

She stared gloomily into the fire. She wanted to be cheerful – she really didn't want to upset Grandad and make him think she wasn't having a good time. Especially as Grandad might worry and think he ought to call Dad. Which would make him and Mum worry about her, too.

But it was so hard to be happy, when she just wasn't.

Grandad put his arm round her shoulders. "Do you think it's time for bed? You might even wake up to find everything covered in snow..."

CHAPTER THREE



Sara woke up the next morning feeling cold. Grandad's house was lovely, but the radiators were ancient, and sometimes didn't work as well as they should. The room felt cold, and somehow looked cold, too, she realized, as she hauled her duvet up around her shoulders. The bedroom she slept in at Grandad's was her dad's old one, but Grandad had repainted it. When her dad had it, it was covered in posters, Grandad said, and you could hardly see the blue paint. He'd decorated it a pale pink when Sara was little. But today the pink walls didn't seem as warm and rosy as usual. There was an icy, crystal feeling in the air.

"The snow!" Sara squeaked, jumping out of bed, and then squeaking again at the coldness of the wooden floorboards.

"Ow, ow..." She hopped across the floor on her toes, dragging the duvet with her, and climbed up on to the windowsill. It was a large one, almost like a window seat, and she liked to curl up in it and read. She flung the curtains open, and took a deep, delighted breath. "Oh, look at it..."

Grandad's garden was very big, but usually Sara knew where everything was – the clumps of rosebushes, the wooden bench, the greenhouse. Now it was all just lumps and bumps. Even the greenhouse seemed to have been flattened out by the deep, sparkling snow.

She glanced round as the hall floorboards creaked. Grandad beamed at her from the bedroom door. "I might have known you'd be awake already. Amazing, isn't it?"



"It's so thick," Sara agreed. "I don't think I've ever seen snow like this."

"It must have snowed heavily all through the night," Grandad said, coming to stand at the window with her. "And the wind's been blowing the snow around too. It's all banked up against the garden wall, look, and the greenhouse."

Sara nodded. That explained why everything looked so strange. She hadn't thought about the wind, she'd just expected that snow fell straight down. But of course it didn't. It flurried about. "The wall looks like a ski-ramp," she said, giggling. "Can I go out in it, Grandad? I've got my big coat and my boots."

Grandad nodded. "Sure you don't want breakfast first? It might warm you up."

Sara shook her head. There was

something about the perfect glittering whiteness outside – she wanted to go and run about in it, and see her footprints. “I’ll come back for breakfast in a little while. Is that OK? I just want to see what it’s like.”

Grandad nodded. “I think I’ll make scrambled eggs. You’ll need something hot. I feel cold enough just looking at all that snow.”

“But it can’t be as cold as it was in the Arctic,” Sara reminded him.

“Mmm. I’m sixty years older than I was then, Sara. The cold seems to seep into my bones now. Still, maybe later on, when I’ve had some breakfast, I’ll come out in it with you.”

Sara hurried to get dressed, putting on her warmest jumper and trousers, and a pair of thick socks to go under her boots.

If she hadn’t promised her mum that she really would clean her teeth every morning, she would have skipped that, but she felt too guilty.

Teeth brushed, she rushed down the stairs and opened the back door. The wind had dropped, and the air was very still. It made walking out into the garden seem dreamlike, it was so quiet. The snow had hushed everything. Even the sea, which Sara could always hear beating against the rocks when she stayed with Grandad. It was just a soft whisper in the background.

The garden looked like an illustration from a fairy tale. Sara had seen snow before, of course, but this was so deep, and so clean and new, that everything shimmered and sparkled in the thin, clear sunlight.

"I hope it doesn't melt," Sara said to herself, glancing up at the sky. But it didn't feel like it would. The sunshine hardly had any warmth in it, and she was cold, even wrapped up in her coat and long scarf. She stepped out on to the grass. At least, she thought it was the grass. She had to step carefully – she could have been standing on anything. Sara held out her hands to steady herself. She was glad that Grandad didn't have a pond – she might walk out into the middle of it in this.

"This is definitely the bit of grass between the roses and the wall," Sara muttered to herself, frowning and trying to remember the layout of the garden. She knew exactly what it looked like, almost as well as she knew her garden at home! But she'd never tried to walk round it

blindfolded, and that was what it felt like.

The snow crunched and squeaked under her boots as she tracked across the lawn, admiring her footprints. It was about twenty centimetres deep, she thought. Not quite high enough to go over the top of her boots. But not far off.



Sara turned and looked back at her trail. The prints were really crisp, as though she'd shaped them with a knife. The snow was calling for her to build something in it. But not just a snowman. Somehow that wasn't right for the magical feel of the morning. Sara moulded a snowball thoughtfully, pressing it together between her gloved hands, and enjoying the feel of the snow under her fingers.

Then she smiled. Of course. Grandad's story last night. She was going to make a snow bear.

Once she had the idea, it came easily. The snow was a little powdery, but it held together well enough, and the shape she had in mind wasn't very complicated. Sara loved polar bears and she had lots of toy ones at home, of all sizes, and a little

notebook with a polar bear photo on the cover. The bear was sitting up, almost like a boy slouching against a wall, with his hind paws stuck out in front of him. So it was easy enough to heap up a mound of snow to be his back, stretching it out into two fat back paws. The head was harder – when she tried to build the snow out into a pointed bear face, it just fell off. In the end she rolled a sort of triangular snowball, and balanced it on the top, with little snowballs for ears. Then she shaped some of the body into front paws, hanging down at the sides.

Sara stood back, admiring her bear. He was almost finished, but there was something missing. She pursed her lips thoughtfully, and then sighed. The eyes. She needed some little stones, or

something like that – but everything was buried under the snow. She glanced around, and managed to find a couple of dark, withered rose leaves, still just about visible under the snow covering the bushes. She pushed them into place on either side of the long white muzzle, but they didn't look quite right.

Someone laughed behind her, and she turned to see Grandad standing in the doorway.

"He's fantastic, Sara!"



She grinned at him. "He is nice," she agreed. "But he isn't finished, Grandad. His face looks wrong. It's mostly the eyes. I can't find anything to make them out of."

Grandad nodded, and then rubbed his hands together. "I know. Give me just a minute." He hurried indoors, and came back, smiling, holding out a hand to her.

Sara tramped to the door, feeling the cold now that she'd stopped building. "Oh, they're perfect," she said delightedly, picking the bits of green sea glass from Grandad's hand. "I should have thought of that. Can I really borrow them? Won't they get lost in the snow?"

Grandad had a jar of sea glass on the kitchen windowsill, all shades of green, and even a couple of tiny blue pieces.

He picked it up when he went walking on the beach, and now, when the sun shone through it on the windowsill, it looked like a tiny jarful of the sea inside the house.

“Of course you can. You’ll just have to go hunting on the beach for some more if they disappear when your bear melts. I’m sure we’ll spot them in the grass, though.”

Sara ran back to the bear, taking out the leaves and pressing the green glass into the snow. She smiled at the difference they made to the long white face. He was suddenly real, a snow bear sitting in the garden.

She couldn’t help glancing back at him, as she hurried in to eat breakfast. She had the strangest feeling that he was waiting for her to return.

CHAPTER FOUR

