

Snowmen and Rose Bushes

The first occurrence was after I told my mother I was bullied at school.

It was winter, the air was frigid and still, and children piled along the streets. Our heads tilted back, mouths open, breathing in deep, breathing slow, before exhaling, with force. Puffing at the air, surrounded by giggles and laughter, curious eyes sliced through the air to scrutinise the little clouds of smoke-like mist roaring from each other's mouths. All was well, until they came along.

Three of them, looming over, bats in their hands, sneers on their faces. A scarf, a beanie, and a pocket watch adorned the great bodies. Their presence was overwhelming as their auras pressed us down, squashing us like bugs in the snow. Even our shadows whimpered and retreated, shivering, behind our backs in fright. Everywhere, young eyes shied away, interesting things suddenly appearing. Mouths moved, excuses made, my friends vanishing. Irritated, I glared upwards, craning my neck to meet their eyes... Wrong move.

Accompanied by the moon, I dragged myself home. My mother's hands fretted, her concerned and rage-filled eyes scanning over my body, pursed lips and eyebrows pushed together, her carefree demeanor melting away. Soon enough, the moon lowered itself into the water, sighing with the small waves.

I yawned and stretched alongside the sun, pushing ourselves upwards, reluctantly beginning our day. Rubbing my eyes, I put on my boots and pulled on my clothes, waving goodbye absentmindedly at a snowman wearing a red scarf in our backyard. Slowly but methodically kicking up snow as I meandered my way towards school.

Inhaling and exhaling slowly, I bathed in the numbing cold. It was my preferred state of things. Being able to bundle up in warmth, cosy up next to a fire, the simple joys of life. Crouching down to pet a purring cat, two large shadows dwarfed mine. Clutching bats in their gnarled hands, wearing sneers on their faces. Beanie and pocket watch glinting in the sunlight. My arms shielded my head, my legs tucked close to my chest.

The moon ushered me home. I snuck past the kitchen, my mother's jovial singing remaining undisturbed. A window quietly whispered to the pantry mirror, sneaking a photograph of my battered face. The jovial song came to a halting finish while I buried myself under soft blankets, soothed, under their embrace.

In harmony with the morning birdsong, a soft knock peppered my door, before gently opening and closing with a click. My mother gracefully perched on the edge of the bed, carefully avoiding my legs. She leaned close, pressing a gentle kiss to my forehead and caressing my chubby cheeks tenderly. "Did you want to make some snowmen today?"

Rubbing my sleep-filled eyes, I smiled back up at her, giving a small but grateful nod. Her warm hand enveloped my small one as I skipped towards our backyard. She guided me towards the larger bundles of snow with my instincts in agreement.

The day was spent happily patting careful handfuls of snow into large round spheres. From within the safety and warmth of their homes, neighbours smiled at the kneeling mother, playing with the giggling child in the falling snow. And eventually, with time, two luscious and rather large snowmen were created.

With the sky growing dark, my mother herded me indoors and into my bed. Checking that I was asleep, she returned to the backyard. Shuffling and hurriedly decorating the snowmen, and sneaking back underneath her blankets.

Winter was nearly over, and she once again sat familiarly perched on the edge of my bed. "We're moving" She declared, looking at my eyes worriedly. I nodded silently, offering no complaints. It was growing warmer, and I had no interest in melting.

We packed up our belongings and left. Our melting snowmen waving goodbye. A knitted red scarf, a goofy beanie and a strange round object adorned their cold bodies. Their presence underwhelming, as their auras blended into the snow.

Many days had passed and my mother and I had settled wondrously in this new town. Unbeknownst to the pair, a radio crackled to life: "BREAKING NEWS: CORPSES FOUND IN MELTED SNOWMEN"

Oblivious neighbours smiled at the once again kneeling mother next to her giggling child. Now, planting rose bushes instead of making snowmen.

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Short Story Draft

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