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Winter Magic

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It was that time of year again, winter. Taking an hour to shovel yourself out of your driveway just to go to work. Wearing ten layers just so you don't freeze to death. Then getting done at 5 and by five thirty it's dark out, not just any dark, it's like midnight dark. The days are shorter, the nights are longer, colder and we are thankful it won't last forever. Sitting at my kitchen table I'm looking out the window, into my backyard. It looks like a winter wonderland. It did look pretty. It reminded me of my grandmother who had passed away a few months earlier. I was her favourite grandchild. As I should be, since I was her only grandchild. She was the only family I had left, and now I was alone in this world. She had given me a little golden wrapped box and told me not to open it until the snow came. The snow came, but I didn't have the heart to open it yet. Holding the golden wrapped gift box in my hands, tears sprung to my eyes. "I miss you gram."

Tomorrow, I will open it tomorrow, I vowed to myself. Gently placing the box on the table, as I continue to eat my dinner.

The next couple of weeks went by in a whirlwind. My date dropped me off; it was Christmas Eve. He kissed me goodnight at the door. I invited him to come in. He kissed my cheek and said tomorrow.

Gary was a great guy. I enjoyed his company. He did miss the little cues I'd send him, but it was part of his charm. Closing the door behind me and kicking off my boots. I headed to the kitchen and began brewing a cup of tea. As the water heated, I went and wrapped myself in my

grandmother's sweater, it was a ratty, pink fuzzy sweater that was too big. It was too big for her, and it was too big for me. It was like she was hugging me. Gary texted me when he got home and said that he would see me tomorrow.

Sipping my tea, I sat down at the kitchen table. The golden box stared at me, waiting for me to open it. There was a little card attached to it, I opened it again and reread the card. "Put your boots on, go outside in the backyard, open the box. Toss the contents into the air above your head and say, 'Like a prayer, this winter air and these words will take me there.' Love you, my child."

"I love you too Gram." Looking out the window. Now was a good of a time to do this. It's Christmas Eve and I was missing her something fierce. Slipping on my boots, I took the box and carried it out to my backyard. Standing in the middle of the backyard, it was after ten, the neighbourhood was quiet. Just the crunching of the snow beneath my boots. Looking around me, I tilted my head up and looked up into the cloudy night. It began to snow. Light cold snowflakes dropped from the sky. Like kisses from heaven. Inhaling deeply, I lifted the lid and tossed the contents into the air above my head as I said, "Like a prayer, this winter air and these words will take me there."

The ground beneath me shuddered, blinking my backyard disappeared before my eyes. I was in the woods. It was lightly snowing.

"Hello?" I called out around me. Turning around in a complete circle I was standing in the middle of the woods, in my boots and my grandmother's sweater.

Where did my house go? Where was my backyard? What the hell? "Hello?"

Nothing but trees everywhere. It was dark but the snow made it lighter. I took a couple steps forward. "Hello?" I called again. No one replied.

Panic began to settle in. I had no idea where I was, or which way to go to get home. The night sky held clouds, no stars. Just light snow coming down. I began walking forward and found what looked like a trail. Pulling my sweater tighter I said a little prayer that I didn't freeze to death in the middle of nowhere.

I heard jingling in the distance. Santa? Not likely. It was growing louder, which meant it was coming my way. Stepping aside, I stood and shivered, the last thing I needed was to get run over by something or someone.

Around the corner a large sled pulled by very large beautiful white horses came quickly into sight. The driver slowed down and came to stop beside me.

"What are you doing out here? Dress like that?" his deep voice asked.

Looking up at the man, he looked like a Norse god, he couldn't be real, none of this was real. It had to be all a dream. I felt down outside in my backyard and bumped my head. If I didn't wake up soon, frostbite would set in. I would die in my backyard. Well maybe Gary would find me in the morning.

"Come," he held out a hand to me.

I reached out and took it, I was already feeling too cold. His hand wrapped around mine, big, warm and it felt strong. He yanked me up into the air and sat me down beside him. Then took a blanket that was large and heavy and draped it over me. We rode in silence through the night, the chilly air kissing my cheeks. The jingle of the bells and the horses thumping through the snow. It felt magical. Who was this guy. We came to a stop outside a log cabin. He helped me down and I followed him into the cabin. I still had the blanket draped over me. He started a fire and sat me in front of it on a chair. It wasn't long before I felt toasty warm. He handed me a cup of tea.

“Thank you,” I mumbled.

“You look like Freya’s granddaughter.” He sat next to me.

“You knew my grandmother?”

“Yes.”

“Who are you?”

“A friend of your grandmother.”

“What’s your name?”

“Erik.”

“Erik, how do you know my grandmother?”

He smiled. “Your grandmother saved me once.”

“Just once?” I teased.

He chuckled. “Astrid, there is a lot I know about you.”

“How did I get here? And where exactly are we?”

“Winter magic, and here is my home. North of the city.”

“Of what city?”

“Yours.”

“How far north?”

“About thirty minutes or so.”

She paused, was he telling her the truth. “Why am I here?”

“Your grandmother wanted it.”

“For what purpose?”

“She thought that we would be a good match.”

“A good match?” I felt my eyes going wide. “A good match for what?”

“A good love match.”

I heard myself laughing, “no I’m sorry. I have a boyfriend.”

“Gary? Freya didn’t like him much.”

“I know that. She told you?”

He nodded.

“Well, I,” rolling my eyes, shaking my head. “I don’t know what to say.”

“You know your grandmother.”

“I do.” She really wasn’t a Gary fan. But to find me another guy? Really Gram?

“My apologies Astrid. I can take you home.”

“Please.”

Erik pulled out another coat and handed it to me. I put it on. It was his hanging on me.

My grandmother went to a lot of trouble for me to meet this guy. “What did she want?”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“She wanted you to bring me here and then what?”

“Hang out, get to know each other. I have some photos of her.” He offered.

“Fine, pour me another cup of tea, and get the photos out.” I shrugged off the coat and found my spot by the fire.

We stay up all night, exchanging stories about my grandmother and that woman was right. Erik was a good catch; he was much more charming than Gary and we had much more in common. Three weeks later we were dating. Erik turned out to be my best friend that I didn’t know I was looking for. Winter magic, my grandmother did consider herself to be a witch of sorts. Well played Gram ... well played.