

The Warmest Day of Winter

A smile spread over her face as Liz daydreamed, carelessly draped over a chair in her bedroom. All around her, snapshots littered the floor. Each one was like a wonderful display of her deliciously satisfying summer. Barely aware of the raging blizzard outside, Liz was still rolling down grassy hills, laughing with her friends.

“Liz! Hurry up, it’s time to go to work!” Her mother’s voice trailed up the stairs.

Ugh. Work. Liz longed for the days of summer, job-free and careless. She didn’t understand people who got summer jobs. Who would want to waste their time inside working, when they could be outside enjoying the sunshine? No, it was only in winter when she has to buckle down and transform into a robotic zombie. Work! Every day, all day. It was either school, or her part time job at Gringham’s Grocers. There was no room for fun during the winter months. Everything was impersonal and standardized. Even her nametag sounded cold - “Elizabeth”. How boring.

“Liz! I mean it! You are going to be late!”

Sighing, Liz grabbed her backpack, which was still adorned with numerous key chains and souvenirs she had collected over the summer. They jingled as she ran down the stairs, and it comforted her to know that not all of her summer had been destroyed by the thick, suffocating blanket of snow that had engulfed her world weeks before. Shivering, she pulled on her parka and trudged out the door.

Stepping outside, Liz imagined the snow to be gone. The scent of freshly mowed grass filled her nostrils. She could practically feel the sun on her back. No more thick, white sludge. No longer did she see her own breath crystallize with every sigh.

Once in the car, Liz tried to imagine it again. Leaning on the car door, head against the window, she tried. But all she could feel was the icy cold frost seeping into her skull, numbing her mind and sending chills through her spine. She hated snow. She hated winter.

It took longer than usual to get to work that day; the roads were icy and snow covered, forcing drivers to slow down. By the time she got to the small town grocery store, she was already a few minutes late. “Great.” She thought to herself. “The last thing I need right now is a lecture from Mr. Gringham.”

The moment she stepped out of the car, icy air seeped into her lungs, making it difficult to breath.

“Elizabeth! You’re late! Hurry up, I need you to run cash!” Mr. Gringham, leaning out the front door, did not sound happy.

Picking up her pace, Liz rushed towards the store. She immediately regretted it, however, when she lost her footing on a sheet of ice and fell hard onto the ground.

“Elizabeth! Are you okay?” Mr. Gringham was still waiting at the storefront. Tears coming to her eyes, Liz nodded, wondering why on earth anyone could ever like snow.

It wasn't until after seven that night that Liz got home. The store had been overly busy with customers trying to get some early holiday shopping done. As she walked through the door, brushing snow off her coat, Liz couldn't help think that she never wanted to see another can of cranberry sauce again.

"Hey Liz," called her mother, "would you mind coming into the kitchen?"

Both of Liz's parents were seated at the kitchen table, and Liz couldn't help noticing a strange, strained look on their faces, as if they were trying to hide a smile.

"Liz, I just got a call from my boss." Said her mother, setting the phone on down on the table.

"And what does he want?" Liz interrupted. "If he's anything like my boss he'd want you to spend every second at work, like some kind of zombie or something. The nerve Mr. Gringham has. Do you know he yelled at me today? I was ten minutes late and who wouldn't be in this weather! It's..." Liz stopped at the sound of her father clearing his throat.

"Liz, you know Mr. Gringham is a good man." Her father warned. "Anyways, listen to your mother. I think you will like what she has to say." There was that smile again. "Go on, Ellen."

"Like I was saying," continued her mother, "I just got off the phone with my boss. He was calling to confirm the trip."

"The trip?" Liz asked, confused.

"Your mother us going to go on a business trip for two weeks." explained Liz's father. "She and I were talking, and we think that the three of us should go, as a family. We thought maybe it would cheer you up."

Liz grimaced. Living in this snow covered world was torture enough. Being forced to drudge around all day in some boring city was hardly appealing. All she could do was nod feebly.

"Well, it's set then!" smiled her mom, walking out of the room. "We leave in three days...I know its soon, so you'd better start packing." Liz couldn't help but think she had seen a twinkle in her mother's eye. "And be sure to bring your bathing suit! Oh, and lots of shorts and t-shirts!"

"Bathing suit?" Liz was dumbstruck.

"Well yeah!" called her mother, who was now in the other room. "I mean, you're going to want a bathing suit in Florida, aren't you?"

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