



1 The North Wind

Last time a powerful North Wind blew across Kelly Lake, strange things happened. And the winter when Tara turned ten years old, the North Wind blew sharp, and the lake froze solid by Thanksgiving. Old-timers from the village warned everyone to take care.

On the coldest morning that Tara and her sisters could remember, the North Wind scattered snow swirls through the frigid air, coating everything with powdery white crystals. Tara and Kristen huddled together, waiting at the school bus stop near their house on Kelly Lake.

“You look like a penguin, T,” said Kristen.

“I do, don’t I?” Tara admitted, answering to her family’s sometimes-nickname for her. “My coat is warm, and this scarf Grandma knitted for me is the perfect match for it. You’re jealous because Mowgli ate your scarf.”

Kristen laughed. Tara was right, as usual. Their crazy cat liked gnawing on everything he could get his paws on.

“Think we’ll play outside at recess today?” Kristen asked, stomping her boots to keep her toes warm.

“We’ll have to stay in until that wind stops.”

“Bor-ing.”

Tara agreed, dreading long days stuck indoors. She kept thinking about her new scooter stored in the basement. A red racer she got for her birthday just last week. She couldn’t wait for her first ride, but Daddy said not until spring, after the snow melted.

“Finally!” Kristen said, pointing to the bus easing toward them on their icy street.

“Sit with me? We’ll wrap in Grandma’s scarf to stay warm,” Tara said, as the bus carried them away into morning’s first light.

But the North Wind never let up that day. It roared even louder once school let out.

Despite the chill, Tara’s house overlooking Kelly Lake stayed warm and cozy.

Tara’s long, black hair swirled as she tossed her head and darted between snowflakes to reach the front door and the warmth of Mama’s wood stove. Tara’s green eyes glittered like ice sparkles off the lake when she smiled and stepped inside.

As oldest sister, she smiled a lot, especially when she helped her family.

She helped middle sister Kristen pour milk into Mowgli’s cat bowl without spilling.

She showed little sister Jenna the best way to find straight-edged borders for the tricky jigsaw puzzles Jenna loved putting together.

And Daddy never found his car keys without her. So, it was only natural for Tara to claim the front seat in the family car.



That afternoon, everyone stayed close to the wood stove to keep warm.

“T, look what I can do with this new drawing app,” said Kristen, flipping her tablet around to show Tara her latest piece of art.

Then Jenna tapped Tara gently on the shoulder. “Can you help me figure out this tricky jigsaw puzzle?” she wanted to know.

Tara kept busy helping her sisters. But even after Tara finished her homework, she kept thinking about that new scooter.

She sighed. Waiting was hard. Especially after being cooped up indoors forever.

“Why don’t you visit your scooter?” suggested Kristen after Tara sighed for the forty-eleventh time.