

The Two Christmas Trees
By Valeyard87

He appeared the same night that she came back – except that it wasn't her. How could it be her? I remember it clear as day. Father and I had decorated the tree and then he tucked me in to bed. He hugged me and told me that we would get through this Christmas. I believed him. I always believed him.

Since Mother had passed he had protected me and looked after me. I closed my eyes and started drifting off to sleep. I don't quite remember what I was dreaming about but I awoke suddenly. Something made me stir – a noise. From downstairs I heard the soft sound of a woman's voice, I recognised it instantly. It was her. Mother was here, but how could she be? Then I heard another voice, a man's voice...but it wasn't Father.

I slowly crept out of bed and made my way to the stairs, my arm brushing off of the tinsel as I passed it. The voices were becoming clearer, more audible as I grew closer. I slowly and gently descended the stairs, trying not to alert anyone to my presence.

“Jamie, get back in the TARDIS and close the door, Florilegiums are dangerous when around a living mind,” I heard the man say.

I didn't hear this 'Jamie' say anything but I did hear a door open and close; however, from inside my sitting room there was only one door and I was now staring at it.

“Right then, yes...what shall we do with you?” I heard the man ask.

Then I heard her, the voice I'd heard every night when I slept. The first voice I ever heard in my life. Her soft, well mannered and sweet voice – my Mother's voice.

“I want what we all want...a place to call home,” she told him.

I felt a tear roll down my face...she was home. I could hear my Mother's voice and I knew she had come back to me. I wanted so much to run through those doors and wrap my arms around her but something held me back. I wasn't sure what it was but something told me not to go in that room.

“Your home is not here,” said the man. “Yes, now I can see why you would want it, it's a lovely little house...but you can't stay here.”

“I already am here,” she retorted. “Look at my form. I would be accepted with open arms in this home.”

“Hmmm, do you believe that a family could accept you? Families are bonded.” He raised his voice at her. “No matter what you look like, you are not part of their family.”

Hearing this I could not stay still any longer, my legs rose me up and I ran towards the door both arms out, pushing the door open. My legs froze with what greeted me there in that room. There was the woman whose voice I had heard, she sounded like my mother but I could see instantly that she wasn't her.

“You're not my Mother!” I spat at her as a tear began to form in the corner of my eye.

“No, you're quite right. She's not,” the man told me. My eyes fell upon him...a short man, sort of Charlie Chaplin-esque in his demeanour. And smiling. His smile made me feel warm and safe.

“See, I told you, you wouldn't be accepted here,” the man said as he took a step closer to 'Not-Mother'

She turned to me, her steely glaze caught my eye and she took a step towards me. As if by magic she changed, her clothes changed right in front of me. She looked wonderful, radiant, exactly as I had saw my real Mother the last time I saw her. She bent down in front of me and looked straight at me.

“I'm sorry,” she uttered. “You're right, I'm not your mother but if she was here, if she could see how strong you are, she would be proud.”

With that she stood up and gracefully turned herself back to face the man.

“Doctor, I will leave this home and I will find somewhere else to call mine. Do not follow me and do not try and stop me.”

With those words she began to glow, her body emitting a faint yellowish glow before finally she was gone.

“Oh my giddy aunt,” the man said. “That was terribly unusual. I suppose you must have some questions?”

“Wh-wh-what is that?” I asked him as my eyes fell upon a large blue wooden box sitting in the corner of my sitting room.

“Oh yes, well you see that's the TARDIS,” he told me

“The TARDIS?!” I asked him

“Yes, it’s my home,” he smiled. “It goes with me wherever I go and it can change its shape”

“It can change its shape?” Puzzlement took me over.

“Yes. Well, it used to but then it broke. I fixed it today. Well...sort of.” He grinned, looking rather mischievous. “Would you like to see?”

He opened the door on the box and spoke to someone inside, Jamie I presumed.

“Right now Jamie, do what I showed you,” he said as he closed the door and stood back.

Without reason or explanation the box transformed, it groaned a little and it changed into a Christmas tree. It wasn’t any old tree either, as it looked exactly like the tree my Father and I had decorated only hours before. There it was side by side with our tree and not a thing was different.

“Who are you?” I asked him

“I’m the Doctor, but you can call me Doctor,” he smiled. Warmth and care emanated from his face.

“What was that thing that was my Mother?” I enquired

“That was a Florilegium,” he told me. “They feed on your desires and take on their form. In this case, it took on the form of your Mother”

“OK,” I said, not totally convinced.

“You’re a very brave young fellow,” the Doctor told me. “Very brave indeed. Are you sure you’re OK?”

“Yes,” I told him. “Christmas was scaring me a little, not having Mother here was scaring me. Now I know that even though she isn’t here in person she always lives on, in here.” I pointed to my chest.

“You’re very clever too,” the Doctor grinned.

Suddenly the tree sparked and made a strange noise. The groaning started and then stopped again as the top of the tree started flashing. The branches started to shake and there was a strange smell of burning.

“Oh my,” the Doctor stuttered. “I don’t suppose I fixed it properly after all.”

He turned to me and reached into his pocket. He then bent down in front of me and placed his hand on my shoulder as he handed me something.

“What is it?” I asked him

“It’s a recorder. I have a feeling you’re going to make good use of it, young Ashley Solomon.”

With that he stood up and walked inside the Christmas tree. I watched, recorder clutched in my hand, as the Doctor and the Christmas tree disappeared.

*note - **Ashley Solomon** is an English recorder player who formed the music ensemble Florilegium