



# Astra's Mixed-Up Mission

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# Student Reports



**NAME:** Clover  
**BRIGHT DAY:** January 5  
**FAVORITE COLOR:** Purple  
**INTERESTS:** Music, painting, studying  
**WISH:** To be the best songwriter and DJ on Starland  
**WHY CHOSEN:** Clover has great self-discipline, patience, and willpower. She is creative, responsible, dependable, and extremely loyal.  
**WATCH OUT FOR:** Clover can be hard to read and she is reserved with those she doesn't know. She's afraid to take risks and can be a wisecracker at times.  
**SCHOOL YEAR:** Second  
**POWER CRYSTAL:** Panthera  
**WISH PENDANT:** Barrette



**NAME:** Adora  
**BRIGHT DAY:** February 14  
**FAVORITE COLOR:** Sky blue  
**INTERESTS:** Science, thinking about the future and how she can make it better  
**WISH:** To be the top fashion designer on Starland  
**WHY CHOSEN:** Adora is clever and popular and cares about the world around her. She's a deep thinker.  
**WATCH OUT FOR:** Adora can have her head in the clouds and be thinking about other things.  
**SCHOOL YEAR:** Third  
**POWER CRYSTAL:** Azurica  
**WISH PENDANT:** Watch



**NAME:** Piper  
**BRIGHT DAY:** March 4  
**FAVORITE COLOR:** Seafoam green  
**INTERESTS:** Composing poetry and writing in her dream journal  
**WISH:** To become the best version of herself she can possibly be and to share that by writing books  
**WHY CHOSEN:** Piper is giving, kind, and sensitive. She is very intuitive and aware.  
**WATCH OUT FOR:** Piper can be dreamy, absentminded, and wishy-washy. She can also be moody and easily swayed by the opinions of others.  
**SCHOOL YEAR:** Second  
**POWER CRYSTAL:** Dreamalite  
**WISH PENDANT:** Bracelets

# Starling Academy



**NAME:** Astra

**BRIGHT DAY:** April 9

**FAVORITE COLOR:** Red

**INTERESTS:** Individual sports

**WISH:** To be the best athlete on Starland—to win!

**WHY CHOSEN:** Astra is energetic, brave, clever, and confident. She has boundless energy and is always direct and to the point.

**WATCH OUT FOR:** Astra is sometimes cocky, self-centered, condescending, and brash.

**SCHOOL YEAR:** Second

**POWER CRYSTAL:** Quarrelite

**WISH PENDANT:** Wristbands



**NAME:** Tessa

**BRIGHT DAY:** May 18

**FAVORITE COLOR:** Emerald green

**INTERESTS:** Food, flowers, love

**WISH:** To be successful enough that she can enjoy a life of luxury

**WHY CHOSEN:** Tessa is warm, charming, affectionate, trustworthy, and dependable. She has incredible drive and commitment.

**WATCH OUT FOR:** Tessa does not like to be rushed. She can be quite stubborn and often says no. She does not deal well with change and is prone to exaggeration. She can be easily sidetracked.

**SCHOOL YEAR:** Third

**POWER CRYSTAL:** Gossamer

**WISH PENDANT:** Brooch



**NAME:** Gemma

**BRIGHT DAY:** June 2

**FAVORITE COLOR:** Orange

**INTERESTS:** Sharing her thoughts about almost anything

**WISH:** To be valued for her opinions on everything

**WHY CHOSEN:** Gemma is friendly, easygoing, funny, extroverted, and social. She knows a little bit about everything.

**WATCH OUT FOR:** Gemma talks—a lot—and can be a little too honest sometimes and offend others. She can have a short attention span and can be superficial.

**SCHOOL YEAR:** First

**POWER CRYSTAL:** Scatterite

**WISH PENDANT:** Earrings

# Student Reports



**NAME:** Cassie  
**BRIGHT DAY:** July 6  
**FAVORITE COLOR:** White  
**INTERESTS:** Reading, crafting  
**WISH:** To be more independent and confident and less fearful  
**WHY CHOSEN:** Cassie is extremely imaginative and artistic. She is a voracious reader and is loyal, caring, and a good friend. She is very intuitive.  
**WATCH OUT FOR:** Cassie can be distrustful, jealous, moody, and brooding.  
**SCHOOL YEAR:** First  
**POWER CRYSTAL:** Lunalite  
**WISH PENDANT:** Glasses



**NAME:** Leona  
**BRIGHT DAY:** August 16  
**FAVORITE COLOR:** Gold  
**INTERESTS:** Acting, performing, dressing up  
**WISH:** To be the most famous pop star on Starland  
**WHY CHOSEN:** Leona is confident, hardworking, generous, open-minded, optimistic, caring, and a strong leader.  
**WATCH OUT FOR:** Leona can be vain, opinionated, selfish, bossy, dramatic, and stubborn and is prone to losing her temper.  
**SCHOOL YEAR:** Third  
**POWER CRYSTAL:** Glisten paw  
**WISH PENDANT:** Cuff



**NAME:** Vega  
**BRIGHT DAY:** September 1  
**FAVORITE COLOR:** Blue  
**INTERESTS:** Exercising, analyzing, cleaning, solving puzzles  
**WISH:** To be the top student at Starling Academy  
**WHY CHOSEN:** Vega is reliable, observant, organized, and very focused.  
**WATCH OUT FOR:** Vega can be opinionated about everything, and she can be fussy, uptight, critical, arrogant, and easily embarrassed.  
**SCHOOL YEAR:** Second  
**POWER CRYSTAL:** Queezle  
**WISH PENDANT:** Belt

# Starling Academy



**NAME:** Libby

**BRIGHT DAY:** October 12

**FAVORITE COLOR:** Pink

**INTERESTS:** Helping others, interior design, art, dancing

**WISH:** To give everyone what they need—both on Starland and through wish granting on Wishworld

**WHY CHOSEN:** Libby is generous, articulate, gracious, diplomatic, and kind.

**WATCH OUT FOR:** Libby can be indecisive and may try too hard to please everyone.

**SCHOOL YEAR:** First

**POWER CRYSTAL:** Charmelite

**WISH PENDANT:** Necklace



**NAME:** Scarlet

**BRIGHT DAY:** November 3

**FAVORITE COLOR:** Black

**INTERESTS:** Crystal climbing (and other extreme sports), magic, thrill seeking

**WISH:** To live on Wishworld

**WHY CHOSEN:** Scarlet is confident, intense, passionate, magnetic, curious, and very brave.

**WATCH OUT FOR:** Scarlet is a loner and can alienate others by being secretive, arrogant, stubborn, and jealous.

**SCHOOL YEAR:** Third

**POWER CRYSTAL:** Ravenstone

**WISH PENDANT:** Boots



**NAME:** Sage

**BRIGHT DAY:** December 1

**FAVORITE COLOR:** Lavender

**INTERESTS:** Travel, adventure, telling stories, nature, and philosophy

**WISH:** To become the best Wish-Grantor Starland has ever seen

**WHY CHOSEN:** Sage is honest, adventurous, curious, optimistic, friendly, and relaxed.

**WATCH OUT FOR:** Sage has a quick temper! She can also be restless, irresponsible, and too trusting of others' opinions. She may jump to conclusions.

**SCHOOL YEAR:** First

**POWER CRYSTAL:** Lavenderite

**WISH PENDANT:** Necklace

# Introduction

**You take a deep** breath, about to blow out the candles on your birthday cake. Clutching a coin in your fist, you get ready to toss it into the dancing waters of a fountain. You stare at your little brother as you each hold an end of a dried wishbone, about to pull. But what do you do first?

You make a wish, of course!

Ever wonder what happens right after you make that wish? *Not much*, you may be thinking.

Well, you'd be wrong.

Because something quite unexpected happens next. Each and every wish that is made becomes a glowing Wish Orb, invisible to the human eye. This undetectable orb zips through the air and into the heavens, on a one-way trip to the brightest star in the sky—a magnificent place called Starland. Starland is inhabited by Starlings, who look a lot like you and me, except they have a sparkly glow to their skin, and glittery hair in unique colors. And they have one more thing: magical powers. The Starlings use these powers to make good wishes come true, for when good wishes are granted, the result is positive energy. And the Starlings of Starland need this energy to keep their world running.

In case you are wondering, there are three kinds of Wish Orbs:

- 1) **GOOD WISH ORBS.** These wishes are positive and helpful and come from the heart. They are pretty and sparkly and are nurtured in climate-controlled Wish-Houses. They bloom into fantastical glowing orbs. When the time is right, they are presented to the appropriate Starling for wish fulfillment.
- 2) **BAD WISH ORBS.** These are for selfish, mean-spirited, or negative things. They don't sparkle

at all. They are immediately transported to a special containment center, as they are very dangerous and must not be granted.

- 3) IMPOSSIBLE WISH ORBS. These wishes are for things, like world peace and disease cures, that simply can't be granted by Starlings. These sparkle with an almost impossibly bright light and are taken to a special area of the Wish-House with tinted windows to contain the glare they produce. The hope is that one day they can be turned into good wishes the Starlings can help grant.

Starlings take their wish granting very seriously. There is a special school, called Starling Academy, that accepts only the best and brightest young Starling girls. They study hard for four years, and when they graduate, they are ready to start traveling to Wishworld to help grant wishes. For as long as anyone can remember, only graduates of wish-granting schools have ever been allowed to travel to Wishworld. But things have changed in a very big way.

Read on for the rest of the story. . . .



# Prologue

*STAR MEMORANDUM*, Astra typed on her holo-keyboard.

*TO: Cassie and Piper*, was the next line.

Then: *FROM: Astra*

She paused for a moment as she considered the subject line. She needed to get Cassie's attention. The question was, how?

Something strange was going on at Starling Academy. Astra was almost sure of it, and Piper was pretty convinced, too. They wanted to discuss it with one of the

other Star Darlings, but Astra couldn't decide whom to approach. Piper suggested talking to Cassie, mentioning her thoughtfulness and perceptiveness. And Astra was, despite her initial hesitation, learning to trust Piper's instincts. To be completely honest, when she first met Piper, she had found her slow dreaminess annoying and her occasional dark side ridiculous. But now Astra had a new respect for both the hidden messages that dreams could hold and the strength of Piper's intuitive powers.

But even though Cassie had been so concerned about the flowers, she was now completely focused on herself. She spoke about her starmazing mission, about how startacularly it had gone. She continued by praising her own wish energy manipulation skills. She even went on to discuss her eyelashes, calling them "dusky, luxurious, and starmazingly sooty." Astra could barely even see them behind those large star-shaped glasses Cassie wore, so she told her she'd have to take her word for it.

Perhaps she had snorted as she said it? Because Cassie had stormed off. Possibly to go look in a mirror. Or to find someone with a finer appreciation of eyelashes. Who knew?

So Astra decided it might be best to send both Cassie and Piper a holo-message. Something short, direct, and to the point. But what should the subject be? She thought

and thought and then smiled as she came up with the perfect idea. Astra's fingers practically flew over the holo-keyboard. So many odd things had happened since the beginning of the starmester!

STAR MEMORANDUM

TO: Cassie and Piper

FROM: Astra

SUBJECT: Top ten weird things that have been going on at Starling Academy

10) MESSED-UP MISSIONS. EVERYONE.

(Think about it: each and every Star Darling who has been sent down to Wishworld has had great difficulty identifying her Wisher or figuring out the wish.)

9) SCARLET'S OUSTER. (One day she was a Star Darling; the next she was kicked out. Then the Wish Orb picked her to save a mission that was going badly and she was back in the fold again. Startastically strange.)

8) POWER WENT OUT. (We've been taught since we were in Wee Constellation School that we have massive wish energy reserves. How in Starland could the lights have gone out?)

- 7) THE RANKER. (Somehow the whole school got invited to try out for Leona's band. The Ranker was brought in to choose the band members and their name, and it chose an all-SD band and the name of our secret group for the band. Coincidence? Perhaps not.)
- 6) FIGHTING FLOWERS. (Each of our rooms had a vase of these. We all fought like rats and hogs, or whatever that Wishling expression is. Now that they are gone—thanks, Cassie—we are getting along again. Something to think about.)
- 5) PIPER'S FOREBODING DREAMS. (No offense, Piper, but I used to think you were way creepy. Now I know you've got some stellar prediction skills.)
- 4) ONE WORD: OPHELIA. (It makes entirely no sense that someone so clueless could have been a real Star Darling. Then you got suspicious of her, Cassie, and she disappeared.)
- 3) LEONA'S FAILED MISSION. (She's self-absorbed—star apologies, Cassie—but even I felt bad when she didn't collect wish energy and her Wish Pendant got all burnt-looking. What an embarrassment.)

- 2) STAR KINDNESS DAY MESSAGES WERE THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF WHAT WAS INTENDED. (Because I know that neither of you think I am a bad sportswoman, or that I have slow reflexes. And no, I am not holding any grudges.)
- 1) EVERYONE IS ACTING LIKE A WEIRDO! (Star apologies again, Cassie, but it's true. Piper and I can't put our finger on exactly what it is, but we'll get to the bottom of this soon. . . .)

Astra smiled, read it through one more time, and pressed SEND. To her disbelief, the entire holo-document disappeared into thin air. “Starf!” she yelled.

The sparkle shower turned off and her roommate, Clover, stepped into the room. “Are you okay?” she asked Astra. Her eyes lit up. “Do you need a hug?” Not waiting for an answer, Clover headed her way, arms wide.

“See you at breakfast!” Astra called as she expertly dodged away from her roommate’s embrace. She picked up her starstick, slid the door open smoothly using energy manipulation, and was gone.

## CHAPTER 1

“Piper! Piper!” called Astra, waving urgently at the girl sitting across the cafeteria table from her. Astra’s red-and-silver-striped fingernails caught the light and she noticed with dismay that the polish she had applied on Wishworld was already starting to chip. She knew it wouldn’t last through Physical Energy class later that afternoon. What a difference from her Starland manicure, which had taken *forever* to remove!

Piper looked up from her dream holo-diary, flipping a lock of hair the color of ocean foam over her shoulder. “Is someone on the way?” she asked.

“I think Tessa is heading over,” Astra told her. After striking out with Cassie, they had tried to talk to some of the other Star Darlings and had begun to notice that

something seemed off with each and every one of them. But they couldn't figure out exactly what was going on. So they decided they'd study their roommates first and report to each other.

Back in their room, after Clover had hugged Astra tightly for the tenth time, she realized that no one could possibly have missed her that much. So she sent Piper a holo-text:



Clover is a mad hugger! What about Vêga?

After a while she received a holo-text:



To figure it out took me some time. But Vêga only talks in rhyme!

They made plans to study the rest of the Star Darlings the next starday, starting at breakfast. So there they sat, awaiting their arrival.

Piper shut off the dream diary with a swipe of her hand. "Star apologies, Astra," she said. "I just thought I'd skim through some of my latest dream entries to see if I could come up with any clues about what's going on. You know, any themes or symbols that might have deeper meaning."

Just a few stardays earlier, Astra would have scoffed at such a statement. But now she totally got it.

“Find anything?” Astra asked hopefully.

Piper sighed. “Not yet,” she said.

They both watched as Tessa, her brilliant green eyes flashing, made a glitterbeeline for the table near the windows that the Star Darlings had claimed as their own. All the Star Darlings knew how much Tessa loved food and looked forward to each meal. “Star greetings,” she said pleasantly. She plopped down in a chair. “I’m starving!” she announced.

A Bot-Bot waiter zoomed up to drop off Piper’s and Astra’s breakfasts and take Tessa’s order. She thought for a moment, then nodded. “I’ll take a pastry basket and a cup of Zing, please,” she said.

Her breakfast arrived shortly thereafter. Tessa’s hand hovered over the baked treats, and she licked her lips as she made her choice. She pulled out an ozziefruit croissant and took a big bite. “Moonberry,” she said when she was done chewing. She made quick work of the flaky pastry, then, dabbing the corners of her mouth with a cloth napkin for any errant crumbs, reached in again. This time she grabbed a mini astromuffin, which Astra could see was liberally studded with lolofruit. She popped the entire thing into her mouth and chewed.



“Moonberry again!” she said. “What are the chances?”

Astra’s Star-Zap, which was sitting in her lap in silent mode, flickered. She flipped it open and read the message.



Tessa = Everything tastes like moonberries?



Sure looks that way!

Cassie and Sage strolled in next. Cassie sat next to Piper and smiled at her as she flicked open her napkin.

“Starkudos on your mission, Piper,” she said.

“Star salutations, Cassie,” Piper said, digging into her bowl of Quasar Krispies with sliced starberries.

“It probably didn’t . . .” Cassie began, obviously trying to figure out the best way to phrase her statement. “It probably didn’t go quite as seamlessly as mine, did it?” She thought for a moment and laughed, placing a hand on Piper’s arm. “Of course it didn’t,” she said. “What was I thinking? My mission was such a stellar success!”

Piper looked stricken for a moment. But her expression changed to a knowing grin when she received Astra’s holo-text:



Cassie = Braggy! Now her weird behavior yesterday makes sense!

The rest of the Star Darlings began to arrive at the table. Astra and Piper watched as Sage giggled when Clover shamefacedly confessed to getting a D (for *dim*) on her Chronicle Class examination and then guffawed when the Bot-Bot waiter informed her that the kitchen was out of the Sparkle-O's she had ordered.



Sage = Can't stop laughing.

Piper nodded and began to compose a holo-message in response.



Libby = Can't stay awake.

Astra looked at the girl, whose cheek was resting on her plate of tinsel toast. *My stars*, she thought. She reached for her mug, drank the last gulp of twinkle tea, and began to compose a reply.

"Hey," said Cassie, noticing. "Are you writing a message about me?" She looked down at her silver dress and lace tights and smiled. "I did pick a startastically fashionable outfit this morning, didn't I?"

Astra wanted to roll her eyes but instead replied (as pleasantly as she could), "You *do* look nice today."



They don't know that they are acting odd, do they?



I don't think so. Let's see. . . .

"Vega," Piper said, "have you noticed that everything you say is in rhyme?"

Ten Star Darlings swiveled around to look at Piper, curious expressions on their faces.

Cassie cocked her head to the side. "Really?" she said. "I don't hear it."

Gemma turned to Tessa. "Imagine if I talked in rhyme all the time. That would be so annoying!"

Tessa laughed. "My stars!" she said to her sister. "Bite your tongue!"

"Ouch!" said Gemma.

Astra made a mental note, to be verified later. *Gemma = Takes things literally?*

Vega stared at Piper like she had three auras. "Piper, do you need some schooling? Talking in rhyme? You must be fooling!"

With a quick glance at Astra, Piper asked, "You really didn't just hear that?"

"I think it is completely clear," Vega replied. "There isn't anything to hear."



Does that answer your question?



It certainly does!

Soon it was time to head to class. Piper and Astra lingered at the table as the rest of the Star Darlings gathered their Star-Zaps and stood up to leave. Their Bot-Bot waiter collected the breakfast utensils and dishes around them.

“Star salutations, SL-D9,” said Astra. When he zoomed off, she turned to Piper. “It’s just so startastically strange that no one knows they are acting odd.”

Piper nodded. “Or that anyone else is, either,” she added.

The two girls headed out of the cafeteria, down the steps, and toward Halo Hall.

Suddenly, Piper grabbed Astra’s arm and jerked her backward. “Watch out!” she cried. Astra realized that she had almost been knocked down by a Starling rushing to class.

Astra stared after her. “Was that Scarlet?” she said.

Piper nodded.

“And was she *skipping*?” Astra asked incredulously.

“She was skipping,” said Piper.

“Well, now I’ve seen everything,” said Astra. “We’ve got to figure this weirdness out, and fast.”

“So why aren’t *we* acting odd?” asked Piper.

“Great question,” said Astra. “I think when we sort out that part, we’ll be able to get to the bottom of this.”

Piper sighed. “Let’s figure it out soon,” she said. “If I have to listen to Vega’s rhymes for much longer, I think I’ll scream!”

