

Finally Home

Emma was planning on going out after work, but by the looks of it she might not even make it home. The snow was coming down hard and even the radio was warning those who listened not to go out tonight. She had already seen so many cars in the ditch on her way home and it scared her just thinking about meeting black ice and spinning out of control. She stopped at the traffic light, turning up the Christmas music that KTIS was playing.

She sang along trying to ease her nerves, "Oh the weather outside is frightful, but the fire is so delightful and since we've no place to go...let it snow, let it snow, let it snow." She sighed as she prayed repeatedly, "Please help me get home Lord...please help me get home."

As the light turned green she rolled forward, about to head past the old ice rink that she had way too many memories of, as her engine light went on. Her vehicle started stuttering and she exclaimed, "No no no!" barely pulling to the side before her car stuttered to a complete stop.

She took her hands off the steering wheel and into her lap as she muttered, "You have got to be kidding me." After a minute of praying her car would randomly start, she gave up hope on the old thing as she looked over her shoulder to the ice rink.

In the midst of the snow that was way too frantic to come down if you ask her, she saw someone skating with a stick in hand. *Who is crazy enough to be playing hockey right now?* she thought. She was already wrapped up in her coat, hat, and mittens, so she got out to investigate who this hockey player was. As soon as she opened the door she wished she were back inside her warm car, but it was too late for that so she headed over to the old rink as the snow came down.

As she got closer she recognized that old hockey jacket, the navy Bauer hat, and the only hockey stick he'd ever used... "Lucas?" He was about to shoot the puck, but he stilled at the sound of her familiar voice. He slowly turned around as he asked, "Emma?" He met her eyes as he finished saying her name and she immediately flashed back to the last time she'd seen him.

"Lucas, you know you don't have to leave." Emma was wrapped in his hockey jacket, warmer than could be out on the ice as they leaned against each other on the ledge of the rink. She never felt more safe than in his arms - or his jacket for that matter. He met her eyes after a long moment of staring out onto the ice. "You know how big this offer is for me Emma. This...this could actually be a future for me, playing hockey in the big leagues." He had gotten nearly a full ride in playing Junior Hockey to someday play for an NHL team. She was happy for him, but not at the risk of him getting hurt and her never seeing him again as she headed across the US for college. He sighed as he looked into those gorgeous green eyes that he always knew what she was thinking just by the way she looked at him, "Emma, I'll be just fine in Juniors. I'll just be playing a bit of stick and puck with the boys and will be home before you know it." She leaned her head against his shoulder as she whispered, "But what if you do? What if you can never play hockey again? What if...what if I'm not home when you come back?" He looked at her, not knowing she'd be in New York yet since she hadn't told him, "What do you mean if you're not home? Aren't you staying at home and doing college online?" Before she even said anything, he could already tell just by the look in her eyes that that wasn't true. She sighed, "No. I...I'm heading to New York at the beginning of August. I got a huge scholarship in my writing department that I have always dreamed of, so..." She couldn't meet his eyes and he was having a hard time meeting hers as both of their futures weighed down on their shoulders. Ultimately, he ended up shattering his knee as well as his chance at playing for MN Wild. Emma never got her dream of becoming a writer as no one would publish her. All the publishers stated that she was, "Not creative or imaginative enough to be an author." So much for the futures they had planned.

As she came back to Lucas standing in front of her, all she could think about was throwing her arms around him. But how would that look since they hadn't seen each other in more than five years? Not a day went by that he wasn't on her mind, but she couldn't just say that out loud. Not seeing him for the first time at least, so she said with a bit of mischief in her eyes, "Of course you'd be here playing hockey in the middle of a blizzard."

He grinned, answering, "You know me, a little bit of snow never hurt anyone."

"A little! You're more than INSANE to be out here when it's what? Nearly below zero!?" she grinned back at him, shaking her head.

He chuckled, "You always did love the cold though."

She looked at him through her eyelashes, speaking softly, "Only because someone was playing hockey."

He grinned, but played dumb as he said, "Good old Rocky? I knew you always had a thing for that guy, couldn't take your eyes off him for a minute. No wonder he always got nervous when you'd come to any of our games, much less practices!"

"Oh really? Then how come he never told me this?" she asked, lifting an eyebrow.

He looked up at the sky as more snowflakes came down around them. "Maybe because he's not the one your eyes went to every time he went out on the ice."

He looked at her with that look of longing when he had first given her his jacket to wear back in high school. Man, how she missed those days.

She looked up as the snowflakes came down, meeting his eyes as she spoke, "I could always tell when you came out to skate. You would go back and give our goalie a fist bump before every period. You skated with such agility and quickness, nobody could ever get past you or take you down. But when you looked up at me in the bleachers, you don't even know the effect you had on me. How could my eyes not go immediately to you then? You were my everything, you were..." Home, she was about to say, but she looked away from his eyes that always made her say more than she knew she should as the pain set in from not seeing him everyday for the last five plus years.

He skated closer to her, until he was right in front of her. He put his Bauer glove underneath her chin, as he raised her face up to meet his eyes. She saw so many emotions when her eyes met his always captivating sky blue ones. He whispered, "I should have never left. I ended up shattering my knee and had to come home without you anywhere close by."

She swallowed as she spoke softly against the breeze, "I heard that you had shattered your knee and," she looked down with regret, "And I didn't think you wanted to see me, so I didn't come home to you. I didn't come back home... to you." She looked back up into his eyes and if he didn't kiss her right then she didn't know what she would do.

He brought his other glove around her neck, pulling her to him in only the way he could as his lips met hers. She tangled her mittens around his neck as he bent to kiss her and she breathed in his scent that she had longed for way too long.

He backed her up to the ledge and pressed his firm hockey body against her small frame. His hands went to her waist as he pulled her in closer. She brought his face closer to hers, scared that he would let go. Too soon had he pulled away, but only to breathe heavily as he said, "Only you could have this effect on me Emma. It was always you, you have always been home to me."

He captured her lips with his and it didn't matter if she made it back to her house because she had home right there in her arms and that's all that mattered. After all this time, maybe they just needed a little blizzard magic to bring them back home to each other after all.