



Colourful feasts, hundreds of dazzling lights and joyous voices transform even the biggest and noisiest cities around Christmas. It looks as if everyone is at peace with themselves having found inner harmony. Trivial issues disappear melting into the warm and cosy atmosphere of crackling fireplaces, drowning in the bittersweet odour of pinewood. All hearts await the Birth of Christ... All souls crave to see the shining Bethlehem star in the sky... All thoughts drift back to precious memories of previous Christmases.

Most of the children were out that day. They had gathered in the snow-covered yard of the orphanage. The gray grim stone structure was like a Medieval fortress lifted up in the fluffy clouds. The usual toughness on the teacher's face had turned into a sympathetic smile. The strict eyes had acquired a milder and gentler shade. Freezing cold had put all the trees and buildings under its deathly spell. Still, hand in hand, the small children started singing. They were rehearsing their Christmas carols. Each boy and girl had memorized the long, complicated and rather archaic verses perfectly well. Now they were ready to go to their

benefactor's house. There they would perform the carols singing their hearts out, truly happy seeing the wonder and joy their melodious voices evoked. Then, everyone would be given a small pouch full of tasty kickshaws, candies and sugar-coated fruits. On their way they would pass by the town church where dozens of people would be gathered. Seeing the poor homeless children, everyone would utter: "Oh, dear God, have some mercy and fill these creatures' lives with hope and happiness so that they would have a normal living!" And then every child would feel warmer and safer in that freezing Christmas Eve night. And it would seem that kindness and sympathy had reached even the darkest and furthest corner of the world.

However, no one would see another homeless orphan - the one wandering the dirty back streets of the city. It was a boy about seven who knew it was Christmas time just because of the flashy window displays, skilfully decorated with mistletoe branches, artificial snow figures and exquisite silver garlands. He would see beautiful wreaths adorning metal doors; he would pass by shops piled with wondrous toys. A merry parade of dolls with golden curled tresses, petite porcelain fairies, small models of ancient galleys and shiny trains would march before his eyes. His heart would fill up with joy and happiness at the thought that someone might give at least one of these presents to him that year.

Time went on and on but nobody ever paid any attention to the poor filthy child. There wasn't a single person who cared about the existence of the black boy. He was just an integral part of the scenery, a symbol of all that people were trying to ignore during the holidays. He was not even in an orphanage because of his descent. So, there were no carols, candies or chocolates for him. There was never a warm hug, a gentle smile, a good wish or a sincerely kind word for him. There was no love for him and therefore many would say there

was no life for him, too. He only had a tiny cross and several Christmas tales, which a long time ago his mother used to put him to sleep with.

So, each 24 December the boy would go around the entire city and gather a few alder branches. Their only decoration were the glimmering snowflakes which in his eyes were bright stars giving him solace and amazement. Then he would ask for a candle in the church. These he regarded a priceless treasure. It meant Christmas. At about 12 o'clock he would say a hymn praising Virgin Mary and then he would drop into the scalding hug of the snow blanket dreaming about warm houses, happy family dinners and joyful smiles.

This year the small boy finally touched the so desired world of his dreams. He found a miracle, a happy Christmas Eve. His soul flew towards the shining Bethlehem star. But suddenly he looked back and remembered all the sorrow and pain in the hearts of the other homeless children. His eyes filled with tears, which turned into gorgeous snowflakes and fell on an alder branch. The boy's bright soul embraced each homeless child, showering them with rays of calmness and hope.

Each Christmas there is an angel who lightens up the faces of the wandering small homeless children with love. Love, that he himself never tasted...