Summary

The cup was Helga Hufflepuff’s most treasured possession. But how did she come to own it - and why was it so treasured.

Notes

Note from ChristyCorr, the archivist: this story was originally archived at Unknowable Room, a Harry Potter archive active from 2005-2016. To preserve the archive, I began manually importing its works to the AO3 as an Open Doors-approved project after May 2017. I e-mailed all creators about the move and posted announcements, but may not have reached everyone. If you are (or know) this creator, please contact me using the e-mail address on Unknowable Room collection profile.

When All Else Fails… Helga Hufflepuff had been alone for more years than she cared to remember. A seemingly endless cycle – spring easing into summer; summer sliding into autumn; autumn fading into winter; and winter bursting into spring. Someone had to remain behind at the school when the other three … left. But she knew that the day was rapidly approaching when she too would leave the school.

Salazar was the first to leave Hogwarts, ending many years of hostility between himself and Godric. They had been unable to prevent their students from becoming aware of the tensions between them, and the tension quickly spread through both houses.
It was an ugly time.

Rowena somehow managed to remain aloof. Helga both envied and was frustrated by the way she could ignore the tensions. Helga certainly couldn’t. She tried her best to make peace between Godric and Salazar, but realised how unsuccessful she was when Salazar turned on her – turned on all of them.

“And you, Hufflepuff! You insist on allowing those – those creatures into our school. They aren’t deserving of admittance!”

“They are children. Not creatures, not Mudbloods or any other name you call them. They have ability and deserve the opportunity to learn.”

Salazar raised his wand and stepped towards her. Godric pushed her aside and raised his own wand. “Your argument is not with Helga, but with me,” he said. “Abusing one who only seeks peace is not the mark of a pureblood, but of a coward.”

Salazar was not prepared to duel Godric, and left the school that day vowing never to return.

But he would come back, and things went from uncomfortable to impossible.

She found Godric standing on top of the North Tower, staring over the battlements. “He is coming?” Even after all these years, she couldn’t bring herself to say Salazar’s name.

Godric nodded. “We knew that it would come down to this in the end.”

The glow of a campfire was visible on the other side of the lake. There was no point in Salazar concealing his presence – he knew they would know – the school would know – that he was near. “There must be a way to stop this from happening.”

Godric turned and smiled at her. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God,” he quoted. “You always have been the best of us.”

“No, I’m not brave or clever or …”

“But your loyalties have always been solely with the school, and particularly with the students. Rowena, Salazar, myself – rightly or wrongly - we have all attempted to impose our beliefs on the students. You haven’t.” He nodded. “Whatever happens tomorrow, Hufflepuff’s children will be Hogwarts’ eternal protectors.”

He bent down and placed a small gold cup on the battlement beside them. “Give me your hand.”

“What are you doing?”

He laid her hand on top of the cup and covered it with his own. “Just in case,” he told her, and closed his eyes.

Helga didn’t recognise a tenth of the spells that Godric used. She kept her eyes on his face as he struggled to charm the cup. Finally he opened his eyes. “It is finished.”

She grabbed his arm as he staggered back. “What have you done?”

He looked down at her, then picked the cup up from the battlement and handed to her. “We have created extra protection for Hogwarts, but only…” He broke off. “Helga, for as long as this cup is in your family’s possession, the school will be safe.”
She looked down at the cup that now was engraved with a badger – the symbol of her house. “It seems as if you think you will lose tomorrow.”

“I will not lose – not to Salazar. But there will come a time when we are all gone from Hogwarts. The cup will keep the school safe – when all else fails.” He turned his head and gently kissed her forehead. “As will you and your children.”

Helga looked out of her office window, down into the grounds. The duel between Godric and Salazar was both the most brilliant and the most terrifying duel she had ever seen – or would ever see.

She stood with Rowena near the castle, watching. They confined the remaining students to their common rooms, but looking up, she noticed that that order had been ignored. Students crowded every possible vantage point to catch a glimpse of the combatants.

The duel raged throughout the day and all they could do was watch. Godric had told them both not to interfere in the duel, regardless of what happened.

The end, when it came, was unexpected. Helga watched in disbelief as green light flashed from Salazar’s wand and Godric slowly crumpled to the ground.

Helga broke away from Rowena and ran over to Godric. “You’ve killed him!”

On Salazar’s face was an expression of complete and total shock. “I didn’t intend…”

She stood slowly and drew her wand. “Leave. Leave now, before I forget that we were once friends.”

“Helga, I swear to you by everything I hold dear, this wasn’t supposed to happen.”

She smiled sadly, but did not drop her wand. “You may not have intended this to happen, Salazar, but you know that this day would come. You had to know that one of you would kill the other.”

Rowena moved to stand beside her. “Please leave,” she said softly. “You are no longer welcome here.”

He looked at both of them for a long moment before dropping his wand and backing away from them. At the edge of the lake he stopped and stared at them for a long moment. He opened his mouth but then closed it without saying anything.

Helga watched him go, and then knelt back beside Godric. “Let’s – let’s take him back to the castle.” She folded his hands over his chest and placed his wand between them. She stood, and raised her wand. “Mobilcorpus.”

Students silently lined the corridors as they carried Godric through the castle to the Great Hall. The walked slowly down the aisle between the tables to the head table. Together, Rowena and Helga lowered Godric’s body onto the table.

“What will we do now?” a student asked.

Helga looked at Rowena then stepped forward. “We will mourn our dead,” she said. “Then the school will continue – as it always will.”

They learned of Salazar’s death several years later. He had drifted for a while before ending up in Mesopotamia where he had been caught in the middle of a dispute between two tribes.
Helga felt relieved at the news. Finally it was all over. But Rowena disagreed.

“It’s not over yet. Our children, and their children, will be fighting this war for years yet. But it will be over one day.”

Rowena usually was right about such things, but on this occasion, Helga sincerely hoped she was wrong.

Years passed. Students came and went. In next to no time they were teaching the children and, heaven forbid, the grandchildren, of their original students.

And Rowena and Helga grew older.

About fifty – or it could have been sixty – years after Godric died, Rowena left the school and returned to her home. “I’ve given Hogwarts most of my life,” she told Helga. “I cannot give any more.”

“You’re going away to die.”

Rowena nodded. “Yes, I rather think I am,” she said. “But we cannot live forever, Helga, and I’m not sure that I want to live too much longer.”

Helga had stood at the gates and watched Rowena walk slowly away from Hogwarts, knowing that she wouldn’t be back. She wandered back to the castle knowing that she was now the only one left.

About a year after Rowena left, Helga heard that she had passed away.

And now it was nearly time for her to say goodbye to Hogwarts.

She turned away from the window and sat down at her desk. The small cup stood on the edge of her desk, as it had done since Godric had given it to her, still in immaculate condition. Helga picked it up and ran her thumb over the badger embossed on it. It was her most precious possession, and it was time for her to pass it to its next guardian.

That evening she sent for her son.

Morcant arrived several days later from his home in the Welsh mountains. She immediately took him up to her office.

He sat down in the seat in front of her desk. “I was surprised when I received your letter, Mother – especially since we’d see each other at Christmas.”

She smiled, and sat down beside him. “I know, dear, but what I need to discuss will not wait until then.” She picked up the cup and turned it around in her hands. “Do you know how I came to own this?”

Morcant shook his head. “I asked you once, and you said that you’d tell me when the time was right.”

“Yes, I remember,” Helga said. She looked down at the cup she was still holding, then met her son’s eyes. “This is our family’s greatest treasure…”

And she told him of that last conversation with Godric – about the spells that Godric put into the cup in order to protect Hogwarts … when all else failed.

When they had finished, Morcant stood and walked over to the window. They had talked all night,
and the sun was rising over the hills to the east. “I thought that the need for such protection was gone. After all, Salazar Slytherin is no more.”

“There are witches and wizards who have the same beliefs that Salazar did. He is not the only threat that Hogwarts will face.”

“And if the cup falls into other hands – Hogwarts will not be safe?”

Helga hesitated. “I’m beginning to doubt that Hogwarts will ever be safe,” she said slowly. “But protecting the cup cannot hurt.”

Morcant turned and walked back towards her. He picked up the cup and turned it over in his hands. “Mother, I promise you that I will keep your cup safe.”

Helga smiled. “I know you will, dear.” She looked down at the cup still in his hands. “Tell your children about the cup – and their children.”

Morcant nodded. “I will,” he said. “I remember the day that Slytherin came back, and there’s no way that I want to see anything like that again.”

“Neither do I.”

The cup no longer belonged to her, but to Morcant. It was as if a great weight had been taken from her shoulders – one she hadn’t been aware was there. “It’ll be safe here for the mean time. Shall we go to breakfast?”

He laid the cup back on the desk and took her arm. “Let’s,” he smiled.

As they reached the door Helga looked back at the cup. She could almost see Godric standing beside her desk smiling with the knowledge that the cup – and hopefully Hogwarts as well – was safe for another generation at least.

It was enough.

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