



# *Queen Winter's Reign*

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Fable

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Princess Winter was draped in a majestic, white cloak of snowflakes, edged with white fur. Her crown, of ice crystals, dazzled like jewels. In a quiet ceremony, she was to take over the reign from her sister Queen Autumn who was clothed in a cape of orange and red leaves and wearing a crown of apples and pears.

“How was it?” asked Princess Winter smiling.

“Very good,” she said “ However, it did upset me when Prince Summer was reluctant to hand over the reign to me. Just one more week he pleaded last year, and I yielded. But this year he demanded two weeks! He told me firmly that all humans wanted him to rule longer. What a cheek!” said Queen Autumn

“Oh dear, What happened?” asked Princess Winter, concerned.

“I said No to two weeks and he lost his temper. I reminded him how our parents wanted us to rule each season equally. He huffed and left.”

He has such a fiery temper noted Princess Winter.

The moment Queen Autumn passed the ruling sceptre to Princess Winter, the glass bauble on the top changed from burnt orange to white, formally signalling the change of season. And the title of Queen transferred with it.

Queen Winter's reign had begun.

The following morning, followed by her Winter Soldiers, Queen Winter began the long journey through the

mountains and valleys that made up her vast kingdom. She marched boldly on foot so that her eyes could take in every detail of the changes her army had made, sent in advance of her inspection. And she was pleased.

The soldiers had whipped up the wind so that it gusted fiercely, with such force that the bare trees leaned forward. Many branches bowed and snapped.

The soldiers had shaken the clouds hard to make snow fall, covering the mountains. They had dusted the bushes with cold biting frost, allowing red and white berries to peek through. They froze the rivers into sparkling sheets of ice.

Queen Winter crunched through the snow and drove resolutely forward against the harsh wind, her necklace of frozen red and white berries swinging with her movement. Her long black hair was lively and wild. Her beautiful black skin and piercing blue eyes did not flinch. The stronger the wind blew, the wider she smiled. Oh the joy of Blizzards! She thought to herself.

Birds tweeted as Queen Winter passed, and animals scurried excitedly to watch the annual procession of Queen Winter inspecting her winter magic.

Suddenly, she startled.

“What’s this?” she asked coldly, as she arrived in one of her favourite places, a small nature reserve. It had been vandalised. All her winter flowers had gone. The ground was scarred black. There was no snow. And no sign of life. A deathly quiet hung in the air and it was unpleasantly mild.

A soldier rushed to her and spoke with agitation in his voice.

“Your majesty, I believe it is a deliberate act of destruction; I fear the humans have turned against us here”, he said mournfully.

“Everywhere else is decorated as you commanded. It’s only a small area. I think we should stay away from it” he advised.

But Queen Winter knew there was danger in his advice. If there was a hole in the winter blanket her strength would be weakened. The area would absorb too much sun and chase her Winter away, far too early. The

consequences were that her Winter magic could disappear altogether.

Queen Winter left to think about this problem overnight. She was vexed.

She wasn't sure who was to blame for this act of vandalism. She needed to find out. She reflected that, as children, Prince Summer had always pushed for more than his fair share. She suspected he was intent on extending his reign permanently and was justifying his actions by asserting it as the will of the humans. But was he right? She did not know.

If he succeeded, it was likely that it could force Princess Spring and Princess Autumn to extend their reigns too and squeeze her out of existence.

The next morning, Queen Winter woke up early. She decided to visit the Human land alone and see for herself what was going on. She removed her crown and royal clothes and dressed as a commoner, a maid.

She saw children playing in a park in the bitter cold. They were enjoying themselves. She discovered Humans used ice in their drinks and preserved food and medicines with it too. She saw humans skiing down mountains and playing sports like ice hockey. They glided on ice with silver blades. She watched their happy faces and heard their laughter as they whizzed around on the ice rink. Some skated gracefully: others stumbled and fell but merriment filled the air. These activities implied humans needed ice, for work, sports and pleasure. So she concluded there was a deep-rooted desire for her reign in every aspect of their lives and she had the mandate to rule. She was elated.

The next day Queen Winter summoned her soldiers to the barren nature reserve. With assurance, she gave her commands. The soldiers were ordered to make the wind blow hard to cool the air. And she directed them to shake the clouds vigorously to make snow fall in gigantic furies.

Queen Winter took her sceptre and sprayed icicles creating thousands of stalks ready to carry flowers. She took snowflakes from her cloak and shaped them into bells to hang as snowdrops, and formed cups to make Christmas roses. Everything was made from ice. And these sculptures were a magnificent sight.

Finally, The soldiers sprinkled the ground with frost and their new theatre of ice sculptures was born.

The hole in the winter blanket had been closed.

Queen Winter returned to the Human land in disguise. At the ice rink, she told the skaters about the ice sculptures that decorated the nature reserve. Many humans went to look and were entranced with what they saw.

Birds flying above spread the word to animals and they all came to see the wondrous sight. Many decided to stay.

When her reign was over Queen Winter passed the ruling sceptre to Princess Spring, who wore a cloak of pink apple blossom and a crown of budding twigs woven with yellow crocuses. The glass bauble changed from white to green, signalling the change of season. The Princess became a queen.

“How was it?” asked her sister Queen Spring.

Princess winter told her about the barren nature reserve she'd found.

“Oh, that was Prince Summer. He scorched the nature reserve in a fit of temper after a row with Princess Autumn” she said “ But all is well now” she assured.

Princess Winter was doubtful that all was well. Her brother Prince summer had grown up strong. She suspected he was flexing his muscles. But she kept her concerns to herself.

With trepidation, Queen Winter returned to the nature reserve the following year and she was pleased by what she found. The valley was covered in winter flowers, as she had hoped. But then she came upon a spectacle she was not expecting. The humans had made new ice sculptures. They did not possess the delicate or intricate details of her own but there were still beautiful. When she saw an ice statue of the mystical beautiful maid who had guided them there, she was touched.

Humans had started a new tradition of an annual Ice festival and she knew that her reign was secure by their love of winter. Any thoughts of threats to her reign vanished.

Thrilled by her achievement, she did not notice that her blood ran a little warmer than before. Prince Summer was on the march. But that is all for another story.

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