

Inside, Outside, Hidden Away

by Alison

A little musing on what to tell the children...

Complete short story

Chapter 1 of 1

A little musing on what to tell the children...

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Daddy told me once that secrets, really big secrets, magical ones, need a Secret Keeper. Will you be my Secret Keeper, Jemima? I know I can trust you, because you're my best friend. But this is an important secret; nobody must find out, not ever. Will you do it? You will? Okay.

Daddy said the way the secret is told to a Secret Keeper has to be exactly right. Otherwise the magic won't work. I have to tell you everything. So here goes.

My name is Serena Snape, I am six years old, and I live with my two mummies at Spinner's End in Manchester, Britain. I know you know all that stuff already, Jemima, but that's the way I have to tell it! So pay attention.

I have an Inside Mummy; her name is Hermione Granger, and she was born to a Muggle family, but she's a witch like me. She has long brown curly hair and brown eyes, and she's very smart. She looks after me when I'm inside the house. She cooks, cleans and takes care of me. She tucks me into bed at night and reads me stories. And sometimes when there's a thunderstorm, I go into her bedroom and sleep with her, so she won't get scared. But she's never left the house, not even to hang out the washing.

My other mummy is my Outside Mummy. Her name is Suzy Barrett. She's a witch too, of course. She's got blonde hair and blue eyes. She's the one who does all the outside stuff. She walks me to school in the morning and picks me up in the afternoon. She does the shopping and everything else that needs to be done outside the house. If anybody knocks at the front door, Suzy speaks with them. If we go visiting somewhere, Suzy takes me. I used to think everybody had two mummies, but I've learned that most people only have one, oh, except for Jimmy Smitz at school, but he's got two daddies, so that's a bit different. Everybody thinks Outside Mummy is my only Mummy. Nobody knows about Inside Mummy except us in the family.

My daddy's name is Severus Snape, and he's a wizard. He's also the Supreme Emperor Voldemort's Chief Advisor. I asked him what that means once, and he told me that the Supreme Emperor listens to him when it suits him and then ignores his advice. I didn't understand that, but Mummy, Inside Mummy that is, chuckled a bit when he said it.

Now I'm going to tell you the secret, Jemima. Come over here and sit with me. This is the important bit, so you need to listen carefully. Daddy and Inside Mummy told me about it just now. They said I was a big girl and I needed to know the truth. But it could be really, really dangerous to all of us if anybody ever finds out. Daddy said that's another reason they told me, so I wouldn't accidentally tell anybody else. It's our family secret. I was a bit worried when he said that because once I told Miss Hughes at school that I have two mummies, but it was all right because she didn't believe me. She just said I had a wonderful imagination.

You know how Daddy doesn't live with us, how he has to go to his other home a lot, and we only see him once or twice a week? He said that's because nobody knows he's married to Inside Mummy. I don't know what his other home is like, but I think it could be a farm because when I asked who he lived with there, Mummy said, sort of grumpily, that he lives with that Pureblood cow, Pansy. So perhaps he needs to live on his farm to take care of his special cow when he's not working for the Supreme Emperor.

When she said that, Daddy looked at Inside Mummy and said, "You know I don't love her; she's a cover for us. You know how I really feel", and then Mummy said, really softly, "I know." Grown-ups are hard to understand sometimes. That's one reason I like you, Jemima. You're not at all complicated. Stop that at once, it tickles! I'm trying to tell you this really important stuff, and you're just mucking about!

Anyway, Daddy said that Inside Mummy is hiding from the Supreme Emperor because when he was trying to take over years ago, before I was born, Mummy and some of her friends tried to stop him. Mummy's friends were all killed in some big battle, but Mummy and Daddy had fallen in love during the war, and nobody knew about it. So Daddy hid Mummy to save her from the Emperor.

She has to stay indoors all the time and not let anybody see her. Everybody thinks she was killed with her friends, but if somebody sees her, they'll tell the Emperor, and he'll be mad at her. Mummy said the best she could hope for would be to be put to work with the Muggles and other Muggle-borns in the state-owned farms or factories, but Daddy told her she was a fool if she thought the Emperor Voldemort wouldn't kill her, and him too, for hiding her. Mummy looked at me quickly and said, "Severus! You'll scare the child!" And Daddy said, "I hope so, I truly do. Fear makes you wary, and being wary keeps you alive."

Then Inside Mummy said to me, "Do you know that drink I take, the one that turns me into Suzy Barrett? That's a magic potion called Polyjuice. Daddy makes a special potion for a lady who doesn't want to have any children..."

"Why doesn't she want children?" I asked.

"Well," Mummy answered, "babies would get in the way of her... her job... She, um, dances with lonely wizards for money..."

Daddy sort of snorted at that, and I looked at him to see he was trying really hard not to laugh. "Dancing, right!"

"Stop it, Severus. Anyway, Serena, your daddy makes this lady a potion that stops her having to have a baby, and she pays him by giving him some of her hair. I put a strand of hair into the Polyjuice Potion, and then I can turn into Suzy."

"Everybody thinks that Suzy is my dancing partner," here Daddy glanced at Mummy with a grin, "what's known as a mistress. Rich wizards have them; it's just like being married."

"Tell that to Pansy," Inside Mummy muttered.

"That's why you've got my last name, Serena. Under Wizard Law, the child of a wizard's mistress has the same rights as children born into wedlock. You don't have to hide, so long as everybody thinks your Mummy is 'Suzy Barrett'."

"Couldn't Mummy just tell the Emperor she's really, really sorry?" I asked, trying to understand it all. "Then she wouldn't have to hide anymore."

"Ah, but I'm not sorry," Inside Mummy said. "Not at all."

"Anyway," Daddy added, "the Supreme Emperor is not the forgiving type."

"But we have a little problem now," Mummy said to me. "The lady who gives us the hair had an accident last week, she was trying to charm her hair a different colour, and the spell didn't work. It made all her hair fall out instead. So she has to wear a wig until it grows back, which will take a couple of months. And I only have enough of her hair to turn me into Suzy Barrett for a few more days."

"Oh, no! What are you going to do, Mummy?"

"Well, Daddy has got some hair from another lady. We're going to pretend that Suzy has to go away to look after her sick mother, and I'll take Polyjuice Potion to change me into a lady we thought we'd call 'Aunt Elaine'. We'll say she's a cousin of your father's, and she's going to look after you while Suzy's away."

"What will she look like?" I asked.

"Severus, have you got the photo?" Mummy asked.

Daddy took it out of the pocket of his robes and showed me. There was a thin lady with black hair. She looked a little cross, and there was a boy about my age with her. He kept trying to hide behind the lady as if he were embarrassed about having his picture taken. I looked hard at the little boy.

"He looks a bit like me," I said, pointing at him. "Except his nose is bigger than mine."

Daddy looked across at Mummy. "She inherited your intellect, that's for sure. I'm just glad she's got your nose, too!"

You see how silly grownups are, Jemima? There was Mummy with her nose on her face, and Daddy saying I had it!

But anyway, he said, "This lady was your grandmother, Serena. I still have some locks of her hair, and Mummy can change into her until she can be Suzy Barrett again."

"We'd have to move away from here if I couldn't be Suzy Barrett again," Mummy said. "Too many people know that she's your mother. And I really don't want to leave. I've made a few friends as Suzy, and you like your school, don't you, Serena?"

I nodded. "I don't want to leave," I said. "But this Auntie Elaine, she's going to be you still, isn't she Mummy?"

"Of course, darling. I'm sorry I have to keep changing about, but you know why now. Don't worry. I'll just look different, that's all. And you're used to that with Suzy, aren't you?"

"Yes." I took a deep breath. "Could Daddy find a man who dances and get some of his hair? Then he could stay with us more."

Mummy looked down at this, but Daddy picked me up and cuddled me on his lap. For a minute he didn't say anything, and when he did, his voice sounded like he was getting a cold. "I'm sorry, baby girl. I'd stay every day and every night with you and mummy if I could. But it's impossible. Not even if I used Polyjuice. There are too many other places I have to be."

I nodded. I guess I knew that already. Then I said, "Would it be okay if I told Jemima about this? Nobody else, but I mean, Jemima's part of the family, isn't she? She'll need to know about Suzy and Aunt Elaine and everything. Otherwise she might get confused."

"Jemima?" Daddy looked across at Mummy.

Mummy smiled. "That's her pet rabbit. Serena keeps her in a hutch in her room. Not that Jemima spends much time in the hutch. She's usually gnawing holes in the mat or chewing through the skirting boards!"

"Oh." Daddy slid me off his lap and looked at me sternly. "This Jemima, she's not an Animagus, is she?"

"I don't know what that is, but Jemima's a Dwarf Lop Cross."

"An Animagus is a wizard or witch that can turn into an animal. You can't tell her if she's really an Animagus..."

"Severus, don't tease the child! It's all right, Serena. You can tell Jemima. I doubt she'll say much. She's never struck me as a brilliant conversationalist!"

I grinned. Daddy and Inside Mummy settled back down together on the sofa. Daddy put his arm about Mummy and pulled her close, and Mummy rested her head on his shoulder. "Serena," he said, just as I was about to leave the room. "Tell only Jemima, all right? This really is very important. We know you're getting to be a big girl now, and that's why we trust you with this important family secret."

I nodded solemnly. "I understand Daddy. Just Jemima. Cross my heart!"

So that's why I'm telling you Jemima. Don't you dare tell, okay? You're my Secret Keeper. Nobody else must ever find out. I don't want the Emperor to be mad at Mummy and Daddy.

The End.

Author's note - This story is the sequel to "Whose Side Are You On?" at this link:

<http://www.thepetulantpoetess.com/viewstory.php?sid=2297>

Also, if you liked this story, please have a read of my original story "Love Inhuman" at this link:

<http://www.thepetulantpoetess.com/viewstory.php?sid=11932>

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