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# The Moonbeam Theory

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## THE MOONBEAM THEORY

The ten-hour drive to Florida was more than any eight year old could stand. Stewart Calton was no exception to this rule. Stewart was a bright, curious young man and sitting in the car for ten straight hours turned this healthy curiosity into hyper-activity.

"Can I go for a walk?" asked Stewart, slamming the door of the Oldsmobile.

"Yes," said his mother, as she carefully applied her lipsticck.

"Don't slam the door, for Chrissakes!" his father yelled, as only a father who has driven for ten straight hours with an eight year old can yell.

"Darling, there's no need to yell at the poor boy," said his mother sharply. "We've all had a long..."

Stewart didn't hang around long enough to hear the rest of the conversation; he was already sprinting toward the beach. He got about ten yards out and stopped abruptly. He walked over to a nearby piece of driftwood and sat down on it.

"Damndt!" he hissed.

It was at this point that he heard a nearby voice. "What's wrong there, Sport?"

"I got a buncha sand in my shoes and now I gotta stop and dump it all out," he explained. It had not yet occurred to him that he was talking to a complete stranger. "Hey, who are you?"

A young man lay on the beach in his bathing suit, with sunglasses on. His hair was dishwater blond, and it came down to his shoulders in thick waves. He had a broad nose and high cheekbones. When he took off his glasses his eyes were bloodshot and the color was a blue-green.

"Me? Who am I?" asked the man, sitting up and gazing at Stewart intently.

"Yeah. Why are you lyin' on the beach in the middle of the night?"

Stewart was holding one of his shoes in his right hand, banging the heel with his left.

"Why am I lying on the beach in the middle of the night?"

Stewart was frustrated. "Yes! Who are you and why--"

"I heard you the first time. My name is Moonbeam and..."

Stewart was snickering. "What kinda name is Moonbeam?"

"That's what I'm tryin'a explain to you, Smiley." Moonbeam seemed irritated. Then his voice took on a conspiratorial tone and he looked suspiciously about. "See, not many people know, but the moon," his eyes rolled up toward the sky and he pointed up toward the bright, full moon, "the moon's rays, you know, those ultraviolet rays, are at least as strong as the sun's, under certain circumstances. Since these rays are attracted to body heat and the beach is empty, I'm soaking up all the rays. Until you came along." He glared melodramatically at Stewart.

Stewart had stared intently during the story and his mouth had dropped open. Moonbeam had a certain hypnotizing charisma that he added to the story. Stewart recovered and apologized for taking up some of Moonbeam's rays.

"Naaah, don't worry about it, kid," said Moonbeam reassuringly, patting Stewart on the back. "I don't mind sharing."

"So howcome your parents named you Moonbeam?"

"My parents didn't name me Moonbeam?"

"Who named you Moonbeam?"

"I named me Moonbeam."

"You can do that?"

"I did."

"Oh." Stewart paused. A puzzled look came over his face. "What did your parents name you?"

"David."

"Howcome you don't like that name, David?"

"I don't know, it's just not me, you know? I mean, well, what's your name, for instance?"

"Stewart."

"Do you think it describes you pretty well?"

"I don't know. I never really thought about it."

"Well, you can find your real name, it's out there. The thing is you gotta figure out what you know or like and believe and why. That's the most important thing of all, WHY? You gotta find yourself."

"Find myself? I'm sittin' right here." Stewart looked extremely puzzled.

"Where?"

He looked down and patted the piece of driftwood beneath him. "Right here, sittin' on this piece of wood."

"How do you know that's a piece of wood?"

"Cuz, well, it's just a piece of wood that's all."

"Oh."

Stewart looked as if he thought that his explanation was more than adequate. "What could it be if it wasn't a piece of wood?" he asked, now looking rather frazzled.

Moonbeam shrugged his shoulders exaggeratedly. "I don't know, it could be anything you want it to be."

"Just like my name!?" Stewart's face lit up as if this bit of knowledge had come from divine revelation.

"Right, just like your name." He patted Stewart on the back again. "It's all out there, Stewart." His arm stretched out to the sea. "You just gotta be willing to take a little time and find it, that's all."

Suddenly Moonbeam jumped up and brushed the sand off his legs. "Sorry, Stewart, gotta go." He started running off down the beach, and then turned quickly. "Hey, good luck, see you 'round."

"Yeah, see ya." Stewart waved and watched Moonbeam as he ran down the beach and his silhouette faded slowly from sight.

William F. Patterson