on a boulder.

Phoenix leaned closer, mischief in his expression. “Am I gonna need to carry you?”

Miles’ eyes widened in shock and indignation, and Phoenix laughed.

“Kidding, Edgeworth. I couldn’t carry you. I can barely carry myself up all these hills.” He looked further down the trail and sighed. “Nothing like doing literally anything with Athena to remind me how out-of-shape I am.”

“Why did you agree to this, again?”

Phoenix rubbed his neck. “Eh, I don’t know. Some fresh air sounded nice? Nothing like spraining my entire body to make me appreciate my boring ol’ desk job?”

“I suppose there’s some logic to that,” Miles conceded.

“High praise, coming from you,” Phoenix quipped. He looked down at their feet. “So, you really didn’t have just a regular pair of sneakers or anything?”

Phoenix was wearing a battered pair of running shoes and cargo shorts with his t-shirt. Miles looked like he was ready to lead an archaeological expedition.

“I…no,” Miles admitted. “I thought this would be fine, but I didn’t realize...”

“Well, if it’s any consolation, they’ll probably be really comfortable for when you never wear them again,” Phoenix said, nodding at the shoes.

“Hm. Quite.” With a sigh, Miles pushed off the rock and settled gingerly to the ground, his face scrunching up in a wince. “We should probably get moving if we hope to reach the overlook.”

“Do we hope to reach the overlook?” Phoenix asked. “I’m sure there are shorter trails. Or we could just double back.”

Miles took a deep breath and looked down the trail. “Well, we did come all this way. It seems a shame not to see the view, no?”

Phoenix shrugged. “Just remember that you’re the one who has to drive back tomorrow,” he said. “But sure, I’m game. Maybe we can actually make it if we go at our pace instead of Athena’s.”

So they continued up the path at an unhurried stroll, stopping every so often to give Miles’ feet a break or to point out a glimpse of wildlife through the trees. It was a gorgeous day, sunny but with a pleasant breeze, and the views down the mountain were spectacular, but more often than not, Phoenix found himself watching his hiking companion instead of the scenery.

Miles was being a good sport about it, but Phoenix could tell his feet really were bothering him, mostly by the way he kept glancing down at his hiking boots with a glare that suggested the
footwear had personally betrayed him. But each time Phoenix suggested they turn back, the glare was turned on him, and Phoenix had to look away so Miles wouldn’t see him laughing.

On the flatter sections of trail, they chatted as they walked, about recent cases and their employees’ antics, and Phoenix nearly patted himself on the back when he actually made Miles laugh with his retelling of a recent incident involving Mr. Hat and a client’s overexcited poodle.

Even after years of being friends, Phoenix still treasured moments like this, when Miles had his guard down. It was almost habit, like he was cataloguing memories—saving up moments so he would have something to look back on if Miles ever disappeared again. He didn’t want to think like that, but he couldn’t help it.

Phoenix was distracted enough that he didn’t notice when the rock he was using as a foothold to scale a short slope was too loose to support his weight. He would have fallen flat on his face had Miles not caught him by the shoulder.

“Watch your step, Wright,” he scolded. “I can’t carry you, either.”

“R-right, sorry.”

It was ridiculous, because they had been friends for years, and Phoenix had known about his feelings nearly as long, but any time Miles touched him, he felt his heart skip a beat. It was just… Miles wasn’t very tactile. Phoenix usually settled for handshakes, and it was always on his initiative if that handshake turned into a brief embrace.

Now, he could feel the heat of Miles’ hand through his t-shirt, and the edge of his thumb was just barely brushing Phoenix’s neck. It was such casual contact, nothing to lose his mind over, but it made Phoenix want to trip over every rock he saw.

“Are you okay?” Miles prompted.

“Yeah, thanks,” Phoenix nodded. Without thinking, he covered Miles’ hand with his own for a moment—and Miles released his grip almost immediately, his hand slipping from under Phoenix’s as he turned away, too quickly for Phoenix to even see if his expression had changed.

Shoot.

Miles probably hadn’t even noticed the extra contact—he had already been moving to let Phoenix go, after all. Even so, Phoenix couldn’t help but see it as a gentle rejection. Miles didn’t want his touch to linger on Phoenix’s shoulder. He didn’t see the something more that Phoenix had been imagining for years.

Because that was the only explanation, right? If their feelings were mutual, there was no way they could have gone so long like this, close but not that close. Especially lately, with their lives becoming more stable, Phoenix had been thinking that now, with some fairly substantial obstacles out of the way, they could finally take that step. But he could never be sure if Miles wanted the same thing.

Phoenix knew he was supposed to just take the hint. It wasn’t as though he was settling for Miles’ friendship—he treasured the relationship they had now, so much so that he was reluctant to push, in case something he did sent Miles disappearing again.

“Wright, are you coming?”

Miles’ voice shook him out of his thoughts, and Phoenix nodded and followed him.
When they finally made it to the overlook, Apollo, Athena, and Trucy were lounging on a few large boulders in the shade of a couple scrubby trees—they looked like they had been there for a while. Athena and Trucy were munching on granola bars, and Apollo was smiling at his phone the way he did whenever he was messaging Klavier.

“Daddy, finally,” Trucy said, jumping up.

“We thought you fell down another ravine,” Apollo piped up.

“Hey, now, we were just enjoying the sights,” Phoenix replied. He sank down on the rock. “Going down will be easier, right?”

“Do you guys need a break?” Athena asked. “We can stay here for a while.”

Phoenix glanced at Miles. “Just for a little while, maybe. We’ve been taking it easy. Truce, you said you wanted a picture?”

“Yeah!” Trucy said around the last bite of her granola bar. “Everyone, over here.”

As the Wright Anything Agency tried to arrange themselves to fit in a selfie, Miles hung back.

“Here,” he said, holding out a hand. “I’ll take the picture—”

“Thanks,” Phoenix said, handing over the phone. Then he grabbed Miles around the waist and pulled him into the group. “You have the longest arms.”

Miles frowned slightly, but he obligingly pressed closer to Phoenix’s side to fit in the frame before snapping a few pictures, at least one of which Phoenix thought might be good enough to hang in his office somewhere. He had no choice but to trust Miles’ photography, anyway, because he was a little distracted by Miles’ palm resting lightly between his shoulder blades.

They lingered at the overlook for a while, but soon enough Athena started to get restless and Trucy seemed to have run out of pictures to take. Phoenix heaved himself off the boulder he had been sitting on.

“Alright, gang, ready to go?”

Apollo slumped his shoulders. “Do we have to?”

“Only if you don't want to be eaten by mountain lions!” Athena told him cheerfully. He hopped right up after that.

Phoenix turned to Miles.

“Need a hand?”

Miles scowled, but he reached out to grasp Phoenix’s outstretched hand regardless, and Phoenix pulled him to his feet.

They stood crowded in each other's space for an instant, before Edgeworth released his hand and stepped back.

“Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it.” He watched Edgeworth take a tentative step, then pointedly offered his arm again, eyebrows raised.
Miles’ scowl intensified, but Phoenix thought it looked like he might actually be considering the offer—although it might have been wishful thinking. Either way, after a moment, Miles straightened up and started down the trail after Athena, Apollo, and Trucy, with hobbling—but determined—steps.

_Same, proudful Edgeworth_, Phoenix laughed to himself, and followed his friend down the mountainside.

~~~

Dinner was simple. It was hard to mess up hot dogs, and once Trucy got their fire going—albeit not in the most conventional of ways—everyone was able to successfully cook their meal.

Miles wasn’t even sure when he had last eaten a hot dog—he wouldn’t have been surprised to find out it had been decades. But he wasn’t feeling inclined to complain about _anything_ once he managed to get his feet out of those accursed hiking boots.

“Is something _wrong_, Wright?” Edgeworth asked, noticing that Phoenix seemed to be glancing at him with a frown every few moments.

“No…I just don’t think I’ve ever seen you wear sandals,” Phoenix said. “I didn’t know you _owned_ sandals.”

“Unfortunately, we’ve all seen _you_ wear sandals,” Miles shot back. Apollo snorted into his hot dog.

“How many times do I have to tell you guys that that was a _part_?” Phoenix sighed. “Every detail of that outfit was carefully selected to lull Kristoph into a false sense of security.”

“Then why’d you keep dressing like that after he was incarcerated?” Apollo asked, raising an eyebrow.

“I’m…very dedicated to my method acting,” he grumbled into his hot dog. “…and my old suit didn’t really fit anymore.”

“I can’t believe you were even _considering_ wearing that old ensemble again,” Miles remarked, recalling a conversation they had had around the time Phoenix regained his badge. It had concluded with Miles dragging Phoenix downtown to his own tailor for a fitting.

“Wait, the new suit was Mr. Edgeworth’s idea?” Athena asked, looking between them.

“You think Mr. Wright would have chosen a waistcoat for _himself_?” Apollo interjected. “I almost didn’t recognize him when he first wore it.”

“Nor did I,” Miles said, glancing at Phoenix, who pouted back at him.

“Yeah, yeah, okay,” Phoenix said sourly. “Maybe I was a little far gone. But if we’re gonna talk about clothes, we should _really_ be talking about _this_.” He leaned over and hooked a finger under Miles’ bandana. “What, none of your cravats matched the shirt?”

Phoenix’s knuckle brushed his neck, and Miles hoped he wasn’t close enough to feel how his pulse jumped. It took great effort to remain still while Phoenix leaned closer.

For the most part, Miles was glad that Los Angeles had become his permanent home again, but settling down had had some…consequences, one of them being that he couldn’t disappear every time Phoenix confused him. But Miles had long since decided that it didn’t _mean_ anything when
Phoenix touched him—to try to read into the man’s actions was a futile endeavor, especially when Miles had a hard time separating his own wishful thinking from the facts.

He cleared his throat and directed a stern glare on Phoenix.

“It is absolutely ridiculous to suggest I would wear a cravat out here,” Miles retorted. “One of those is more expensive than your entire sweatpants getup combined.”

“Ah, that’s where you’re wrong,” Phoenix shot back. “You’re forgetting that that was a very special hat. Those cameras don’t come cheap.”

“Aw, Daddy, you’re supposed to say it’s priceless because I made it!” Trucy protested from across the fire. Phoenix laughed.

“That too, of course,” he agreed. He tugged slightly on Miles’ bandana. “So, are we gonna see you wearing this in court someday soon? For casual Fridays, maybe?”

“At this rate I’m likely to burn it as soon as I get home,” Miles replied archly, trying to ignore the way Phoenix was pulling him closer—entirely inadvertently, he told himself.

“Good thing I have photo evidence, then,” Phoenix said, releasing the bandana with a smirk. “A little something to give to your staff in exchange for taking you away from them all weekend.”

Miles subjected him to his most severe glare. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Already sent the picture to Klavier, actually,” Apollo piped up. “Sorry,” he added, unapologetically. “He wants to know if you found any dinosaur bones.”

“Oh, yeah, Jurassic Park!” Trucy said, finally making the connection. “Those movies are kinda old, huh? Like ten years ago?”

Phoenix and Miles exchanged a glance.

“God, we’re old,” Phoenix sighed. “You’re thinking of Jurassic World. The original Jurassic Park came out in ’93. A year after we were born.”

“Ninety-three?” Trucy cried. Athena grinned.

“Mr. Edgeworth, maybe you should’ve dressed up as the dinosaur.”

Miles tapped his temple with one finger. “Ms. Cykes, you should remember who made this trip possible for you before throwing around words like dinosaur.”

Phoenix looked around the whole group, his expression suddenly grave. “Good point. Kids, stop being mean to Edgeworth, he might leave us up here.”

“It would certainly make things easier for my office if I did,” Miles remarked.

“You’d miss us,” Phoenix asserted. Miles only chuckled.

Later, Apollo surprised everyone by sheepishly retrieving a ukulele from the tent—apparently Klavier had been giving him lessons. His repertoire was limited—Klavier’s influence was clear, to say the least—but as Gavinners albums were apparently standard Agency background music, almost everyone around the campfire was able to join in. Miles refrained, although after years of employing Klavier, he thought he had probably a good handle on some of the lyrics.
“Well, that’s all I got,” Apollo told them, after the final chord of Guilty Love—Trucy had practically begged him to play it, although Miles wasn’t sure the song actually gained anything from a ukulele rendition. The sky was truly dark now, moonless, and the circle of light around their dying fire made it feel like they were the only five people on the mountainside.

Suddenly, Athena stood and stretched. “Hey, I’m a bit tired. Trucy, Apollo, wanna play cards or something in the tent?”

Apollo, in the process of carefully replacing his ukulele in his case, looked up and frowned. “Cards? But—”

“Yeah, sounds fun!” Trucy interrupted, grabbing him by the arm and hauling him towards the tent.

Apollo just managed to snap his case shut and pick it up before being dragged away. “But—”

The tent zipped shut, and Apollo’s protests faded.

Phoenix watched them go. “Huh. Kinda surprised they wouldn’t want to look at the stars.”

Miles looked up, and he couldn’t contain a quiet gasp. Away from the city, the dark sky was spectacular—Miles had been focused on the fire, but with the embers cooling, the stars strewn across the sky became even clearer.


He crossed the campsite to the second tent, and returned carrying a blanket, which he spread out over the ground after kicking a few rocks out of the way.

“What free to join me,” he called, as he stretched out on half of it.

Miles hesitated, then moved to settle on the blanket beside him. The ground wasn’t exactly soft, but it was much more comfortable to watch the stars from this angle.

“Reminds me of old times,” Phoenix remarked. “We used to stargaze with Larry. You probably don’t even remember.”


“Eh, you don’t need to pretend, it’s okay if—”

“There was too much light pollution,” Miles interrupted, “so we couldn’t see very many stars, but you and Larry kept trying to convince me that the airplanes on their way to LAX were UFOs. You spent hours just making up stories for each of them, even though I kept telling you they were just airplanes with regular people in them.”

Phoenix fell quiet. “Oh. You do remember.”

“Of course.” After a moment, Miles went on. “Larry always ate too much candy and ended up crashing halfway through the night. And then it was just us.”

“You’re right…I’d almost forgotten tha—oh, hey, hey! Shooting star!”

Miles watched the pin-prick of light arc overhead and vanish.

Phoenix turned his head. “Did you make a wish?”
Am I ever not wishing, when it comes to him?

He had spent many nights when he was younger, watching these same stars, and wishing. Wishing circumstances were different. Wishing he could stay when Phoenix needed him to. Wishing he could say something, after all these years just say something to let him know, because it was eating him up and it had been for so long—

“Miles?”

Miles started. He wasn’t even sure how long he had left Phoenix’s question unanswered. He made the mistake of glancing to his left and found Phoenix looking at him instead of the stars, propped up on one elbow and giving him his full attention.

“S-sorry,” Miles stammered. “I…what was the question?”

“What did you wish for?” That hadn’t been the question, Miles was certain. This one was harder.

“I—nothing,” Miles lied, and he saw Phoenix’s brow crease. Would he have carried the magatama all the way out here?

Whether he caught the lie or not, Phoenix relaxed back to the ground, hands resting over his stomach, fidgeting.

“Can I tell you what I wished for?”

Something in Phoenix’s voice was making Miles’ heart beat faster. In the quiet of the night, he almost wondered if Phoenix could hear it.

Calm down, he ordered himself. For all you know, he wished for a new bicycle.

“Miles?”

He’d forgotten to answer again. And why did Phoenix keep saying Miles?

“Of course,” Miles replied. “If you want to.”

Phoenix took a deep breath and let it out, and now he was the one to fall silent.

Miles formed a word on his lips, tested it out silently, then lent it the barest amount of breath required to make it heard.

“…Phoenix?”

He regretted it instantly. The name came out too raw, too earnest, bearing the weight of decades of unspoken feelings.

Phoenix’s breath caught, and he let out a shaky laugh. “Sorry. I was thinking.” He was quiet for another moment, but this time Miles didn’t interrupt.

Finally, Phoenix went on, gazing up at the sky as he spoke. “They’re always about you, you know? Shooting star wishes, coin-dropped-in-a-pond wishes, birthday wishes, that-one’s-actually-an-airplane-but-who-cares wishes...” He trailed off, then seemed to think of a few more. “Eleven-eleven wishes, eyelash wishes, dandelion wishes—”

“Phoenix,” Miles repeated, this time more firmly, because he was certain the man beside him would go on for hours if he wasn’t stopped. Phoenix let out a nervous laugh.
“Sorry. But, it kinda seemed like the only option, you know? Whenever you were gone, just…
wishing you would come back. When we were kids, and after your note, and after my badge…and it
finally…I guess it finally stuck. And I thought that would be enough, but…” He tilted his head
and looked to the sky again, watching a satellite zip from east to west. “…I’m still making
wishes.”

The sounds of the night were inaudible to Miles over the rush of blood in his ears.

“Phoenix, what are you…”

“If you really don’t know, I should just quit while I’m ahead, huh,” Phoenix mused. “But that’s
never really been my M.O., so…” Phoenix let out a breath and sat up suddenly, his elbows resting
on his knees. His back was to Miles, so Miles could only see his silhouette against the navy sky.
When he spoke next, Miles had to sit up slightly, propped up on his hands, to hear him.

“Do you ever think there could be something more, between us?”

He didn’t turn around, just stared out into the darkness, but Miles could see his fingers clenched in
a nervous fist.

For his part, Miles was certain he had forgotten how to breath. “Do you…want there to be?”

“Have you been listening?” Phoenix asked, but the exasperation in his voice wasn’t serious.
“That’s what I wished for,” he said after a pause. “That’s what I’m always wishing for.”

This had to be a dream. Miles kept his eyes fixed on Phoenix, wondering how long it would take
before the image before him shifted and vanished, and he woke to find himself tucked in his
sleeping bag with a rock digging into his back. But seconds passed and continued to pass, and
nothing changed.

Finally, Phoenix turned to look at him.

“Miles, can you…say something…?” His voice was taut with hesitation.

“I…” was all Miles managed.

“It’s fine, if you don’t…I mean, you’re my best friend, really, and I wouldn’t give that up for
anything, but I just…I felt like I had to tell you—” Phoenix was babbling now, one hand nervously
pulling at the hair at the back of his neck as he spoke. “It was getting really hard not to tell you,
honestly, so I just—”

“I do,” Miles breathed out, and he wasn’t even entirely sure what question he was replying to now,
he just knew he needed to say something in the affirmative before Phoenix kept rambling into self-
doubt. “I mean…me, too! I—” There have to be better words for this! “Phoenix—” he tried to start
over, but then he caught Phoenix’s eyes and thought maybe the words weren’t all the necessary
after all.

“Really?” Phoenix said anyway. His voice sounded so small, so reluctant to believe. I did that,
Miles realized. By leaving, by not being there for him.

In the light of the moon, Miles realized with a shock that there were tears glinting in Phoenix’s
eyes. They weren’t quite overflowing, but one caught on his eyelash and slipped down his cheek,
and without thinking, Miles reached out to stop it, cradling Phoenix’s jaw in one hand as his thumb
brushed his cheek.
“I’m sorry,” he breathed. “I—”

“Don’t be,” Phoenix said, leaning into his touch and lifting his own hand to cover Miles’. Then he gently tugged Miles’ hand away from his face and brought it to his lips instead, pressing a soft kiss to his knuckles. Miles’ thoughts turned static.

“Don’t be sorry,” Phoenix repeated, his breath rushing over Miles’ skin. “Just tell me if you’re ready. I’ll wait if you’re not. As long as you need, Miles. I’ll wait.”

For a long moment, Miles could only stare. I’m not worth the heartbreak I’ve caused you, he almost said, but Phoenix would have just denied it.

“That…that won’t be necessary,” he said at last. The words were a little stiff, but formality had always been his fallback. He made an effort to soften his tone. “Phoenix, I—”

But then Phoenix looked up, and Miles lost his words to that wide gaze. He had met those eyes so many times before—a challenging stare across a courtroom, a shared sideways glance during an investigation side-by-side—and, while hints of it had always been there, Miles was sure he had never before been subject to the undiluted devotion he now saw in Phoenix’s eyes.

Phoenix interrupted him. “Can I kiss you?”

You already have, was the instinctive sardonic response on Miles’ tongue, but he bit it back, laughing at himself. Instead, he said nothing at all, just leaned forward and captured Phoenix’s lips.

Phoenix was surprised, but he recovered quickly—he never was one to be thrown for long. Miles felt him smile against his mouth as Phoenix kissed him back with enthusiasm.

Above them, the stars continued their silent revolutions, unconcerned by the small romance playing out below, but Miles offered up a moment of wordless gratitude, regardless.

~~~

“BS,” Apollo said, before Athena could even place down her two cards.

“Dammit!” she groaned, scooping the pile of playing cards into her hand and making a feeble attempt to arrange them into a fan.

“This was your idea,” Apollo reminded her. “I wanted to stargaze.”

“I already told you, that would mess everything up,” Athena retorted.

“I still can’t believe you dragged me on a camping trip just to try to get our boss to confess his feelings to the District Chief Prosecutor,” Apollo said with a sigh. “I am so glad that I just asked Klavier out like a normal person.”

“Do you really think we could have gotten Mr. Wright to ask Mr. Edgeworth out like a normal person?” Athena countered. “It’s been years. They need a push.”

“And being all sweaty and covered in bug bites is the push?” Apollo replied doubtfully.

Athena rolled her eyes. “The stars. The night air. It’s romantic.”

“I guess I’ll have to take your word for it,” Apollo said, “considering I’ve been banned from actually seeing the stars.”
“Polly, you’re being too loud,” Trucy interrupted. “And it’s your turn.”

Apollo huffed. “Fine. Three sevens.”

Athena frantically shuffled through her cards. “Wait, hold on—B—”

Suddenly, she froze and looked up. “Oh! Everyone quiet!”

“We weren’t even—”

“Sh!” Athena shot him a venomous glare, before swiveling her head back towards the flap of the tent. She closed her eyes, and her ears twitched slightly. “Aw…” she said after a pause. “Mr. Wright, that’s so sweet…”

Apollo’s mouth fell open. “You can’t eavesdrop—”

“SHH!” Now Trucy and Athena were shushing him. Apollo threw up his hands and leaned back against his pillow, resigned.

“What are they saying, what are they saying??” Trucy whispered.

Athena was quiet a moment. “I can’t quite… I’m gonna…”

She reached for the zipper of the tent. Apollo sucked in a breath.

“Athena, don’t—”

“Wait, wait, let me—”

“Guys…”

“Agh!”

Trucy, eager to see or hear better, crowded up next to Athena near the flap of the tent. Apollo reached out to grab her arm but missed, but instead, Trucy’s foot caught on a sleeping bag and she went tumbling into Athena, which resulted in Athena tugging on the zipper of the tent much less subtly than she had intended.

The tent flap fell open with an aggressive zip.

Athena yanked it closed a second later, and she and Trucy collapsed backwards onto their sleeping bags in a fit of giggles, shushing each other at the same time.

“Do you think they noticed?” Trucy whispered. Athena held her breath, trying to listen again.

Apollo sighed. “Five sevens,” he said, and dumped the remainder of his hand into the pile of cards.

~~~

When Miles leaned in to kiss him, Phoenix didn’t think about how long he had been waiting for this. He didn’t think finally, or about time, or why did we wait so long.

All he could think was that this felt right.

Maybe it had taken them some time, but that hardly mattered. Now was the perfect moment, and it would have been the perfect moment whenever it happened, today or years from now. Time was
inconsequential when Miles Edgeworth was cupping his jaw with one hand and pulling him closer, kissing him deeper.

Then there was a flurry of movement from the direction of the tent, and the sound distracted Phoenix just enough that his lips parted from Miles’ for a moment.

Miles gave a confused frown.

“Phoe—”

Phoenix held up a finger, glancing towards the tent.

“Truce…?” he called.

The night was silent again. Too silent.

“Trucy!” Phoenix repeated, with more authority this time.

“Yeah?” Trucy’s too-innocent voice replied.

“What’cha up to?”

“What’cha up to?”

“Just playing cards, Daddy!”

_Hm._ Trucy usually wasn’t a bad liar, but Phoenix was well-versed in her tells, and the pitch of her voice was one of them. He glanced at Miles, apologetically, before raising his voice again.

“So, you’re not, say…spying on your dad?” Phoenix asked.

Silence, then… “Athena started it!”

“Hey!” Athena squawked.

Of course. Trucy had known how he felt about Edgeworth for years, and it was impossible to hide troubled feelings from Athena. They had both offered help in the past, in their own ways, but Phoenix had firmly refused. He appreciated that they cared, but he wasn’t sure he wanted teenagers involved in his love life.

“Kids,” he sighed. He leaned forward to drop his forehead against Miles’ shoulder. “They’re incorrigible.”

“Ngh,” Miles muttered, and Phoenix tilted his head to catch a glimpse of the troubled crease in his brow. He was probably blushing, too, and Phoenix thought it was a shame that it was much too dark to see it.

“Better get used to it,” he told Miles, matter-of-factly. “But on that note, maybe we should, uh… postpone this? Just until—”

“Until we have more privacy?” Miles finished. “Yes, that seems wise.”

Phoenix sat up and glanced towards the tent. “Besides, I think Apollo will hate me for weeks if we don’t even let him look at the stars after dragging him out here.” He raised his voice. “Come on out here, guys, the sky is beautiful.”

Predictably, Apollo was the first out of the tent, grumbling to himself as he went to retrieve something from the car. Trucy and Athena emerged a little more cautiously, but Phoenix just
waved them over to the blanket, patting the spot beside him. When Trucy sat down, he slung an arm around her shoulders.

“I should have been suspicious as soon as Athena said she wanted to play cards with you two,” he said. “Don’t tell me you had this planned all along.”

“Uhhh…”

Phoenix sighed. “Who taught you to scheme like this, huh?” he asked.

Trucy gave a thoughtful frown. “You,” she said after a pause, at the same time that Athena said, “Simon.”

“Oh,” Phoenix said, with a glanced at Miles. “So we didn’t stand a chance.”

Athena, sitting on the other side of Trucy, chewed on her lip. “Are you mad, boss?”

Phoenix chuckled. “Of course not.” Athena started to let out a breath of relief, but Phoenix wasn’t finished. “That said—toilet cleaning duty for a week.”

“What?!”

“Both of you,” Phoenix clarified. “Apollo gets the week off.”

“Haha, serves you right,” Apollo laughed, returning from the car with a few oddly-shaped objects in his arms. He placed one down on the ground and started unfolding the other, which appeared to be a tripod. “So, does anyone here care about like, nature or whatever?” he went on as he affixed what turned out to be a small telescope to the top of the tripod. “Jupiter is really bright tonight.”

“Ooh!” Trucy leapt to her feet, and Athena joined the two of them at the telescope, leaving Phoenix and Miles alone on the blanket again.

Phoenix took advantage of the kids’ distraction, leaning closer to Miles to press their shoulders together. Low in the sky, an airplane made its slow transit across the sky.

“What am I supposed to wish for now?” he wondered in a low voice, glancing sideways at Miles.

Miles answered after a thoughtful pause. “I’ve had quite enough wishing, I think,” he concluded.

“Agreed,” Phoenix chuckled. He leaned back and stretched out on his back again, and when Miles followed suit, Phoenix reached out to take his hand, lacing their fingers together in the darkness.

A thousand glimmering vessels for dreams waited in the inky sky, but for the first time in years, Phoenix just saw the stars.

End Notes

As I was writing this I was constantly thinking about that one page from that volume of ace attorney manga, you know the "Edgeworth seeing Phoenix's silhouette in the stars" one. yeah.

I'm on twitter at u_andcloud and tumblr at klvrgvn!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!