

Orphans of Hogwarts

by Alexannah

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Grim to Gold

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author's notes / Disclaimer: Mimsie (largely based on Dzeytoun's Iris) is mine, the rest JKR's. Rating is subject to change (unlikely to go higher than T).

They looked like two angels, sleeping peacefully, curled up together on the worn armchair, a soft blanket covering them almost fully. Two raven-haired toddlers, who ate together, slept together, played together, and were brothers in every way but blood.

Neither had any idea one had tried to kill the other before being reduced to the same physical age in the backlash of the failed spell. Both were oblivious of the prophecy that stated one must kill the other in the end.

Mimsie didn't want them to ever know. Or anyone else, for that matter.

"Boys?" she whispered, bending over one tuft of black hair sticking out of the covers. It was Harry – Tom's hair didn't stick up, even in the morning. Harry's never lay flat. "Little ones need to go to bed."

"Ha' sweepy," Harry said sleepily. "Wan' sweep."

"In baby's own bed," Mimsie said firmly. When neither boy woke properly, she raised a hand. The blanket wrapped itself firmly around them, and she levitated the package up and out of the living-room.

Mimsie sang them a lullaby as they ascended the stairs, and when the boys were tucked up in their own massive four-poster that had once belonged to her old master, she pulled a potion vial from her pocket.

"Harry needs to take his medication before he sleeps."

Harry pulled a face, still half-asleep. Tom still didn't stir. "Yucky."

"Harry takes it and he gets an extra kiss," Mimsie persuaded gently.

"Tom wan' ecthra kith too," an indignant voice suddenly spoke from under the covers.

"Both babies get extra kiss if Harry takes his medication like a good boy."

Harry obediently swallowed the potion and pulled another face. Mimsie kissed the clamouring boys goodnight three times each.

"Sweet dreams," she said softly, turning out the lamp with a click of her fingers.

"For the last time, Phineas," Albus said irritably, "I'm not interested in hearing it."

"But Albus—"

"No. So what if the house-elf wants to do some spring-cleaning? Stop complaining, you're doing my head in."

"Shall I silence him, Albus?"

"No, that's not necessary, Armando. Phineas, please just let me get on with my work."

"Hmph. Maybe spring-cleaning in your house takes months on end. But my portrait's been stuck in the cellar with the others since November. Maybe Kreacher's dropped dead. Albus, please get it checked out. I can't leave this castle until you do."

"Fine!" Albus slammed his book shut. "Never mind about the new students needing Hogwarts letters. Never mind about the teachers' salaries. I'll just drop everything and Floo to London all because Phineas Nigellus is bored."

"I knew you would understand."

If looks could kill, Phineas Nigellus' portrait would be crumbling under the glares of the Headmaster and the other portraits.

Albus Flooed to the Leaky Cauldron before Apparating to the side road just off Grimmauld Place. He'd only visited the house twice: to deliver Regulus' Hogwarts letter when the Owlery had run short of owls and for Bellatrix Lestrange's arrest two weeks after Voldemort's disappearance on Halloween. As he looked up at the grim building, Albus wondered if that mystery would ever be solved.

Little did he know the answer lay inside.

Rather than knocking or ringing, Albus spent ten minutes breaking through the Black family protections and unlocked the door before stepping inside.

"Anyone at home?" he called, only half-expecting the house-elf to come running. Looking around the hallway in distaste, he saw Phineas had been right about one thing: every portrait had been removed.

"You is trespassing."

Albus jumped and looked down. The Black family elf, he knew, was male. This house-elf was female and looked oddly familiar. She was dressed in a neat black dress and white pinafore and brandished an orange feather duster in his face.

"Er," Albus said quickly, fighting off the feather duster, "I came to see Kreacher. Is he at home?"

"Why?" she asked suspiciously, hands on her hips. Albus suddenly knew who she was.

"*Mimsie?* Is that you?"

The elf's eyes widened and she suddenly looked frightened. "Professor Dumbledore? *Oh!*" She dropped her feather duster and sank into a bow at his feet. Albus reached down and gently pulled her up.

"What ... what is you doing here, Professor?" Mimsie asked, backing away nervously. "There is nothing for Professor Dumbledore to see here, nothing; Mimsie swears."

Albus frowned. "All I wanted to know was why all the portraits have been moved to the cellar, but ... Mimsie, where have you *been?*"

Mimsie hung her head. "After Mimsie's masters is dying ... Mimsie is ashamed, sir; Mimsie is being unable to protect her family." Her voice hardened. "No-one is messing with Mimsie's family no more."

Albus slowly sank down onto the floor. "Mimsie ... Harry ... did he ...?"

Fear flooded Mimsie's face. "Little ... little master Harry is being in better place now, sir."

Albus frowned. It didn't take a Legilimens to know the elf was hiding something.

"You mean he's dead? Or do you mean he's alive somewhere?"

Mimsie froze. "You – you is not taking him!" The feather duster flew back into her hand, and she took up a defensive position. "Mimsie is knowing Professor Dumbledore is good man, but he is not taking little Harry!"

"Mimsie, calm down!" A bubble of joy was swelling inside Albus, and he was having a hard time fighting off the grin threatening to spread over his face. He wanted to jump up and down and whoop. Harry Potter was alive!

"Mimsie," he continued once he'd fought down the urge, "I'm not going to do anything to Harry you don't want me to. Where is he?" As he voiced the question, something suddenly clicked. "Wait – he's *here*, isn't he? That's why all the portraits were moved ..." he trailed off.

"Is being Kreacher's suggestion. Is saying portraits talk. Mimsie is not wanting wizards to know where Harry is." Suddenly her eyes filled with tears. "Professor Dumbledore must promise not to take Harry away!"

Albus shifted onto his knees. His legs were getting pins and needles. "Mimsie, Harry needs to grow up with a proper home and family. He also needs protection: if people know he's alive, he could be targeted by Death Eaters."

Mimsie frowned. "Then Mimsie is making sure no-one is knowing Harry Potter is alive."

"That's not very practical."

"*You is not taking him.* Mimsie is looking after little Harry now," she said fiercely.

Albus sighed. "Can I at least see him for myself?" he pleaded.

Mimsie hesitated.

"I won't take him anywhere without your permission," Albus promised. "But we will need to agree on a home for him."

For a long moment, Mimsie stood, staring at him, apparently thinking deeply. Finally she spoke. "Is Professor Dumbledore believing in second chances?"

"Sorry?"

"Is you believing that even the most evil wizard can have a fresh start if given the opportunity?" she pressed.

"Yes ... but ... what has that got to do with Harry?" Albus asked, confused.

Mimsie slowly lowered her feather duster and beckoned him towards the stairs. "Mimsie has a secret. The Ministry must not be knowing about him."

"Who? Harry?"

"No. Tommy."

Albus couldn't believe his eyes as he saw the sight. Curled up in a massive four-poster bed were two tiny toddlers, both dark-haired. One was sucking his thumb, and the other was clinging to the former's sleeve.

"Which one's Harry?" he whispered. Mimsie pointed at the thumb-sucker.

"And the other?" Albus hardly dared ask.

"The other is being Tom Riddle."

TBC ...