

Unforgettable Forgiveness

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She stared out the cold foggy window draped with frost. Boredom slowly seeped into her mind and it was only the second day of her holiday break. Tomorrow would be Christmas but Janet wasn't excited. She longed for that close-knit family- the type that would gather around the fireplace swapping silly stories and gobbling up roasted warm marshmallows. But Janet was home alone, wishing, waiting, while her parents attended "an important business function." Christmas came and went like the cold winter wind.

However, Janet was looking forward to the next day. Her parents had promised to drive her up to the Coloradan mountains so that she could do the one thing she was passionate about- snowboarding. Every year, Janet would go snowboarding with a couple of her friends but all of them were either busy or on vacation this year. This wouldn't stop her from going by herself. The rush, the adrenaline she felt as she glided across the smooth paved snow path was the greatest feeling ever. She excitedly packed her bag and attempted sleeping early so that the morning would arrive sooner.

During the long, endless car ride, silence filled the car, but Janet didn't mind. She was used to it and drowned herself in music as she stared at the familiar scenery passing by. As they reached the ski resort, an anxious smile slowly spread across her face. She knew her parents would just be sitting around all day sipping their hot coffee so she jumped out of the parked car and rushed ahead.

After apprehensively registering and checking in, she wasted no time slipping her feet onto her snowboard. She had a specially designed snowboard that she was absolutely in love with- a creamy egg yellow color with a dragon spanning out. Her name was engraved on the

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bottom as well- “Janet Wells.” She headed down and jumped into line for the ski lift. She was next in line and got ready to sit on the ski lift chair. No matter how many times she went on it, she always had a feeling of excitement as her feet lifted from the ground as the machine jerked the chair forward.

Janet started off nice and easy on the bunny slope. It had been a year since she had gone and she tried getting used to the rhythm of balancing her body on the board which was quite difficult with the amount of clothes she was wearing- puffy ski pants, giant ski jacket, hat, gloves, the usual. As she slowly started going down the hill, the harsh wind blew across her chapped face. She moved in a criss-crossed manner and watched out for other riders. That was the tricky part, moving in a fast efficient manner in accordance with other people.

As she reached the bottom of the hill, she decided she had regained her confidence in her skills and was ready to move onto the next level mountain. When she reached the top, skiers and snowboarders buzzed past by her. “Uh-oh. Maybe I’m not so ready” she thought. However, she was at the top and there was nothing she could do any longer. She started heading down shakily but tried not letting her fears get the best of her. Halfway through, CRRRAASH!

When Janet woke up, she found herself to be in a hospital bed, entangled in a web of IV tubes. She felt groggy and lifted her blanket to find a cast around her right leg. “What happened?” she quietly asked to herself. She could only remember that something had knocked into her mid-way of her snowboarding. A nurse walking in caught those whispery words and asked, “Sweetie, are you doing okay? Some guy crashed into you after losing control of his skis and you tumbled down for the rest of the hill. Luckily, the repercussions aren’t too terrible. Just a broken leg and you lost consciousness for a bit. I know it seems as if it’s really bad right now but

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consider yourself lucky honey. Anyways, eat and rest up!” Janet moved her mouth but no words came out. She didn’t know what to say. She didn’t know how to react.

A million thoughts raced into her head and she couldn’t sort them out. “Where are my parents? THIS is how I’m going to spend the rest of my winter break? This place looks like prison. It smells like old people. Where’s that skier who crashed into me? I have something I’d like to crash into him!” Bitterness was swallowing Janet up whole. Janet was usually quiet and content but darkness ruled today.

“I DEMAND AN APOLOGY!” Janet yelled. “I’m sorry,” came a muffled meek cry from the other side of the curtain. Janet reached as far as her arm could extend and swung the curtain open. There laid a young guy with a more severe injury than her own.

“Who...are you?” Janet stammered out. But she already knew.

After a couple coughs, “I’m the skier that crashed into you,” he answered timidly.

Janet didn’t know how to reply nor did she want to. She was so wrapped up in anger and she knew she would stay under this spell for a while.

“I’m sorry. I thought I was ready. It was my first time skiing, but I practiced a lot on the bunny slope and I don’t know. I really thought I was ready. I’m so sorry. I wish this never happened.”

Janet looked over to see his eyes glistening. His eyes were full of tears that were just awaiting for a hurtful response before it all came pouring out.

“How old are you?” Janet demanded.

“Twelve.” He couldn’t even respond to that without his voice shaking. Fear was written all over his face.

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“What’s your name?”

“Tobias. Bbbb-but my brothers and sisters call me Toby.”

Janet noticed how he didn’t say friends but referred to family rather.

Janet sighed before she spoke, “You know, I could have died out there. You shouldn’t be going on the next slope if you’re not ready. Especially since this was your first time.”

“I know, I know. I just really wanted to feel a sense of adventure, a rush in my body. But that was stupid of me. If I could never go skiing again and take it back, I would do it! I can’t tell you how sorry I am.”

Despite her anger, Janet knew herself that she would never be able to give up snowboarding. She could tell he was overwhelmed in sorrow and guilt and decided to divulge into further conversation with him. There was nothing else better to do.

“Whatever. So why is this your first time skiing? People *usually* start when they’re a lot younger,” she said in a condescending tone.

“Every year, the orphanage I stay at chooses three people to give really big Christmas presents to. It’s kinda like a lottery.”

It was as if a knife had stabbed Janet in the gut. “An orphan?? Grrrrreat. Now I can’t even be mad at him.”

The lack of reply was a common response Toby was used to after he announced he was an orphan.

“It’s okay. Don’t feel bad for me. I like living in an orphanage. I’m surrounded by so many people who love me and it’s not bad.”

“Who said I felt bad for you?” snapped Janet.

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The two laid in a room of awkward silence. Janet turned over onto her side and pretended to sleep. Not long after, the room became filled with Toby's family- brothers and sisters of all different ages and ethnicities. As weird as it was, Janet felt an impingement of jealousy as she felt the love among Toby's unique family. She knew her parents were working and wouldn't visit her any time soon-if at all. Janet soon dozed off.

When she woke up, she found her bedstand filled with "Get well soon" cards. She picked one up and saw it was written by a child.

"My sister Mary wrote that," Toby said. "My whole family felt terrible and wrote you all cards."

Janet sighed and put the card back. She stared at the ceiling counting blocks. Before she knew it, she found herself telling Toby how she longed for a loving family like his. She didn't know why she told him that but she didn't care. This would be the start of the most eye-opening conversation of her life.

Three days later, on the last day of her stay at the hospital, Janet ironically found herself not wanting to leave. Even though she had only known Toby for four days, he already knew her better than anyone else. They exchanged phone numbers and promised to keep in contact. After they hugged goodbye and Janet headed out of the room, she realized she had forgotten something. She hobbled back as fast as she could, popped her head in through the doorway and said, "Hey Toby, by the way, I forgive you."