



# Wishing Day

## An Autumn Walk for Families

Welcome to the Sands Point Preserve's Autumn Walk! The trail is approximately ¼-mile long – it is easy to walk but very bumpy, so strollers will not do well here. Print this story at home and bring it with you. As you explore the trail through the forest, share this tale of good friends who explore a magical pathway to an old wishing well – they discover all sorts of fascinating things about the world along the way...



Sasha



Nathalie

### 1. Sasha & Nathalie

**Sasha** is a young chipmunk who lives with his family in these woods. Today, he is thrilled to see his good friend **Nathalie**, a young Northern Parula, whose family is visiting from a land far away to the North. These yellow and gray birds are stopping off for a rest at the Preserve as they migrate to the South for the Winter. Sasha and Nathalie see each other just twice each year – when the birds travel South to find food in Winter, and again when they travel North in the Spring. They love to play and explore the forest together – finding something new in each season.

Nathalie came from a land covered with evergreen trees that look the same all year long, and she was worried about Sasha's home. Autumn had started here, and the trees' leaves were turning from green to bright yellow, orange, and brown – and falling to the ground with every breeze.

✓ Can you see falling leaves? What colors are they? Are they different shapes? Choose one leaf on the ground and hold on to it for later...

## 2. Tree Roots

As they make their way down the path, Sasha scurrying along on the ground, and Nathalie flying from tree branch to branch, they found an odd tree that is standing up on its roots on the right side of the path.

Nathalie said, “I thought all tree roots were deep underground to keep trees steady and well-fed with nutrients from the soil.” As she hopped to the ground and peeked underneath the tree, she said, “I can see clear through, between these roots!”

✓ *Can you find the tree standing up on its roots?  
Can you see through them, too?*



Sasha and Nathalie went further down the path and found long tree roots sticking up from the earth, going across the path from one side to the other – they had fun hopping over them.

✓ *Can you jump over the tree roots in the path? Which trees do they come from?  
Where do they go?*

## 3. Breathing Autumn Air

They stopped for a moment, closed their eyes, and took long, deep breaths of fresh air. The air smelled like Autumn.

✓ *Breathe deeply – in and out. What does Autumn smell like to you?*

## 4. Wavy Bench

The path turned to the left, and Sasha and Nathalie found a green wavy-shaped bench. They looked at each other, then at the bench, and wondered why it has this strange shape.

✓ *Can you jump on and off of the bench three times?  
No time for sitting now – the best part of the walk is ahead!*



Sasha and Nathalie had enough of jumping on and off of the bench and continued down the path to a clearing.

## 5. Wishing Well



The old stone well was now in view, with its ornate wrought iron posts above it.

Sasha said, “Make a wish, dear friend. Then take your pretty leaf and throw it in the well, so your wish can come true.”

“That doesn’t make any sense, Sasha,” said Nathalie, “how can throwing a leaf into a well make a wish come true?”

Sasha replied, “It doesn’t, silly! We make our own wishes come true – but you start by thinking of your wish – something that is important to you, something that you hope for, or that gives you hope – for yourself and your family, or your friends and school – or, if you are thinking really big, our world.”

“Goodness! I have to think about this,” said the Northern Parula.

After a few moments, she said, “I know what is needed here.” She closed her eyes and whispered words that Sasha could not hear.

Then, she tossed her leaf into the well. She flew up to the post above it, and looked down inside, where she saw her leaf settling in with quite a few others. “There! That should do it.”

Nathalie flew off of the well and around to the right, where the path continues up a small hill. Sasha made his wish, quickly dropped his leaf in the well, and scampered after her.

✓ *Now make your own wish and throw your special leaf into the well.*

## 6. Periwinkle



Sasha always loved this part of the trail, where the ground is covered with a carpet of green moss. It felt so soft on his toes.

To the left of the trail, the ground is covered with a plant called *Periwinkle* because it has masses of Sasha's favorite purple-blue flowers every spring.

✓ *Can you find the mossy path? As you walk, look to your left for a field in the woods that is covered with plants with small shiny leaves.*

✓ *Come back in the spring to see the flowers!*

## 7. Lily

They came upon a large tree with a little hole at the base of the trunk. Sasha yelled into it, "Hello!" And out popped Lily, a silver-grey mouse with a pointy pink nose. Her family has lived in this burrow all summer. She is squished in there with dozens of brothers and sisters, whom she loves. Mice are nocturnal – they sleep during the day and are awake at night, but she sneaks out for daytime playdates with Sasha. Her tiny heart beats up to 630 times each minute! They ran three circles around the tree, then up and down the trunk twice, just for fun.



Lily



✓ *Can you find a large tree with a small hole at its base on the left side of the trail?*

✓ *If Lily doesn't come out to play, she must be sleeping – so wish her sweet dreams.*

## 8. The Lone Evergreen



The three friends started up the path together, and they saw something unexpected in these woods. On the right side of the path, they saw a small evergreen tree – unlike all of the other trees in this forest, it keeps its dark green needles all year long, through every season: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. They wondered why there is just one such tree here – and if this tree felt lonely.

The evergreen whispered in the breeze, “Six years ago, the wind carried a seed to this spot, and that seed snuggled into the earth and sprouted. Now I have grown into a unique tree, and I am proud of that. Anyway, we are all trees with roots in the earth, even if we have different leaves. We all clean the air that everyone breaths.”

✓ *Can you find the only evergreen tree along this trail?*

## 9. A Serpent



Lily and Sasha looked around for Nathalie, but she’d flown off somewhere out of sight. They walked up the trail and were delighted to find her standing on a fallen tree on the right side of the trail.

Nathalie called to them, “Look! I have never seen such a huge snake – how exciting!”

Her furry friends turned their heads sideways and back again, trying to see what she saw, and all at once, they could see it, too – when they used their imaginations, the winding, undulating shape of the tree trunk *did* look like a big serpent.

✓ *Can you find the fallen tree that looks like a serpent?*

## 10. Jasper & the Acorns

Farther up the path, an oak tree on the left has dropped its acorns – many of which are attached in pairs. Jasper the squirrel spotted the friends and stood straight up on his hind legs with his forelegs drawn up in front of his chest.

“Mine,” he said, “all mine. I’m collecting acorns now for the winter, so I’ll have plenty to eat. Mine, mine, mine!”

“Will you ever learn to share?” Sasha asked, always hopeful.



*Jasper*

✓ *How many acorns can you find on the ground beneath the oak tree? Hint - look for a great old oak tree with these leaves:*

✓ *Please leave the acorns here, so Jasper and other animals can collect them for their winter meals.*



## 11. Leaning Tree



Looking straight ahead, up the path, the friends saw a very tall tree leaning far to the right – it had grown at an angle, from the ground way up to the sky, and they wondered if it was going to fall over.

Sasha reassured them, “That tree has been growing like this for years – maybe it is reaching for more sunlight beyond the shady forest because light gives trees and plants energy to grow – or, maybe the wind has pushed it that way.” Sasha had been studying his environment. He had questions about almost everything he saw, and he liked finding the answers.

✓ *Can you find this beautiful leaning tree? Are most trees growing straight up toward the sky, or do some of them lean toward light? Do the trees sometimes lean on each other?*

## 12. Camouflage

Lily the mouse scampered up to her favorite tree in these woods – an American Beech tree. When she climbed onto the tree, she almost disappeared because her fur is the same color as the bark. She liked being camouflaged because her friends had to try hard to see her.

Sasha called out, “Lily, where did you go?”

Then he heard her giggle. “I’m here,” she said, “right in front of your whiskers.”

Sasha laughed as he saw her run in spirals around the trunk – he could just make out the little mouse’s shape.

Lily yawned, kissed her friends goodbye, and went home to sleep.



✓ *Can you find Lily’s American Beech tree on the left side of the trail?*

## 13. Leaf Canopy

As Sasha and Nathalie made their way further down the path, they looked up and saw the canopy of leaves above them. The trees’ branches, lush with colorful leaves, seemed to fill the sky. The leaves were almost glowing from the bright sunlight above them.

✓ *Look overhead for patterns of leaves above you. Can you see the sky?*

## 14. Wishes

It was time for Nathalie to go – her flock was ready to migrate South. They had many days of flying ahead of them.

Before Nathalie flew away, she said, “Sasha, I really want to tell you my wish, would that be okay?”

“Yes, sure.” Sasha nodded.

“I wish that you and everything in this beautiful woodland will have a peaceful winter. Leaves are falling now, and the deciduous trees will be bare soon – but, in the Spring, I hope that everything will come back to life with thousands of green leaves and pretty flowers everywhere, millions of insects that crawl or fly – and lots of wonderful birds, including me!”

“Thank you, dear Nathalie,” Sasha said, “My wish is for you to have a safe flight South, where the winter months are warm. I hope you find plenty of bugs and seeds to eat and keep you healthy and strong. I wish you happiness and love while we are apart. Let’s make our wishes come true, and make new wishes when you come back.”

Nathalie and Sasha said a cheerful goodbye. “See you in the Spring!”

Every day in this forest is a Wishing Day. We can look around us and think about what is important to us – to our families and friends, to our communities – and to the trees, plants, and animals that fill our world.

We make our wishes come true when we care for each other, our forests and other places on earth, so everything that we love can flourish, this season and always.

## *Wishing Day*

by

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