

A Surprising Scene

by DawnEB

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Set (slightly) before Philosopher's Stone.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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The door of the classroom slammed shut as the last of the children made a dash for freedom at the end of the day. With a sigh, Anna Cartwright made her way around the tables, clearing the detritus from the Art lesson. *If only I could wave a wand and make the lot disappear*, she thought as she worked.

At the back of the class the wall was covered with examples of portraiture; photos, posters, and a single, framed painting – a self portrait of Oliver Cartwright, which he'd willed to his great-niece, Anna, on his death nearly 10 years earlier.

She'd never had much contact with him in life, but assumed that he'd heard along the grapevine she was taking Art at college and had wanted to offer his encouragement as the professional artist of the family. Sadly, Anna's talents hadn't been enough to make a living at it, so here she was earning her bread and butter as a Primary school teacher, specifically ten- to eleven-year olds.

She smiled ruefully, and leaning forward to brush some dust from Oliver's frame, she noticed something wedged between the desk and the wall. Teasing it out, she found it was a slim sketchbook, adorned with West Ham United stickers and the name of one of the pupils that had been troubling Anna's thoughts of late.

Something was a little off with him. Nothing she could put a finger on, but she'd noticed a few things. Take his artwork. Last term he'd shown a budding talent for still life in class and had progressed happily to images of sportsmen. She'd expected good things from him this term, but his work was frequently unfinished and poorly executed. He was a 'sporty' boy, and Anna hoped he wasn't being teased for being 'arty' as well.

Turning the pages she found several sketches of a vase of flowers, one of a couple of teens leaning against a wall (the view likely from a window above ground height, from the perspective), and then a woodland scene, with a large-eyed doe peering out from the tree cover. You could almost see its nose quiver as it scented the air for danger, and its ear flicked...

Anna gasped, and the spooked deer disappeared behind a tree. She put her hand to her mouth, then quickly turned back a page. She stared at the scene, and one of the boys raised a cigarette to his mouth, then passed it over to his mate, blowing out a thin stream of smoke as he did so. Back to the woods, and once again the deer was there, watching Anna warily.

Behind her, the door creaked open. "Scuse me, miss, but I think I might've left—" Anna turned, and the boy she'd just been thinking of stood there. His eyes dropped to the book open in her hand and widened fearfully, unconsciously echoing the deer on the page.

"D-d-d-did you look, Miss?"

Anna nodded and watched the boy's fists clench at his side as the telltale glitter of tears formed in his eyes.

"You shouldn't've looked! It's *private!*" he wailed at her, taking a step further into the room, obviously torn between grabbing his precious book and running away.

"It's okay, Dean, it... it's going to be okay." Anna slowly shut the book and squatted down to his level. "In fact, there's someone I'd like to introduce you to—"

"No!" the boy shouted at her. "Mum says not to say anything, not to do anything, or I'll have to go away. Just like my real dad had to go away," the boy finished with a sob.

Anna reached forward and held the boy's arm, gently standing as she did so. Pulling out a chair, she guided him into the seat, put the book on the desk, and pointed to the wall.

"Dean, this portrait is of my distant relative, Oliver Cartwright. Master Painter Cartwright, this is Mister Dean Thomas. I think you two have a few things in common."

The previously still and rather sombre man in the frame broke into a gentle smile as he looked down. "Indeed. I've been impressed by what I've seen of your work, young man, and I'd like to offer you a few tips..."

Anna Cartwright smiled encouragingly at the wide-eyed boy, then continued with tidying the classroom whilst the old man set about easing his fears. She knew it wouldn't be long now before Dean got his letter from Hogwarts, and Anna felt only the slightest pang of regret that she came from a line of Squibs as she imagined the adventures he would have there.

Prompt:The secret artist: A mislaid sketch book reveals a hidden talent.

A/N: Anna is my own creation, Oliver Cartwright is apparently the signature on one of the portraits created for the films, and Dean Thomas is all JKR's (details gleaned from the HP Lexicon and HP Wiki).