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## THE FREEZE

By Valarie Umar

It was the coldest winter I ever experienced. Icicles hung from every roof top around. The door on our home was near frozen shut. We all sat near the fire, my two younger sisters, and father.

“Okay gals, what should we play next?” my father asked.

“I say we go outside and make a snowman!” my youngest sister replied.

Father chuckled.

“Now we can’t go outside...how about we play cards?”

I watched grumpily as father began to shuffle the gold fish cards. Here I was, stuck watching them play *cards*. I could be playing too, but I was too upset to sit around and play a child's game.

If mother was still around, she would be teaching me a new recipe or how to knit. I could see my father side eyeing me as he passed out the cards. I stared out the window with my elbow resting on the window sill and my chin in the palm of my hand.

I remember when I used to play games with father, but as I got older, I had spent more time with mother...oh how I missed her. And on days like these...I yearned for her even more.

“Gold fish,” the middle sister replied.

I guess I just, grew out of it all. I didn’t realize it until today, but three days is far too long to be stuck in the house with my father and two younger sisters.

“How long will this freeze last father?” the middle sister asked.

I tuned in to listen. I didn’t want to make it obvious that I had been wondering the same thing. I just didn’t want to ask.

“I can’t say, but we don’t have to think about the freeze outside,” father replied.

I really didn’t like that answer. Actually, I didn’t like it so much that now I felt even more down. I let out a sigh.

“Time for dinner,” father said softly.

Of course, that meant time for everyone to get in the kitchen and help out preparing dinner. Now that mother wasn’t around, it was our job as the women in the family to cook and help father prepare dinner. Groggily, I walked over to the kitchen.

“What’s the matter?” my youngest sister asked me.

I gave her a look of exhaustion and sighed. I didn’t reply. I think the sigh answered her question enough.

“Look here, you lose that attitude of yours,” father said sternly to me.

I lowered my brows, father had no idea what I was going through!

“I’m tired of being stuck in this house!” I shouted.

My two sisters stayed quiet.

“If you don’t want to be here with your family, go in your room, you’re getting the rest of us down,” father said.

I angrily stormed away and went upstairs to my room. How could father act that way to me?

Mother would have never banned me to my room! Especially during a freeze. I closed the door and threw myself onto my bed. As I angrily laid my face in the pillow the doorbell rang.

I quickly sat up and became alert.

“Girls, wait there,” I hear my father say.

I hurry to the door and press my ear against it. I wiped the angry tears from my face and listened intently. All I could hear was some murmuring. I wanted to know so badly who could have come to visit us in this awful freeze. Then I began to hear laughter. It was my two younger sisters. I grew even more curious now. How could they be having a good time without me?

“Where is she?” I hear a voice faintly say.

*That voice, I thought. Mother.* It reminded me of.

I heard footsteps running up the stairs and I peek under the door to see who it is. My youngest sister, I see her pink socks, in that space between the floor and the door.

“Father said we have a special visitor, he asked that you come downstairs to greet her,” she said.

I thought about it for a moment, *should I come out?* I was still angry at father, that’s for sure. *I wonder, I wonder why my sister didn’t mention who it was downstairs...*

“Well,” I said. “Who is it?”

“It’s...you have to come downstairs, now hurry,” she said.

I watched her pink socks run off.

I hear laughing again, this time it sounds awfully familiar to...*mother's laughter*. It couldn't be.

It couldn't be mother. Suddenly I hear my father call me. I do not reply. I hear loud footsteps coming to my door. I knew it was father. He knocked on the door slightly.

"Can I help you?" I said.

"A special visitor made her way to see us, I would like you to come see her. I hope you can find it in yourself to let go of what your holding onto."

*What?* I expected an apology. I had to think, I had to ponder what my father had just said to me.

Could he have known how I was feeling all along? I walked outside my room and crept down the sides of the stairs. I wanted to see the stranger before she seen me. I could only see the back of her head. She had long dark hair, just like mother did.

"Now when you brush your hair, you do it like this girls'," her voice said.

Her voice was quiet and sweet like a delicate flower. I watched her as she imitated brushing and my two younger sisters watched her carefully.

"Yes, yes that is how you do it, good job," she said to them, as they copied her action of brushing.

I smiled. The only smile I made since I was stuck in the house from the freeze. How would I approach her? How wonderful it is that she came on this frozen day! I had to come down and introduce myself. I walked to where they were sitting, my father placing wood in the fire.

"Look who has joined us," father said.

The strange woman, she turned to look at me.

“Hello!” “I thought you were never coming down from there, I traveled all this way to see you all,” she said.

I studied her, she looked awful lot like mother.

“This is your Aunt Diane, she is your mother’s sister, she didn’t know there would be a freeze out here in Montana, she figured she’d visit us,”

“Luckily I made it,” she said, she smiled at me.

I looked at her and I looked at my dad, I noticed the way they looked at each other. Mother had come back to us again, Diane.

“I really like Diane,” the youngest sister said.

The middle replied,

“Yes, and the longer this freeze, the longer she can stay here with us!”

I looked at my younger sisters, I wanted to embrace them. I was suddenly filled with joy! Thanks to the freeze, our family will all be back together again.