

*A Montréal
Winter Tale...*



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A Montréal Winter Tale...



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As we approach the end of 2020, a year marked by the pandemic, the scaled-down team at Tourisme Montréal pooled their talents to bring you this simple Winter's Tale. We invite you to snuggle up with a loved one — or perhaps a cup of hot cocoa — and enjoy this journey to a magical metropolis known as Montréal.

We hope this story of our beloved city will bring you a little light and hope over the holiday season.

Enjoy!



It was New Year's Eve. Swirls of fluffy snowflakes danced in the sky above the beautiful island of Montréal, adorned in a winter coat of brilliant white. Crescent-shaped and framed by the flowing waters of the **St. Lawrence River**,¹ Montréal sparkled like an exquisite gem in the storefront window of the historic jeweler **Maison Birks**.² Amidst this tranquil setting, Montrealers in each of the 19 city boroughs prepared as best they could for a test of human resilience. For the first time in history, the entire world shared the same trepidation and fear of the unknown.

Yet in the heart of the city, **Mount Royal**³ blanketed in snow and crowned with an illuminated cross, watched over the residents, inviting them to experience the magic of winter. People donned their warm coats, *tuques*, and mitts, and headed outside to lift their spirits with a little winter fun on the mountain — strolls on forest paths, cross-country skiing, snowball fights, tobogganing, snowshoeing, skating — capped off with their warm hands wrapped around steaming cups of hot chocolate. Montrealers have always loved to play in their city and now, more than ever, everyone felt the need to be together, even if they had to keep their distance. Just seeing the magic in the eyes of the children — rosy-cheeked and eyelashes dotted with snowflakes — seemed to fill everyone with hope for a better future in the New Year.

But not everyone was feeling merry. High above the city, perched on a cloud, the Fairy Spirit of Light felt helpless. Her name was Aurora and she had magical powers. To the people of Montréal, she had always existed, a mystical figure who illuminated the darkness and worked in mysterious ways.



Aurora found it unbearable to see her citizens disheartened by this global virus. What could she do to sprinkle these souls with happiness? From her cloudy perch, her attention was drawn to two families.

The first was the Allan-Chouinard. This family of three shared an immense Greystone home in the heart of the legendary **Golden Square Mile**.⁴ A majestic example of Victorian architecture, the house epitomized the wealth of its owners. The parents themselves echoed the diversity of the flag of Montréal, with its five founding peoples and their symbols: the white pine representing the Indigenous peoples, the *fleur-de-lys* for the French, the rose for the English, the thistle for the Scots and the clover for the Irish.

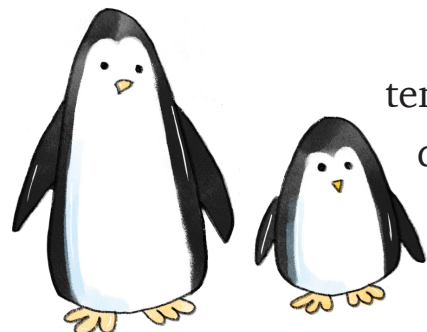
The lady of the house, Carolyn, was indeed a true ‘**Allan**’⁵ born from the union of a chatty Scottish woman and a reserved Englishman, whose blood had a dash of the light-hearted Irish. Tall and slim, she had a delicate face, refined nose, and dark soulful eyes. Her wild curly hair was fiery red like the fall foliage of the maple trees on Mount Royal.

As for Jean, the man of the house, he was charismatic and handsome. His tanned complexion highlighted his sculpted features. His eyes were deep and dark, covered by thick eyelashes. A fine talker, he boasted to whoever was willing to listen that his roots were very Norman, but his physique, strong and distinctive, stemmed from his Indigenous ancestors. He always touted himself as a real Quebecker — a ‘**gars d’icitte**’⁶ — he would joke as he ran a hand absently through his salt-and-pepper hair. He would frequently boast about the curative powers of maple syrup.

Jean was fiercely proud of his professional success and had established a lucrative business developing and distributing video games. With more than 1,000 employees, his company occupied an entire block in the heart of the hip **Mile End**⁷ neighbourhood.

Jean was quickly adopted by the Montréal elite and was introduced to his better half at the annual ball hosted by the **Montréal Museum of Fine Arts**.⁸ Despite being seemingly opposite in every way, their meeting was filled with sparks. Cupid worked his magic, and in less than 60 days, they were inseparable. The pair moved in together and soon welcomed a child named David.

Because of their demanding careers, Jean and Carolyn enlisted the help of a nanny, Valérie. She was David's guardian angel and would often take him on adventures to explore the **City of a Hundred Steeples**.⁹ They visited the towering tyrannosaurus at the **Redpath Museum**,¹⁰ admired the magical animated holiday window at the **McCord Museum**,¹¹ and discovered the many worlds of the **Space for Life**¹² museums: from the Biodome to the Planetarium to the famous Botanical Garden. Sometimes, they would go to the **MTL Zipline**¹³ in the **Old Port**¹⁴ — David loved the adrenaline rush.



In recent months, David's parents, this couple of opposing temperaments, found their time at home together to be very difficult despite their comfort and stature. Confined indoors and forced to slow to a sedentary pace without their hectic lives to occupy them, Jean and Carolyn felt lost and stifled.

Slowly, they began pulling away from each other. Carolyn, the general manager of a renowned hotel, was experiencing the devastating toll the pandemic had taken on the tourism industry. She began to escape her unhappiness by spending: shopping at **Holt Renfrew Ogilvy**,¹⁵ enjoying therapeutic massages at the **Bota Bota**¹⁶ floating spa and nibbling on take-out meals from the city's many local vegan restaurants.



Jean, on the other hand, saw his sales skyrocket as more and more people sought solace in a virtual world of fantasy and adventure. His fortune continued to grow, and dressed in his stylish **Nathon Kong**¹⁷ suits, he dreamed of international glory. Every morning without exception, he went for a run along the **Lachine Canal**,¹⁸ breathing in the invigorating air and delaying his return home by stopping for coffee and pastries at the **Atwater Market**.¹⁹ And so, Jean and Carolyn's daily routines did nothing to bring them together.

David was only 12 years old, but wise beyond his years. He listened silently to his parents arguing and endured the icy atmosphere at home. Like so many kids, he escaped through video games and to virtual worlds, constantly wearing his headphones like a protective shield against the never-ending quarreling between his parents. Frail, dotted with freckles, suffering from chronic asthma, he felt more isolated. Then one day, David didn't feel well. Moffat, his beautiful tabby cat, tried desperately to cheer him up by cuddling close and purring. But nothing worked. First came the runny nose, then the loss of taste and smell.

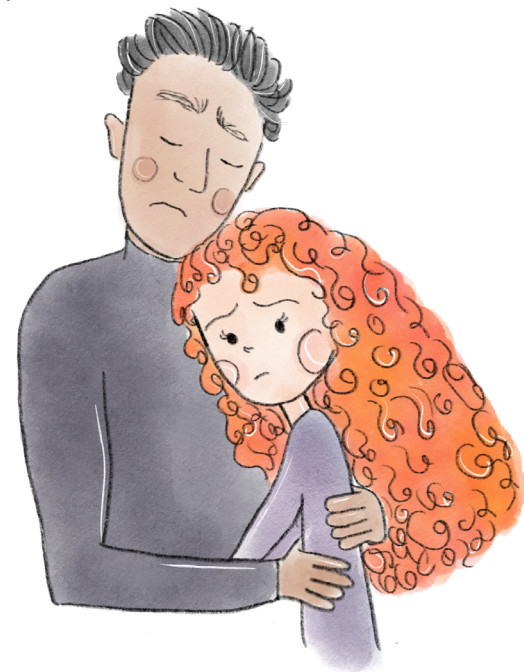


David barely moved and soon began to have difficulty breathing. His parents, frightened by the all-too-recognizable symptoms, immediately called an ambulance. He was taken to Sainte-Justine children's hospital and soon placed in intensive care.

In the waiting room, beside themselves with worry, Carolyn and Jean broke out of their self-absorbed bubbles, reached out and hugged each other. Suddenly, nothing mattered except their son. As they realized how serious David's condition was, both were consumed with guilt. If only they had loved him more, held him more, spent more time with him.



Meanwhile, across the city, lived a different family. On **Saint-Dominique Street**,²⁰ where colourful homes featured iconic spiral staircases, lived the Iaconelli-Zhang family. For over 18 years, Lorenzo and Raven loved each other with a passion that often-elicited eye rolls from their three children. Children of Italian and Chinese immigrants, they had settled on the **Plateau**²¹ to raise their family and build their future. Their handsome brood, Marie-Lou, Marc and Léa, turned heads wherever they went, with their rosy cheeks, jet-black hair and beautiful eyes. They were the centre of their parents' universe.



Lorenzo, a stocky man with a full black beard, was expansive and jovial by nature. His early years in **Little Italy**,²² the neighbourhood where he grew up, were shaped by his Tuscan-born grandparents. Every summer, their compact urban garden, hidden by heavy vines of dark purple grapes, would overflow with tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants and fragrant herbs. Inspired by his family's long culinary history, he went on to open three top-rated restaurants and a legendary pizzeria on Dante Street. However, the pandemic had stopped everything in its tracks. The last few months had been devastating for restaurant owners across the city, the very businesses that had made Montréal famous as a culinary capital.

Every Saturday morning, Lorenzo would shake the little ones out of their beds, pile them into the family car accompanied by Tiramisu, their beloved German Shepherd. Their ritual began in **Villeray**,²³ with a stroll through **Frédéric-Back Park**,²⁴ an enchanting green space. The family would then head off to **Jean-Talon market**²⁵ where Lorenzo cheerfully greeted each vendor by name. His children would sigh and scramble behind him, pleading for hot bagels on **Saint-Viateur Street**.²⁶ Afterward, they would take a walk along Saint-Laurent Boulevard, known

among the locals as **The Main**.²⁷ They'd look for new murals and visit their old favourites, like the one of local poet and singer **Leonard Cohen**.²⁸ By lunchtime, they would be starving again, easily convincing their dad to stop at **Schwartz's Deli**²⁹ for its famous juicy smoked meat sandwiches.



Their mother, Raven, always laughed when she saw the kids ambling about the house after these outings: bellies full, debating various topics, like which bakery sold the best pastries. Raven was a small woman, always busy like a bumblebee, and present in her children's lives despite her long hours working as a nurse. She loved to spoil them with treats from her childhood neighbourhood of **Chinatown**:³⁰ *Dragon's beard* candy, dumplings, and brunches at the one and only **Kim Fung**.³¹

Though she looked petite in her hospital garb, Raven had the courage of a lion and the wisdom of an elephant. Every day, she got up to face the incredibly challenging demands of the pandemic, proudly walking up to Sainte-Justine's hospital with its beloved "Tree of Lights" out front, a giant symbol of hope.





Inside the hospital, Jean awaited news about his son David. Distraught and not knowing what to do, he went downstairs for a coffee in the hospital lobby. Lorenzo was already ordering a *latte* and *biscotti* there. After dropping Raven off at the hospital, he had decided to treat himself to a well-deserved break. Concerned by Jean's saddened expression, he called out to him, "Is everything okay?"

Jean looked at him with sorrowful eyes. "Um, no, my son...David... he's caught the virus and we don't know if he's going to make it. It seems so unfair! He's my whole life. I don't know what to do."

"I'm so sorry," Lorenzo replied. "My wife, Raven, is a nurse here. She works in intensive care. I'm sure they will do everything for your son. No matter how tired they are, our healthcare workers never give up. They are our true heroes."

Jean desperately needed to confide in someone, and Lorenzo was listening. They talked to each other about their very different lives. Lorenzo shared his concerns about his restaurants, now reduced to take-out service, and how frustrated he felt not being able to do something to help the growing number of people in the city without food or shelter. He really admired a local community organization called



Tablee des Chefs,³² he explained, whose mission was to feed people in need. He wished he could contribute more to their cause.

Jean swore that if his son got better, he would donate 3 million dollars to Lorenzo's cause. But on one condition: if he made the donation, every child in the city would receive a festive meal and locally made gifts for the holidays. Dumbfounded, Lorenzo told him, if that was his wish, he would take care of it personally, bringing back all his laid-off staff to make it happen. They were both filled with hope.



Unbeknownst to the two men, Aurora, the Fairy Spirit of Light, had just arrived at the very same hospital. She overheard Jean as he talked about how he wanted to help the children of Montréal. Immediately, she zoomed up an elevator shaft and into David's room.

David was feverish and frail, struggling with the virus, his bony shoulders heaving with each painful breath. Raven, his nurse, watched over her young patient, stroking his hair and softly singing soothing ballads in Mandarin. As she slipped a hand into her pocket, she felt something: What was this? A fortune cookie? A smile lit up her gentle face, and instinctively, she put it into David's small hand. He slowly opened his eyes, and with a burst of childish curiosity, he managed to crack open the cookie. Suddenly, the room was infused with a soft, warm light. He read the fortune aloud: "You will overcome this darkness and share your light with the world." Like a puppet pulled up on a string, David sat up and began to cough and breathe deeply.



He gestured to his nurse that he was okay. Raven's worried face broke into a radiant smile. David had turned the corner. It's a miracle!

Aurora smiled, satisfied that she had used some of her power for good and knowing that Jean and Lorenzo would keep their promise to bring the joy of the holidays to the children of Montréal. She flew down **Robert-Bourassa Boulevard**³³ and turned to face the skyline, grabbing from the street one of Montréal's famous **orange cones**³⁴ — a symbol of a city reinventing itself. As she touched the cone, it became covered with gold and transformed into a powerful trumpet. She lifted the trumpet with her delicate hands, took a deep breath and blew with all her might into the shining instrument. A whirlwind of glittering golden confetti flew from the trumpet and began to dance and fly far into the sky, so far that it sprinkled over the entire planet.

The next morning, people around the world awoke to a dusting of golden glitter on their nightstands. Slowly but surely, everyone began to feel a collective sense of well-being and hope. They greeted the New Year with optimism and resilience, knowing that, while challenges would always arise, together they could make it through — with a little bit of courage, a little bit of creativity, and a lot of love and generosity in their hearts.



FARINE
FIVE ROSES

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