

Nicky And Nicholas

Part of “The legend of Sa’ren”

by
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What is Time but a door through which those who can walk; a window through which those with wisdom can see that which is hidden.

Much that exists does so due to possibility, and possibility sometimes holds more power than reality...

... it is in this uncertainty that this story unfolds, for should the Legend go amiss, mayhaps this tale too shall fade into nothingness.

Time shall tell, Vae'Runam shall Guard it... and the possibility of Vae'*Yarim* may guide it...

He carefully felt his way along the wall of the Cathedral, knowing full well that the darkness of this night would shield him from those who might be looking for him. The chill wind of the Canterbury winter bit through to his skin, even though he was dressed warmly. From inside the Cathedral came the sounds of many people gathering for a meeting: a special one that only came once every year. Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Wanting to be able to hear the singing, yet not wanting questions, the small boy continued feeling his way around the outside of the huge building until he came to a spot that would shelter him from the wind. There, he hunkered down and sat with his back to the wall. He tightened the scarf around his neck and pulled the hood of his coat up quickly to warm his cold, pins and needles afflicted ears.

He then blinked through his milky, half blind eyes at the twinkling lights of the buildings outside of the grounds; waiting patiently for the carols to start and hoping that the music of Christmas could do something - anything - to wash away the pain he felt, so deep inside.

It had, after all, been a strange day; a painful day... same as always, really. Except for one instance that was like a small candle in a darkness so deep that he thought he'd never see any light ever again.

His meeting with that strange man, Nicholas...

In the Realm of Everlasting Light:

"Great Father, I have need of aid."

'Speak, Saint.'

"I fear that the Gift of Foresight you gave to me has failed."

'Why do you fear this?'

"I have always seen what it is that the Children of Earth have truly needed; wanted; desired. Yet for the past three years, I have been unable to help one of those under my charge. I... I should have asked before, but..."

'Your sight has not failed, Saint. I have waited until the time was right to move my Sovereign Hand.'

The Saint nodded as he stared up at the Power before him. "Is the time now right? It breaks my heart to be unable to fulfill the charge you set me."

'It is, Saint. The future of this child has been hidden from you, for another must help.'

The Saint smiled, "Then I shall away and speak with the Guardian of..."

'It is not the *Guardian* to which you need to appeal, but to *Prince Kiras*.'

The Saint's eyebrows shot up as a glimmer of light appeared next to him, and he turned to look down into the smiling face of the High Angel that had appeared at his side. His own Golden Feathered Wings shone with rebounded light from the light cast from the Silken Wings of this Immortal being. "Greetings, Prince Kiras," the Saint smiled. "How is it that you can assist me?"

Kiras grinned cheekily. "By being your 'Helper', Saint Nicholas. From now on, until your task this Eve is complete, call me Brynwr. Now, let's Travel. We've a lot to do, and most of it in this day's past..."

The first song had started, and the boy closed his eyes blissfully as he listened. With his arms wrapped tight about his knees that he had drawn up against his chest in order to conserve his body heat, he allowed the words of Hark the Herald Angels Sing to flow over his burdened mind, and he was taken back to that morning in the Home.

Ben had started off the day as he had always done; by teasing him... only this time it had been worse than normal, for Ben had been adopted. It had been chafing at him for the past three days, but Ben had made it all the more painful:

:Flashback:

"See, I'm *normal* and that means *I* get to have a family," Ben sneered as he pushed the red haired, half blind boy back onto the bed. "Who'd want you, Nicky? You can't even *see*!"

Nicky did not try to get back up. He was in enough trouble for fighting the night before, and he didn't want to lose any Christmas privileges by responding to Ben. Somehow, Ben always managed to talk his way out of any trouble, but he never could.

He was just too bad of a liar.

"Wuss," Ben sneered again as he aimed a kick at Nicky's dangling leg.

Yelping, Nicky pulled both legs back onto the bed and just stared balefully at the shadowy form standing at the side. "Get lost," he spat.

Laughing, Ben ran out of the room with the laughter of the other three boys who shared the five bed dorm with them trailing after him.

Ben and his gang had caused more than a few sleepless nights and bitter tears to fall from Nicky's face, but most of the time he managed to hide it from them. Not this week, however. Ben had been adopted, and if a bully like Ben could be, then why could he not find a family, too?

Once he was sure that the coast was clear, Nicky got out of bed and padded out and to the bathroom to see to his morning business. As he was washing his hands, he peered as best he could at his reflection in the mirror. His eight year old face was blurred, but he couldn't see what was so unlikable about him that no-one would adopt him.

Sighing, he walked back to the dormroom and slowly got dressed, bitterly bemoaning his life to himself. Why had he survived that car crash? Why had his eyes been damaged? Why? Why?

And why was it that, when the others his age here had stopped believing, he still kept faith in Santa Claus? Maybe they were right about that, too, he thought bitterly as he sat down to fumble with his shoes. He'd not had the answer to any of his requests in the last three years. Others had been adopted before him, many who had come to the Home after he had. Why couldn't Santa do that for him, too?

Why?

Breakfast was over and Nicky left the dining room quickly and quietly. He moved fast to the porchway at the front of the Home and grabbed his coat, scarf and gloves. He wasn't allowed out alone, but if he stayed, he'd only get into another fight, and any more black marks on his record with Santa wouldn't help matters. Plus, he didn't want to see Ben's new family come to collect him - especially not on Christmas Eve.

No-one saw him sneak out. No-one seemed to miss him all that day either, but he didn't relax or go to the usual places that he had been found at before when he had sneaked out. Instead, he wandered around the town of Canterbury, his face a thundercloud. In his pocket was the last letter he would ever 'send'; his letter to Santa. If he had no answer this time, then he'd stop believing. Maybe then some of the teasing would stop.

"Why is it that a child who should be looking forward to the coming day carry such a sad face?" came a voice as Nicky turned from the road onto a path that would lead to the park.

Nicky jerked his head up and narrowed his eyes at the tall man standing in front of him. Squinting, he tried to work out who this was and what he looked like. The funny thing was, as fussy as this person's face was, his eyes were clear. Sparkling, joyfilled, comforting. Youthful, yet wise.

"Why shouldn't I be?" Nicky piped in his young, little boy dulcet tones. Why was his voice throbbing with restrained sobs? Why did he feel like crying in front of a total stranger?

But was this man really a stranger? He seemed so... so... familiar. "Do I know you?" Nicky asked, as the silence stretched out between them.

The man nodded, "Yes. But you did not come to me when I visited you three days ago."

Nicky blinked then remembered. "You were the one who came to the Home with Santa for our party?"

The man nodded. "You did not even go to see Santa. You just sat there, alone. Why?"

"Why not?" Nicky shot back as hot tears started flowing. "He's not answered me... I'm... alone, and they... t...tease me and... and I'm a blind useless pathetic..."

A hand covered his mouth gently to stop him mid sob. "You are a wonderful child, and a delight to those who run the Home, Nicky," the man whispered. "And Santa never forgets what anyone asks him, but sometimes it isn't the right time to give the gift he really wants to give."

Shocked, Nicky backed up a step or two. He kept his ruined eyes fixed with the only clear thing he had seen in years: the man's sparkling eyes. "How'd you know my name?"

"Because I do, and because you and I share something," the adult laughed. "My name is Nicholas, too."

Nicky just stood rooted to the spot.

"Your letter. Have you sent it, yet?" Nicholas asked.

Shaking his head, Nicky withdrew the slightly crumpled letter from his pocket. "No, and I think I've left it too late."

"Nonsense," Nicholas laughed. He turned and pointed. A metal bin was behind him and inside a fire burned merrily. Nicky hadn't even noticed that - he was not *that* hard of seeing. "Do you know how to get late letters to Father Christmas, Nicky?"

The boy shook his head.

"Let the fire take it," Nicholas smiled.

Nicky backed up another step. "But..."

"Santa will get it, Nicky," Nicholas assured the boy. "If he knows if you've been good or bad, and the same for every kid on Earth, then will a little bit of fire stop him from reading your letter and looking at the newspaper picture with it?"

Shaking badly, the boy trembled, "How'd you know about the p...picture?"

"Give it to the fire, Nicky," the man smiled, sidestepping the question. "Then wait where the music rings for my friend to visit."

"Who?" Nicky asked softly as he edged toward the bin and dropped in his precious envelope.

"My friend," Nicholas smiled. "Now go, Nicky. And Merry Christmas."

Nicky started walking, then looked back once over his shoulder. Even at a distance, he could still see Nicholas' eyes clearly. Then he turned and ran off into the park.

Nicholas looked down at the bin and the fire inside. Nothing but ash remained of the letter. He then reached into his pocket and took out the same letter that had been burned away and opened it. After reading it and looking at the newspaper cutting, he whispered, "I do hope you know what you're doing, Brynwr. This is going to be a lot of work."

"Always, Saint Nicholas. I'm getting them ready for him, even now. Anyway, don't you have a job to do? The sun's already down in New Zealand!"

Nicholas smiled and vanished with a shower of golden and red sparkles.

:End Flashback:

Half the service was over, and the midnight hour was nearing. Nicky had done everything that that man, Nicholas, had said. He'd found where music rang, but where was this 'friend'? Shouldn't he rather get back to the Home? They must have called the police out by now. They'd done it before, after all.

After mulling that thought over for one more carol that was flowing out from the great building, he sighed and pulled himself to his feet. It was going to be a task and a half for him to find his way back in the dark with his poor sight, but he couldn't stay here all night.

"Going somewhere, Nicky?" came a question from the oddest, most brightly dressed being Nicky had ever seen in his life.

Nicky jumped and swore.

"Oh! Language!" the strange creature giggled.

The being was a little taller than him, Nicky saw, and fairly thin. A happy face under a bright yellow hat with a jingly bell on the top of the pointy end. A red jacket and bright blue shorts - shorts?! In winter?! - completed the outfit.

"Wha... what are *you*?" Nicky gasped.

The creature turned his head and pointed to his ear. "What do you think?" he giggled.

Nicky gasped again. "Noooo.... but... really? An elf?!"

"I'm Brynwr," Brynwr giggled. "I'm Saint Nicholas's Helper this night!"

"Saint... SAINT Nicholas?! That... that man... that was SANTA?!" Nicky shouted, his heart skipping a beat.

Brynwr nodded. "Yup! Well, that's one of his names. He's got a lot. He was born 'Nicholas', though. I've a lot of names, too, but I like Brynwr. Hot chocolate?" he asked as he held out a large metal goblet that had suddenly appeared in his hand. On the sides were reliefs of reindeer.

What else would a person do if presented with a goblet of steaming, creamy, hot chocolate by a multi-coloured attired Elf? They would accept the offered drink, of course. And, naturally, that is exactly what Nicky did.

The liquid seemed to fill him immediately with warmth all the way to his toes. "Mmmm..." he almost purred.

"Yeah! It's a real old recipe that... oh, I'll tell you later," Brynwr smiled. "Anyway, I'm here for you, Nicky."

"Me? What for?" Nicky asked, as he tipped the last of the chocolate down his throat.

"To give you your gifts, of course," the elf smiled. "Haven't you noticed anything yet?"

Nicky shook his head, then checked around. "No... no, I... I don't see my... never mind," he finished sadly, all the joy at meeting an elf from Santa's workshop vanishing in a heartbeat.

"Mmm," Brynwr mulled over softly. "I think I need help! DAVEY! PAB! MARK! Get down here, bros!"

"More elves?" Nicky asked as he looked around the empty grounds.

His answer came in three showers of sparkles; two golden and one red and fiery. Before him and standing next to Santa's elf were three other boys. Two were older than him, but not by much. The third was, or seemed to be, the same age.

Nicky grew afraid, for all three had feathery wings. And halos. "I'm dead," he moaned softly.

"No," Brynwr smiled as his bright clothes seemed to melt away to be replaced by a white robe of silk. On his back appeared silken wings, and his head was crowned. His eyes shone and sparkled, and the deepness of them reminded Nicky of the sea. "And that's not going to happen either," he added as light flowed from his wings and body to mix with the light coming from the other three angels. It filled the whole world, it seemed, until it was all that Nicky could see, apart from the four angels.

"Not a chance in hell," the red winged eleven year old angel added. "Hi, I'm Pablito, but you can call me Pab. This is Davey," he pointed at the twelve year old Gold Winged angel, "And this is Mark."

The small eight year old angel nodded with a smile, his own golden wings glimmering. "Come on, Nicky! We've got a lot of cool surprises for you!"

Resigned to his fate, believing that he was most certainly dead - frozen, he reasoned - Nicky reached for Brynwr's and Mark's outstretched hands. Then he stopped as one more carol started. "Can... can I hear this before you take me to heaven?" he asked with tears in his eyes.

With a nod, Brynwr answered, "Of course." He would get it through to the boy that he was not dead later. It will take too long, right now.

From inside Canterbury Cathedral came:

"O holy night! The stars are brightly shining,
It is the night of the dear Saviour's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and error pining.
Till He appeared and the Spirit felt its worth..."

With his eyes closed, the trembling red haired boy took Brynwr's hand and allowed them to take him.

The music followed him, even as he felt the cold vanish from around him. Normal, he supposed, since it was music angels should sing and he was going to heaven.

He opened his eyes and saw that it was Brynwr singing. And he found that he was now naked; and in a shower.

At least water was pouring down at him from above, but the whole room was white, filled by the light of Brynwr's wings.

"A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!
O night divine! O night when Christ was born;
O night divine... O night, O night divine!"

The four angels were at work as Brynwr continued to sing, cleaning him down and then patting him dry in record time.

"Truly He taught us to love one another,
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains he shall break, for the slave is our brother.
And in his name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
With all our hearts we praise His holy name."

Now he was dressed, and in green pygamas with fluffy, creature-like slippers on his feet. He'd not seen an animal like this, before, though: a bear with big, pointy sabre teeth?

He was led by the singing 'Helper/angel' out of the shower room and into another, all the while the song continued from Brynwr's lips. The only thing that gave it away as another room was that it 'felt' bigger, for Nicky could still not see anything other than white.

"Christ is the Lord! Then ever, ever praise we,
His power and glory ever more proclaim!"

His power and glory ever more proclaim!"

Silence. "What now?" Nicky asked, as he trembled.

Brynwr smiled at him, "Gifts, of course. I told you you're not dead, Nicky. But you still haven't guessed, have you?"

"No... what?" the boy asked.

"You can see," Davey smiled as he rubbed the boy's shoulder.

Blinking, Nicky looked first at Davey, then at Pablito, then at Mark. "I... I can see? I can SEE! But... if I'm dead and in heaven, wouldn't I see?"

"Yes," Mark giggled, "but you're *not* dead! Hey! Nicholas! Get over here!"

From out of the whiteness came the man Nicky had met earlier, and now he saw not only his eyes but his whole face. "You don't look like the pictures of Santa," he smiled with a small sniff.

"Ah, those are stories built up on me," Nicholas grinned. "I can look like that if I wanted, though." And he did so, becoming a large, jolly man with a snowy white beard and hair and dressed in a red suit. In his hand he held an opened letter. "I got your message, Nicholas Smith, but I think that, rather than me read it you should... well, sing it."

He handed the letter back to the small boy, who was now crying openly.

Nicky fumbled with the envelope and pulled out the hand written letter, as well as the cutting from the paper. The colour photo he held in one hand and tight to his chest as he slowly sang out the words that he had painstakingly copied down the day before:

"Well, I don't know if you remember me or not;
I'm one of the kids they brought in from the home.
I was the red-haired boy in an old, green flannel shirt;
You may not have seen me, I was standing off alone.
"I didn't come and talk to you 'cause that's never worked before,
And you'll probably never see this letter, anyway.
But just in case there's something you can do to help me out,
I'll ask you one more time,
"All I really want for Christmas is someone to tuck me in;
A shoulder to cry on if I lose, shoulders to ride on if I win.
There's so much I could ask for, but there's just one thing I need:
All I really want for Christmas is a family."

As he sang, he pulled the picture from his chest and looked down at it. He knew the words to the song off by heart anyway, and now that he could see properly, he wanted to really look at the people in the photo - the family that he wanted to be a part of; or at least a family like them. Then, as he sang the rest, something amazing started to happen:

"Well, I guess I should go ahead and tell you now,
 If it's really true about that list you have.
 Somehow I always seem to end up in a fight,
 But I'm really trying hard not to be bad,
 "But maybe if I had a brother or a dad to wrestle with
 Maybe they could teach me how to get along.
 And from everything I've heard, it sounds like the greatest gift on earth,
 Would be a mom..."

As he sang, the figures in his picture seemed to float off the page, grow and become like see through holograms that stood around him. With tears flowing freely, he continued:

"All I really want for Christmas is someone to tuck me in;
 A shoulder to cry on if I lose, shoulders to ride on if I win.
 There's so much I could ask for, but there's just one thing I need:
 "All I want for Christmas is someone who'll be here,
 To sing me happy birthday for the next 100 years.
 And It's okay if they're not perfect, or even if they're a little broken;
 That's alright, 'Cause so am I!
 "Well, I guess I should go, it's almost time for bed,
 Maybe next time I write you I'll be at home..."

"Your wish," Brynwr, Pablito, Davey, Mark and Nicholas said in unison, "is granted. Merry Christmas, Nicholas..."

The holograms of the family from the picture vanished.

The light from the four angels and from Saint Nicholas vanished.

Where the holograms stood were now the real people from the picture - which had vanished from Nicky's hand.

"Cause all you really want for Christmas is someone to tuck you in," Brynwr sang for Nicky as Teri Short gathered the sobbing boy into her arms.

"Tell you you'll never be alone..." Spock took a turn cuddling the smiling yet crying child.

"... someone whose love will never end. Of all that you could ask for," Cory and Kyle were now getting their turn in with the newest Short brother.

"... well, there's just one thing you need: All you really have for Christmas... is a family!"

"My job is still unfinished," Saint Nicholas smiled as he vanished in a shower of festive seeming sparkles.

As for Davey, Pablito and Mark, they let their wings vanish and started to mix in with the Clan as they gave Nicky his best Christmas Present of all.

Nicky looked over at Brynwr, who was no longer dressed like 'Santa's Helper', nor with wings. "You! It's... I... you!... I thought you said your name was Brynwr?!"

"It is, Nicholas Short," Brynwr smiled. "But like I said... I have many names, and that is one of them. But now you've given me a new one..."

"Oh?" Nicky asked as a living version of his slippers started huffing and licking him.

Brynwr's eyes glowed white and his form shifted to a figure of white light.

\\...Nicky's Big Brother...

Nicky smiled and smiled...

... he was home. Forever home.

Have a very merry Christmas, and may God be with you all...

Iluvantir and Brynwr

Note: The songs used are as follows. All copyright belongs to the respective singer/songwriter/artist and I claim none for myself.

O Holy Night - Adolphe Adam (John Sullivan Dwight's Version)

All I Really Want For Christmas - Steven Curtis Chapman

Editor's Notes:

This is another wonderful Christmas story. I hope we see more of Nicky. He is a very nice little fellow.

Please allow me to mention that 'Oh Holy Night' is one of my all time favourite Christmas songs. There are many wonderful versions of it that I have heard over the years, and I can't honestly say that there were any that I didn't like. I had tears in my eyes as I listened to it in my mind while I read the words.

Thank you Ilu For a wonderful story.

And Thanks to Dark Star for Pablito's appearance.

Darryl AKA The Radio Rancher