



A Fleeting Warmth

Lizzie Logemann

Fable

Pale toes curled into the snow. Light filtered in through the trees, settling into the snow and glinting off, creating a brightness that betrayed the biting cold. Although she could no longer feel the frigid temperatures nipping at her body, Alisa was constantly aware of its presence. There was no blood pumping through her veins, no skin or flesh. All that lived in its place was ice, smooth and solid.

Alisa trudged forward, sinking into the snow with each step. She had no purpose, merely walking until she grew too fatigued to continue. There was no place for someone like her in society. She was condemned to live her life in these woods, caged by invisible walls of her own worries. So she walked. She walked to forget the misery of rejection, to forget the pain of being different, and the loss of normalcy. Motion was the only way to soothe her frayed nerves. If she kept moving forward, then she was making progress, no matter how trivial.

Her trancelike state was interrupted by a sound. It was barely audible, but it was there. Footsteps crunched through the snow off in the distance. Filled with newfound energy, she worked her way into a run. Kicking up a spray of powder behind her, she ran in the direction of the sound as it grew louder. Soon, she could make out a black figure amidst the pristine white of winter. "Hello?" She called, voice raw from days without use. It stopped moving and looked in her direction. Pushing down a thick hood, she was able to make out a face. Nearing the person, she was able to make out some more details: male, and roughly twenty years old.

"Aren't you cold?" He asked, concern evident in this tone. Stopping a few feet away, Alisa looked down at herself. Only a thin lilac dress hung from her frame. Adorned with lace, but tattered and worn, it wasn't in the best condition.

Mustering up the strength to smile, she shook her head. "Nope, I can't get cold." Her words were soft and

wispy, floating through the air. Fingers toying with the hem of a sleeve, she turned her eyes down to the ground, waiting for the boy to realize what she was. Alisa had met a few people, after turning to ice, and they always reacted the same way. Running in fear, they yelled that she was a monster, unnatural and wicked.

“Alisa?” The question caused her to look back up. She was met with striking blue eyes and a shaggy mess of brown hair. Stumbling back a step, caught off guard by his proximity. Then her mind began to work, why did he know her name? Searching and spinning, she thought until she was able to grasp something. An old memory, one of laughter and playing, warmth and cheerfulness.

“Parker, is that you?” She asked tentatively. He was quick to respond with an enthused nod, a smile spreading over his features. They’d been friends as children, playing together while their parents worked.

“What happened to you?” He asked, taking one of her hands in his own. Flinching at the contact, Alisa let her eyes settle on their hands, held between them. Seeing no reason not to tell the truth, she shared her story. One day while outside, several years ago, she walked across a frozen lake. She was cautious, but not enough. It cracked under her feet and before she was able to get back to the bank, it collapsed from beneath her. Shocked by the cold and weighed down by her clothing, she wasn’t able to reach safety. The world faded to black as her air ran out. Some amount of time later, she woke up, safely in the snow. However, her body had become solid ice and a voice spoke, warning her that warmth would melt this body, causing her to die. That was when she ran off into the forest and never looked back.

Taking it all in with grace and a kindness within his eyes, Parker dropped her hand. “Well, I’m glad you’re still around. Everyone told me you had died, but I didn’t want to believe it. I couldn’t believe it. You were my best friend. I couldn’t accept that someone who meant so much to me was gone.” Sadness and relief swirled in his eyes, as well as countless emotion she couldn’t place.

Alisa smiled. Glad she could touch someone that deeply, she smiled. It was the first time in years that she’d genuinely felt happy. It was the kind of feeling that swells through your entire body. It was a warm feeling. She looked down to her fingers. Water was beading up on their surface and dripping into the snow below. Just like that, the feeling was gone, doused by a heavy dread. Her fingers now shorter, the ends melted and gone, lost somewhere to the snow. Tears slid down her cheeks, leaving crystalized tracks in their path. She truly lived a cursed existence. Traded for an extended life, any kind of warmth, physical or emotional caused her to melt

into nothing.

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