

Christmas of 1971

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Three children are left at Hogwarts for the Holidays.

We may sort too soon.

Chapter 1 of 1

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Prompt 1. Through a child's eyes.

My daughter Cariad was my beta for this story. And thanks to Robinsonrocket for her adminning par excellence.

Three children were left at the school this Holiday season. Albus Dumbledore wondered how he was to keep the two boys and the girl from arguing. There was something unusual about these three. At the sorting this year, the Sorting Hat had balked. It had refused to sort these three. Was it a portent that these same three were left here for the Holidays? Albus dismissed the thought as he rearranged plans for the teaching staff.

"Minerva, we have a slight problem. There will be three of the students with us over the Holidays. They are all first years. What I find so unusual about this is that these are the same three that the Sorting Hat had such problems with, Remus Lupin, Severus Snape and Mary MacDonald. You remember that all three were put into Ravenclaw after much discussion. The Sorting Hat never did decide on a House for any of them. Do you think...?"

"Do I think we need to consult Septima and Aurora? Probably so, Albus. They can tell us what the numbers and the stars say about these children. I will ask them to come in for a meeting."

The afternoon meeting with Professors Sinistra and Vector only confused the issue about the three children even more. Septima Vector had stated that Arithmancy showed that Lupin and McDonald should have been sorted into Gryffindor and the Snape boy should have been sorted into Slytherin. Aurora Sinistra agreed with her vehemently, saying that the stars showed clearly that Gryffindor and Slytherin were the correct houses for the children. Neither one of the teachers could shed any light on the reasons for the Sorting Hat's peculiar actions. Dumbledore had his own suspicions about the conundrum but he simply assigned a house-elf to watch each of the children and care for them over the Holidays.

One by one, each of the house-elves came to him with disturbing news. The Snape boy had nightmares and horrific scars on his back. His clothes were rags, and he often cried himself to sleep at night. The Lupin boy also cried at night, but on the nights of the full moon his cries were those of a wolf. The MacDonald girl walked in her sleep. She seemed in a trance most of the time during the day. All of this news only convinced Dumbledore that there were unforeseen magical reasons these three were to be at the school over the Holidays.

The night the other students left on the Hogwarts Express was supposed to be a quiet night; but when Mary MacDonald could not be found, the teachers went searching. In an unused classroom high in a tower, they found her sitting before a mirror. As Minerva McGonagall approached the child, she heard the girl talking to someone. She could not make out the words clearly, but the child looked around as Minerva approached.

"Did I miss dinner, Professor McGonagall? I'm sorry. This was so interesting. The little girl was telling me about another bunch of children; two boys and a girl who will save our world. It was a wondrous story."

"Never mind, child. We were all worried about you. Come back down now and we will all have dinner."

Minerva reported the incident to Albus Dumbledore later that evening. He merely looked thoughtful as she related the story.

Next morning the whole area had been covered with snow. The three children were outside building a snowman and throwing snowballs at each other. The house-elves assigned to watch them had mysteriously found new clothes in the correct size for the Snape boy and a potion that let the Lupin boy sleep without nightmares. The girl had been the hardest to help, but the house-elves had decided she needed a project to keep her busy, so they brought her into their realm of the kitchens early that morning. They asked her to help them make lists of all the supplies in the kitchens. They would create similar tasks for her throughout the Holidays because she was happiest when she was busy.

The house-elves kept Minerva McGonagall informed of what they had done and found out about each of the children. The few days before Christmas passed quietly until a Boggart was found in the Dungeons. The children had been exploring the lower levels of the castle when a form emerged from the door of the lowest dungeons. The Snape boy had yelled and run away when he saw the form of the man. When the Lupin boy had looked, he had seen the full moon, and he had run away too. What young Mary saw when she looked at the Boggart was darkness reaching out for her. It had almost reached her when Dumbledore appeared at the bottom of the stairs and said the words that dispelled the Boggart. He sealed the door where it had escaped from and took Mary back upstairs. The two boys were waiting at the top of the stairs. All three children were shivering from their scare with the Boggart. Dumbledore sent them up to the Ravenclaw dormitory once he had made sure they were unhurt. Dumbledore and McGonagall both explained to the children what a Boggart was and why it looked different to each of them.

Very late that night there was a knock on the door to Dumbledore's office. It was the Snape boy. "Sir, why does Remus fear the moon? Did something happen to him? And Mary seems to fear darkness, too. Is there anything I might have done to make them fearful? I don't want to be any trouble, sir. I don't want to be sent home, please."

"No, Severus, this has nothing to do with you. Remus was injured some years ago in the moonlight. And Mary was locked into a dark room by one of her cousins and not found for well over a day. Neither of them likes the dark. What did you see when the Boggart appeared? Your father, I expect. He is your biggest fear, isn't he, Severus? He cannot hurt you here, lad."

The boy cringed away from answering, but when the house-elves gave their reports in the morning, there was a new development. A small bowl of blue flame had been burning beside the beds of both Mary and Remus. Just enough flame to give a gentle light to dispel the darkness. That night a third bowl of blue flame was placed beside the bed of Severus Snape. Minerva McGonagall smiled down at the sleeping boy as she placed the bowl. He was such a prickly young thing.

She had instructed the house-elves to treat the scars on his back with Murtlap ointment while he slept. The scars were fading gradually. His colour was better, and he no longer twitched or tossed in his sleep. The Lupin boy also looked better, but his condition she knew would never improve because of the lycanthropy. Poor child, to be condemned to a life of transformations into a wild beast during the full moon. And little Mary, so scared of the dark as to become incoherent when the sun went down.

Her charges this Christmas, she cared for each of them equally. The next day was Christmas Eve. She would make sure each of these precious children had the best Christmas possible.

The gifts for the children had been assembled in the Great Hall that night. The teachers were gathered at the Head Table when a strange wind blew through the Hall. Minerva had just handed each child their presents. Severus stood on her left, Remus on her right, and she had a hand on Mary's shoulder as the girl stood in front of her. The wind blew the candles almost out, and when they came up again she saw not just the three children in the room with her but another three children also. A dark haired boy stood next to Severus, a red-haired boy stood close to Remus and a brown haired girl stood next to Mary. They were insubstantial, shadows almost. But not ghosts, Minerva knew, merely the shapes of things to come. Her second sight had never been so strong before.

She reported what she had seen to Dumbledore later. But at that moment the three children touched their wands together in front of her to create the feast for the teachers and themselves the way the house-elves had showed them. They were laughing and happy for the moment. The way all children should be on Christmas. She looked to Albus and he nodded back at her.

Just then Albus's phoenix flew into the Hall carrying the Sorting Hat. The adults looked at each other, and Minerva placed the hat on Remus Lupin's head. The hat cried out in a loud voice, "Gryffindor!" Then she placed the hat on Mary's head. "Gryffindor," the hat cried again. At last, she put the hat on the head of Severus Snape and waited. The hat took its own sweet time about declaring a house for the boy. When it did, it gave a short speech. "Valour and bravery worthy of Gryffindor, strength of purpose and honesty worthy of Ravenclaw, but Slytherin is where this boy's destiny lies. Slytherin, it is!"

The teachers all cheered as the children preened. Minerva looked to Albus and saw that his eyes had tears in them as hers did. They smiled at each other, knowing that these children would be a great part of the future of the school. Their voices rang out as one.

"Blessed be, one and all. Merry Christmas to you all."