

Summary: This is a bit of a prequel to "The trouble with Teenagers", and is an Answer to the 2005 Lady Q's Christmas Advent Calendar Challenge.

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Story Notes:

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Spoilers: No specific episode mentioned

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\*Author's Notes: The information relayed by Marcus comes from a very badly remembered Comparative Religion 101 class from my freshman year in collage. Please forgive any mistakes that have been made. Marcus and Neroon are a young married couple and new parents in this story. One Earth year equals 0.74 Minbari cycles. Also, the Minbari words and phrases were found at the "JumpNow" website in John Hightower's Minbari dictionary.

## 1. [Chapter 1](#) by Third Charm

### Chapter 1 by Third Charm

It was winter on the northern continent of Minbar, and one of the fierce storms that the northern reaches were famous for was raging outside. It had come down and out of the Crystalline Mountains with all the fury of an avenging God. The wind and snow were howling and raging around the ancient Star Rider stronghold, besieging the new Satai Na's home. It was blocking out the weak winter sun and the late afternoon was dark enough to be mistaken for night by those that had no access to a chronometer.


Inside the stronghold though, an atmosphere of happiness and peace reigned. In the warmth, security, and safety of the chambers of the Minsa'hat (Clan Leader); a very frail and exhausted Marcus Cole, former Ranger and now new Shai Alyt, sat by the fire with little Wills in his arms. He was dressed in thick winter bed robes and slippers and was rocking the little miracle in the antique rocking chair that his husband had had shipped all the way from Earth. It had been a surprise gift for him. Neroon had presented it to him when the tests had come back positive, and Steven and Varren had been sure that the implanted pregnancy had safely taken and was fully viable. Now, Marcus rocked his son in that chair and was fully concentrated on his child. He was completely enthralled with the little being held so securely in his arms.

The former Ranger still couldn't believe it. Even after going through the extremely dangerous pregnancy, and coming close to dying on the operating table when William had been born, he still had trouble believing that this perfect little being was here. Marcus was still desperately trying to process that the little one in his arms was here, safe, and his. Oh, God! This was his truly son! His and Neroon's biological child! And at that moment, the little one was dry, warm, full, and content to be pampered by his human father. William was a blend of his parents, a true blend of human and Minbari, and he was as healthy and strong as a newborn could be.

William Durhann Steven Cole, Marcus chuckled at the pomposity of such an extravagant name for such a tiny little being. Little Wills, as Marcus liked to call him, had his Minbari father's dark eyes and a half-Crest that was surround by wisps of his human father's dark hair. Marcus marveled at how beautifully these features blended together in his little boy. This baby, this

precious little bundle, was Marcus's perfect Christmas Miracle, and he was so thankful to God to hold him. The human began to softly speak to his son, his voice filled with awe and wonder.

A very concerned Neroon had just walked through the threshold of his chambers at that moment. At first he had been both concerned for his still very weak mate and angry that Marcus would take such a risk after coming so close to death last night. Then he heard to his Mala (Spouse) speak with such wonder to their son, and thought it best not to intrude on such a precious moment. He simply watched with vigilance and listened, becoming overcome with the emotions of the moment.

"William, my little miracle, my little Christmas Angel. I still can't believe that you are here, here safe, and whole. I really can't believe that God saw fit to leave me on this plane to help raise you. And I say God, my son, because - well, I'll let you in on a very big and very important secret  because Valen was once human, and he learned his lessons from our Savior, too. That's right, my precious one, Jesus Christ is Valen's Savior, too. But, we can't tell that to anyone else, now can we? Ah, do you know that you share a birthday with the Savior of humanity, little love? Yes, that's right. You were born on Christmas Eve, the same night as our Savior, the Son of God was."

Marcus gently hugged his drowsy, yawning child closer, chuckled, and went on. "Ah, you truly don't know what you have done for me my son, do you? You see, your va'mala (father) may have healed my heart, and maybe even part of my soul, but you, little angel, you gave me back my faith. I had lost my faith in God such a long, long time ago, little love. I lost it in the very first battle I was ever forced to fight. How could a loving God let such horrible things happen?"

"Well, after your va'mala started courting me, and convinced me to fall in love with him, I started to heal. I started to let myself feel again. I think that maybe I had even started to unconsciously toy with trying to come back into the Fold of Christ then. But you see, humans and Minbari are so different in some things little one, and your va'mela is such a proud Minbari Warrior ----- and that's neither here nor there. Just know this my beautiful little boy, feeling you grow inside me, and holding you now, well, I have never felt so close to God before. And that love, that closeness, finally gave me the strength to truly come all the way back. Ah, my Wills, my perfect Christmas Miracle."

Marcus chuckled softly again. "Here's another little secret for you, my son. I'm being very naughty right now. By Steven's orders, I shouldn't have left the stronghold's Medlab, let alone my bed yet. But for you, my little one, I'd crawl across the frozen tundra on bare hands and knees, let alone sit in this very comfortable chair that has been placed by a very warm and cozy fire and rock you to sleep."

Marcus smiled down into the face of his now dozing, newborn child as he rocked him. Marcus thought of that precious Holy Child with whom his son shared a birthday and he began to softly sing an ancient carol to the little one, a carol that his mother had sung to this little one's namesake and himself when they were little boys.

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,  
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky  
And stay by my cradle `til morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;

Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.

Marcus finished the carol and stopped rocking. He simply sat still and held his son to his heart for a time. Then he spoke oh so softly again. "My Christmas Angel, there are so many carols sung in His name out there, but holding you reminds me of another that my mother, your grandmother, - oh, my precious child, how I wish she were here to hold you - sung for me and your uncle when we were little boys. And, just like "Away in a Manger", I think it was written for little children too." With that statement, Marcus softly sang to his sleeping son again.

Come they told me, pa rum pum pum pum  
A new born King to see, pa rum pum pum pum  
Our finest gifts we bring, pa rum pum pum pum  
To lay before the King, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

So to honor Him, pa rum pum pum pum,  
When we come.

Little Baby, pa rum pum pum pum  
I am a poor boy too, pa rum pum pum pum  
I have no gift to bring, pa rum pum pum pum  
That's fit to give the King, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum,  
On my drum?

Mary nodded, pa rum pum pum pum  
The ox and lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum  
I played my drum for Him, pa rum pum pum pum  
I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum  
Me and my drum





Me and my drum

Marcus finished the rendition of "Little Drummer Boy" and lightly yawned. He then looked down on his baby with a rueful smile on his face. "Your napping seems to be contagious, little Wills. Your papa is now wishing that this lovely chair was closer to the bed." He said with a soft chuckle while looking longingly at the adjustable and sumptuously appointed king-sized bed set against the far wall of the chamber. The bed had even been set in an antique four-poster frame. Simply by looking at it, a person would never be able to tell that a team of medical professionals had designed it.

The medically adjustable bed was a compromise between Marcus, Neroon, and Steven. The doctor - backed up most vociferously by Varren, the foremost healer in the Minbari Federation - refused to let Marcus sleep on a Minbari sleeping platform for the duration of his enforced bed rest. Neroon had refused to leave his side, and Marcus refused to be moved from his husband's home to the Ranger Headquarters' human Medlab at Tuzanor. Finally, before the doctor, healer, and pregnant (and therefore hormonally and emotionally unstable) Shai Alyt could come to blows, Neroon had come up with the desperate idea of ordering a specially designed bed.

And then he had hoped and prayed that it could be done! And it had been done, in less than a

week, as a matter of fact. A team of specialists from Edgars-Garibaldi Enterprises, handpicked and assigned to the task by Michael, had helped bringing it about so quickly. Lise's personal decorators and home designers had picked out the antique frame and reworked it to accommodate the specialized bed.

All though the bed looked like it belong in a Medieval Lord's solar, it worked as a hospital bed would, adjusting the height, angle, and support for both legs and back, and it had a heated jell and memory foam form-supporting mattress. In other words, it was the human Doctor's dream of a Medlab bed. It was also built to have the two sides adjust to two separate sleeping conditions if needed, and was large enough   a.k.a. king-sized   so that Neroon did not have to leave his husband's side to sleep.

After seeing that the bed could come close to simulating the proper sleeping angle of Minbari platforms, but was still able to give Marcus the support at the proper angle that the team of doctors and healers led by Steven recommended, Neroon had been quite pleased. He was also relieved to have some peace in his home again. The Warrior even went so far as to compliment the designers that had been invading his home. (All though, Neroon would NEVER go so far as to publicly admit that he enjoyed the shear luxury of that mattress, and actually being able to completely relax in sleep as well staying by the side of his mate and unborn child.)

And by that extravagant bed, next to Marcus's side of it, and nearer to the fire, was William's antique French-style bassinet. Which had been another surprise gift and also an import from Earth. Marcus was filled with such warmth and love when he looked at those precious pieces of furniture. Neroon had spared no expense when it came to the health, comfort, and safety of his family. And seeing to what lengths Neroon would go to make him feel comfortable and safe, made him feel loved as nothing else in his life ever had. Marcus tiredly chuckled to himself. It sure made it easy to forgive all the little annoyances of living with and loving one of the more arrogant Minbari in the Federation!

Neroon made his presence known then by lightly chuckling as well. Marcus looked up in surprise, and then smiled tiredly. The Warrior walked over to his family. He knelt on the furred rug beside the rocking chair (a contraption that he personally thought was ludicrous, but that seemed so important to human parents) and reached up to gently caress Marcus's bearded cheek. He smiled up at the human who'd risked everything to give him an heir of his body, a true heir to the Star Rider blood. The Satai Na still had to swallow down the fear that he would lose both his Mala and son at any moment. Though he had always and would always, make sure that Marcus never knew of this fear. Neroon had vowed that his soul mate would never have a cause to worry.

"You have tired yourself unnecessarily, beloved." Neroon chided gently. "If you wished to hold our son, all you needed to do was have one of the nurses bring him to you."

Marcus smiled tiredly again. "No, Mala, not today, not this night. It's Christmas on the human calendar, beloved, and, I wanted to do this for our son. It's my first Christmas gift to him."

Neroon choked back tears at the wonder and love that filled Marcus's voice. "No, my one, your first gift to him was life." He said. And with that, he changed his stance and gathered Marcus and their sleeping child in his arms and carried them both to the bed. He settled Marcus gently onto the bed, and reached to take little William.

"No, love. I just need to hold him for a bit more. I am a bit tired, but I can't sleep yet. Let me hold him a bit more?" Marcus said while looking into Neroon's eyes and with a slight pleading note to his voice.

Neroon could never deny his Mala such a request. "All right, Marcus, for just a bit more then. After which, both you and little William will have to rest." The Warrior said as he climbed into the bed and snuggled his family to him. They lay together quietly for a time. Neroon watched their son,

just as enthralled by the little one as Marcus had been, as he lay sleeping in Marcus's arms. Marcus lightly dozed as well, snuggled just as securely against Neroon. As he held his husband and child, Neroon's curiosity as to the songs that Marcus had sung came back to him in the comfortable silence.

He knew that Christmas was an ancient and sacred Human Religious Festival, but had never bothered to learn the particulars of it, not even after he and Marcus had bonded. Now, looking into the face of his sleeping child, his half-human sleeping child, he saw the hurt that he must have dealt to his Mala by ignoring something that must be extremely important to humanity. Especially if Marcus would go so far as to say to their child that the human God was Valen's as well. When he felt Marcus stir to full wakefulness, he decided that he would try to rectify that insult to Marcus then.

"You spoke and sang of a Savior and a "King" to William. What did you mean?" He asked.

Marcus looked at Neroon, a bit shocked. This was not the type of topic he thought he would ever face right after coming fully awake. And besides, the Warrior had never expressed an interest in human customs or religion before. "What do you wish to hear of?" he asked a bit warily.

Neroon smiled reassuringly at his Mala, and hugged him closer. The Warrior bled inside with the knowledge that he had truly injured his love with his arrogance and dismissal of the human ways. "What ever you wish to tell me, ma'fela (lover)." He answered gently.

Marcus was silent for a bit, putting his thoughts in order. Then he began to speak. "I'm not an expert on the different religions of Earth Neroon, so I might be getting some of this confused. Therefore, I'm going to ask you to please try to bear with me."

"Let's see, where to start? Ah, well, when I spoke of God, I spoke of our God, the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic God. You see, the three great Western Religions of Earth all believe in the same God, but they differ in one major point. That point is in the belief in Jesus Christ and in the combined divinity and humanity of Jesus, called the Christ. And, it is our belief in the combined divinity and humanity of Jesus, which sets Christianity apart from the two other Western religions."

"Now this does not make out beliefs better, or more correct, but it is the spiritual truth that calls to our souls. You know, it is said that Jesus was born well over two thousand two hundred Earth years ago on the last eve. Actually, the modern human calendar is supposed to start with the year of his birth."

"Well, to get back to the topic, Jesus himself was born a Hebrew, a Jew. And the Jewish religion, the religion of the Hebrew tribes - now called Israel - is the parent religion of both Christianity and Islam. Now, the Hebrews believe that Jesus was only a man, a prophet of God maybe, but still only a man. They believe that the prophesied Savior, or Messiah, is yet to come. And when He does come, it will signal the end of time."

As best as it was explained to me, the followers of Islam believe that that which is Divine can only be Divine, and not also human. Therefore, if Jesus was truly the Son of God, he could not be also human. And therefore, could not have died on the Cross, can never truly die. I think that some of their teachers say that when Jesus left the world, He sent a prophet in His name, to continue His teachings, and that this prophet's name is Mohammed. Others say that God himself sent Mohammed. I've also heard it said that some of their religious leaders even say that Jesus still walks among us, judging our souls by our worldly actions."



"Now, Christians believe that Jesus was the prophesied Savior. We believe that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, conceived by the Virgin Mary by Divine intervention, and born man. It is said by the Christian New Testament that, "God so loved the world, that He gave it His only Son."

That He gave the world His only Son in order that in our belief in the Christ and His suffering and sacrifice on the Cross, we can be saved from our sins. But, that is the story of Easter, another very important Human Religious Festival. You wish to know of Christmas." Marcus said, looking at Neroon, as if asking permission to go on.

Neroon, who had been avidly listening to the descriptions of the different Human religions, nodded. He had never thought that humanity could truly be so spiritual. To the Warrior, humanity always seemed so secular, as if it had no true religious underpinning at all. And now to actually listen to and try to comprehend the explanations of human beliefs, he was shamed by his arrogance.

"Christians celebrate Christmas as the commemoration of the birth of our Savior, of Jesus, called the Christ. "Christ" is actually an ancient human word for "Messiah" or, more modernly, "Savior". Hmm, how best to explain? Well, perhaps I should start with a short history of the Bible and the House of David." Marcus went on.

Marcus then gave little Wills to Neroon to hold, and reached to the low dresser by the bed. He opened the top drawer. He took out a pair of very soft looking gloves and put them on. Then slowly, and with a bit of effort, since he was still feeling the effects of the operation, and REALLY feeling the effects of his illicit little trip to the bassinet and rocking chair, pulled out a wooden box. He put it on the top of the low dresser, opened the sealed box, and pulled out a velvet-wrapped rectangle. As he unwrapped the package, he began to speak again.

"Israel is a country of Earth. It was, and still is, the ancestral home of the Hebrew tribes. The Old Testament of the Bible   ah, the Bible is the Sacred Text of Christianity - deals with the formation of the tribes, their covenant with God, the first formation of Israel and the Royal House of David. Ah, the Ruling Clan of Israel, you might say. King David was, well, the best was to describe King David is that he was to ancient Israel what you are to the Federation now, the Satai Na."

"Now, due to what the Old Testament refers to as judgements of God and the invasions of stronger foreign armies over the span of time, the House of David was cast down and Israel became an occupied state of the strongest political and military power at the time, Rome. With Herod, an evil despot, ruling as a puppet ruler. And that is where the story of Christmas starts." Marcus said as he showed Neroon an ancient looking volume. Then he explained the significance of the volume.

"This has been in the Cole Family since the sixteen hundreds, by the human calendar. It is the Cole Family Bible. In it, are recorded the births, deaths, and marriages of every Cole born since that time. In it, are recorded the passing of my family, our bonding, and now, Will's birth will be as well. This volume is nearly five hundred Minbari cycles old, Neroon, and is one of only three things that could be salvaged from Arisa. Until William was born, I was the last of the Coles. Therefore, as previous lone survivor, and now patriarch of the new line, it is my right to hold it. As it will be our son's when I am gone."

The Satai Na looked at the leather bound volume in reverence, and finally knew true shame at his presumptions of humanity. To hold a Religious Volume of such age, and one that held such records of lineage as a Family Relic, and not rely on just a central library as the Minbari did, well it showed a true connection to their beliefs. Humans were much more spiritual than he had first thought!

"Neroon, if you would not be insulted, I would like to read the Story of the Nativity to you and our son. It is an ancient custom of my family. When William and I were children, our father would read it to us every Christmas Day from this very Bible. Just as his father had to him. Now, I know I need to rest, and Wills will most likely soon wake and be in need of a change and a bottle, but if you would let me?" Marcus asked hopefully.

Neroon looked into the hopeful face of his husband, and, at that moment, could have promised him, given him anything in the universe, just to erase the knowledge that it was his former ambivalence to Marcus's traditions that had hurt his beloved so. "Of course, beloved. I wish to hear this story of Christmas. And, as you have said, it is William's first Christmas. Please read the passages, but if you tire, you must rest before going on." Neroon said softly.

And so, after laying the Cole Family Bible on the velvet wrap on spread out in his lap, Marcus began to read. He held the ancient volume of the Bible gently and with reverence. Marcus barely touched the fragile pages as he slowly turned them. He read slowly, so that Neroon could process the old English. Neroon was fluent in Standard, but the old English was a bit different, and Marcus would sometimes have to supply to Standard word, or translate as best as possible to Lenn'ah (the Warrior Caste language) when a modern word no longer existed. Camels were rather comical to explain, and the Wise Men, well, Marcus explained them as Religious Caste Seekers. When he read of the Slaughter of the Innocents, he saw Neroon hold onto William just a little tighter, and smiled secretly at the new father's protectiveness.

Marcus was a little hoarse, in need of a pain pill, and even more tired when he was done reading. But even that pain did not stop him from smiling and finally feeling at peace. He may have been the last of the Coles once, but now he had a son to carry the name, and a husband to love him. And on top of that, he had just been given the chance to keep Christmas, at least in part, as his forefathers had done for countless generations. The former Ranger felt as if the ghosts of the past were finally laying themselves to rest. He sighed as he tiredly looked up into the eyes of his husband, and saw the reverence that Neroon had for the story, as well as the Minbari's love for him there.

"This Festival, this Christmas, it is a commemoration of the birth of hope in the Darkness as well as the commemoration of the innocent, then?" Neroon asked.

"Yes, it is. It is the commemoration of the birth of Christianity's greatest Hope of Spiritual Salvation. As Easter is the commemoration of His Sacrifices for our Salvation and Rebirth." Marcus said, a bit surprised that Neroon had understood the message so well.

Neroon nodded thoughtfully. After a bit he said, "Then you were correct in calling your God Valen's God as well. Sinclair became Valen, and by doing so, become our hope in the Darkness. It would only be right for our son to learn just what teachings may have helped lead him to make such a decision, such a sacrifice. To do such a thing for a race that cost humanity so much."

If Marcus hadn't been so exhausted, he would have been ecstatic to hear Neroon say that. But, as it was, his fatigue was pulling strongly at him, even through his pain. He was barely managing to keep his eyes open now. "I am so glad to hear you say that, love. I would like to have William learn of both his ancestries as he grows." He said.

Neroon nodded again, and looked into the tired face of his beloved. "You are completely exhausted now, Marcus, and it is my fault for letting you go on for so long. Let me put William down, and then I will ready you for bed." The Warrior said as he slowly extricated himself from the bed and walked around the bed to place the baby in his bassinet.

The bassinet was yet another human piece of furniture that Neroon privately thought was ridiculous, but had been told by the doctors and healers that it was needed. They had told the soon to be parents that William's cranial and skeletal structure would not be strong enough for a Minbari slanted child rest until at least a few months after his birth. As the Minbari lay his son down, he shivered at having to leave him in such a death inviting position, but knew that the doctors, healers, and nurses were right. After making sure the babe was well settled he turned to his Mala, and saw that Marcus was already asleep.

Neroon walked over to the bed and gently, so that he only touched the velvet wrapping, took the Cole Family Bible from Marcus's hands and laid it back in its case. He took a closer look at the edges of the pages of the Holy Scriptures, and decided that a specialist in restoration and preservation of paper texts would be needed on staff permanently. He then turned back to his sleeping Mala, and just as gently removed the gloves from Marcus's hands, then laid them on the dresser top. As Neroon adjusted the bed back to the angle and elevations that the medical professionals had recommended and tucked Marcus in, he softly spoke to him.

"You call our son your Christmas Miracle, my one, and I won't deny that he is. But, you, and the fact that you are still here, are mine. Just as William is. I thank you for sharing your beliefs with me, my beloved. When you are awake, I will ask your forgiveness for dismissing them before. And I vow this to you, my heart, I will never again ignore any part of who you are." The Warrior said softly, lovingly, to the one whom held his heart. Tears filled his eyes, and choked his voice as he went on. "Perhaps, my love, you could tell me how to thank your God for seeing fit to let you stay with us on the morn." He finished by placing a sweet kiss on Marcus's forehead. Then Neroon changed into a night robe and climbed into bed beside Marcus to hold him through the night.

The End

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