

The Mysterious Gift

By: Zoey

My name is Melissa, and my mom is a very prestigious lawyer, and the criminals who she worked against always tried to assassinate us before she could expose them. My dad died when I was two from an assassination, so I never really knew what he was like.

Though my mom was rich, she was extremely straight-laced and paranoid because she was scared that I would get murdered, and would never allow me to make friends and made me keep my distance from others. From the day that my dad was murdered, my mom has been drowning in grief and hasn't been in her right mind and has been accusing innocent people and losing important cases. When it became night, I would go to my room and make a wish. One night, I wished, "I wish I could live life like a regular kid, make friends, and you know- be happy." My only friend was a kid named Alex who I met at school. Alex was a poor kid who I thought managed to find happiness in me as I did in him. I hated my life, but I never stopped believing and hoping.

One day after winter break, I found a peculiar box wrapped in shiny silver foil on my doorstep. I squinted and found that it was labeled: To the one who believes in wonder. I was going to open the box when I hesitated; what if this was another one of those assassination attempts?

But curiosity got the better of me, and I tore the wrapping paper off and opened the box. I saw a drawing of a weirdly familiar symbol with a note. The note stated that there was something for me in a place where it was dangerous to go, but if I got it, it would heal my mom's heart and we could be happy once more. My heart leaped as I peered at the drawing a little closer. Suddenly, something in my head clicked and I ran to the attic in my room. And sure enough, the symbol was there. I pressed my hand to it by instinct and a faint whirring started, and all was black.

Later, I woke up in a dark and gloomy forest where shadows lurked in every corner. I saw a small rock path leading somewhere. I walked on and on for what felt like hours before I came to a small clearing. I saw a strand of something white and silky blocking my path and I went another way. Soon enough, I found that every path was blocked with the silky stuff and was confused until I saw a huge spider skin on the ground. Then it hit me; giant spiders! As I leaned down to inspect the skin, a spider deftly lowered itself down from a web and knocked me out.

When I came to, I saw that I was tied onto a web with Alex beside me.

I asked, "ALEX, WHY ARE YOU HERE?!"

Alex sighed, "I snuck into your attic and accidentally got sucked into the portal thingy."

I kicked him and whispered, "Stop brooding and let's figure out how to get outta here!"

Alex grinned, "I wasn't brooding, I used my legs to nab a loose stick!"

I hissed at him to shut up and free me. After we were free, the spider came back.

It spat, "You fools, I knew I should've killed you guys earlier, but I guess I'll do it NOW!"

I grabbed Alex and we slid between the spider's long legs and scurried onto its back.

The spider jumped, shook, and even tried to get us caught on the webs, but we didn't fall off. I exhaled and stabbed it with the stick that Alex had sharpened while stuck on the web. The

spider screeched and convulsed in its last efforts at survival while Alex and I collected spider silk and dashed off.

After a few more minutes of trekking through the forest, Alex found a note stuck to his shoe that told us to go to the castle with the symbol. Ahead of us was an imposing castle with the symbol that loomed over us.

Gulping, I grabbed Alex's hand and crept in. I stared in awe at the gorgeous interior of the castle. Then, Alex pointed at a door that had the symbol on it and was left ajar. Out of the blue, Alex covered my mouth and dragged me into the room and locked the door.

The room was a display room with nothing inside but a locket with the symbol on a podium on the far side of the room.

"Alex?" I asked, "Is there something dangerous outside?"

"Naive Melissa, don't you see?" The only dangerous thing here is *right in front* of you."

"What do you mean?"

Alex pulled out the pointy stick and advanced closer to me. "I only needed you to get here in the first place."

"But-wwhhhy?"

"Your mom was the reason my family went into poverty. She exposed us for trafficking illegal animals, but the only thing I was trafficking was this." He pointed at what I assumed was his scarf, "And besides, if your mother keeps her state of mind, our family could easily win a case against her. At least, my mom told me that if your mom never got the locket, we could get our wealth back.

My head spun; Alex, my friend Alex, who I thought was always poor, was once rich?

When the snake uncoiled itself, it was 8 feet tall, which was horrifying. Before I could react, the snake lashed out at me with its tail. I ducked and jabbed it with the stick.

I pleaded, "Alex, my mom was just strict because of her grief for dad, if we get the locket, she'll convince the court that you aren't guilty and you will have your wealth back! Alex, I've been your friend for years!"

Alex hesitated, but the snake didn't; it pounced on me and would've killed me if Alex hadn't intervened by tossing a mouse on the ground. While the snake was distracted, I swiftly stabbed the snake in the head and leaped back as it fell to the ground.

I snatched the locket and a portal sucked us back to the attic.

"Whoo!" I cheered.

Alex sat despondently by himself, feeling horrible for causing the death of his pet. "I'm sorry for everything. Can we still be friends?" "It's ok, I understand why you were feeling that way." After getting out of the attic, I decided to buy a new snake for him as a "I'm sorry" gift. Tracing my finger along the symbol on the locket, I wondered what was so important in the locket that would make mom happy again.

When Alex left, I peeked inside and gasped, for there was a picture of my mom and somebody who must have been my dad together holding me. I shed tears of happiness as I clasped the precious locket and ran downstairs to show mom.

After all that, things were great, mom was back in her right state of mind and apologized to Alex, I could make friends, and Alex got his family's wealth back and another snake.

Even in the darkest of times, as long as you have hope, even the faintest glimmer of light can break through the darkest night.