



The misty Woods

Akanksha Ganguly

Animals, Kids, Magic

The chill of the winter breeze sent a shudder down Miriam's spine. Her hands were almost numb, but her face was flushed because of the tremendous labour she had put in cutting and hauling of those logs on her cart. They needed it, the supply of logs were dwindling rapidly even though she and her family were trying their best to use it as less as possible. Miriam's father and mother were likely stuck in the town because of the heavy snow on the way back to their village, which had not been cleared for four days now. Misery had befallen the three kids, and the harsh winter was not doing any good. Miriam's elder sister who turned sixteen this year had been down with fever and their younger brother, Joseph, who was five years old, was too young to help, hence the responsibility of getting woods for the fireplace had befallen Miriam. She had turned thirteen this year. She thought she was grown up enough to handle everything, but gradually as the weight of everything started to weigh upon her, her enthusiasm started decreasing. She just wanted to be done with this. She had wandered a bit further in the jungle today in the search of dry wood. The cart seemed to get heavier with each step. She dragged herself and made an attempt to be strong and enthusiastic, she reminded herself of her responsibilities towards her siblings. The thought of the warmth of the fireplace in their cottage and perhaps a hot cup of milk made her straighten up and continue on her way back instead of stopping for the break her legs seemed to be screaming for her to take. The grey sky was a clear indication of an approaching snow storm, she had to hurry. The winds were getting stronger with every passing minute, snow had been falling lightly all this while, but now the amount seemed to increase. Within a matter of five minutes her boots were ankle deep in snow. She muttered to herself as she trudged along, "this is getting bad, I don't like this at all" exhaustion and cold were gnawing at her bones. The winds were making it harder to continue walking, especially with the

cart. Her visibility was excessively compromised, she kept praying to God for some miracle to happen, for this snow storm to stop. But her prayers seemed to go unheeded. Her mind started getting as cloudy as the surroundings around her. Her thoughts were muddled, her body was going numb, her vision was swimming, dark spots infested her vision, and then everything was black.

“Wake up darling” a soft voice caressed her ears; it was a lilting, soothing voice. Miriam’s eyes fluttered open, as her eyes gradually adjusted to the warm yellow light, thoughts began racing in her mind. The surface she was lying on was soft, but what was this place? Where was she? She sat up slowly, her mind was still a bit foggy, and she looked towards the source of the soothing voice that had woken her. What she beheld, took her breath away, for the one to whom the voice belonged was no human, it was a stag. The stag had beautifully curved antlers, and antlers in winters meant, it was a female stag, but wait animals don’t speak. Was she dreaming then? confusion was written all over her face, the stag perhaps reading that said, “don’t fret little one, you are all right, you are not dreaming, everything is just fine, how are you feeling?” Miriam peeled her tongue from the roof of her mouth and mumbled shakily, “I-I am fine, but who-who are you?” The stag’s eyes seemed to smile, she said “I think you know who I am” Miriam did, it came to her in a sudden flash of memory, the stag of Misty woods, from her grandmother’s fables. But wasn’t that just a tale? A folk lore? Miriam was thoroughly confused and awestruck at the same time. She just gaped at the splendorous creature from the fables, who now stood in front of her donning a royal posture, an aura of kindness and warmth radiated from her. The fabled stag, who had saved her life. She just managed to say “why?” The stag read the unspoken words on Miriam’s face, why her? She replied gently, “Because you are worth it, even though you are still a young girl, you shouldered responsibility of your siblings readily, without a second thought, that purity is worth being treasured and saved” The stag’s outline started to shimmer, her body flickered, “Farewell little one, treasure that heart of gold safely, always” The stag whispered as her body gradually turned into snowflakes, and got carried away in the forest on a phantom breeze which ruffled strands of Miriam’s hair and caressed her cheeks. Within the blink of an eye, she discovered herself standing in front of her home, in the village and the cart piled with more woods than she had collected and also some loafs of bread and apples along with the extra logs. She was still dazed when she dragged the cart through the gate and Joseph came dashing out to greet her, as he wrapped his tiny arms around her waist, she said ruffling his hair with her hands, “ Josh, I have a new bedtime

story for you”

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