

# Child's Tales

by Breanna Seale

“Allie, not so fast. You’re going to fall.”

She slipped across the newly frosted ice, gliding in quite an ungraceful way.

“If we don’t hurry, we won’t find the Slipping Woman, Jennin.”

I couldn’t help but roll my eyes. Allie was thirteen now, too old to be chasing after child’s tales. Mother wouldn’t let her ‘explore’ if I didn’t go with her, especially with the notorious thin ice coming back. Someone had already died.

“Jennin, you need to hurry. She hangs around the abandoned house at noon. If we miss her, we’ll have to come back tomorrow.”

It was enough to make me faster, despite my frosty bones. We trekked through heavy layers of snow, arriving at the burnt house that still stood in its tattered spot. The ground seemed permanently stained with ash, and the remnants of the home still reflected its once grandeur. Allie dashed to the ruins, sifting through piles of heavy debris and sifting past rusted nails and splintered wood piles. She quickly took to attempting to climb the wobbly structure, oblivious or else uncaring to the shudders that racked whatever she touched.

“Allie, stop that. You are going to get yourself killed, and mom would be furious if I let you get hurt.”

She didn’t listen, and only bothered to shoot me a stuck out tongue.

“Seriously Allie, you need to get down now. I’m getting really tired of this.” Her stubbornness was infuriating, and she nimbly reached what was left of the second floor of the mansion.

“They say if you can retrieve her wishing stone, she’ll be your friend. How cool would it be to have a ghost friend? C’mon, lighten up, Jennin. You’re such a stick in the mud. Relax.”

Just as I began to threaten her into coming down, a crack echoed through the forest. The two story ruins began to crumble with Allie screaming at the top. Panic raced through me coupled with helplessness. My heart stopped and all I could hear was silence. A rustle behind the home was like a firecracker on a silent night. Flaming hair poked up from snow’s cushion, Allie’s flaming red hair.

“That was awesome, Jennin!”

I rushed over, yanking Allie out of the snow and back to the house. She could have died and it was my fault for letting her do something so dangerous. After ten minute of a silent walk, Allie spoke up again.

“I didn’t think it would break. Don’t be so mad, I’m fine. Promise not to tell mom?”

My only response is a narrow eyed sideways glance. She decides to pipe up again after a few minutes.

“Fine. Well, look what I got. The wishing stone...”

She pulled a see-through marble from her pocket I ripped it from her palm infuriated.”

“You know what? That’s wonderful Allie! You nearly got yourself killed for a marble. Congratulations. I have to constantly make sure you don’t make too big of a mess chasing after your stupid stories. I wish I didn’t have to babysit you like you were a child!”

I chucked the marble at the ground, hoping it would shatter the meaningless trinket. Instead, small cracks began to form on the ice, I hadn’t realized we were on. Allie stomped her feet, making the cracks wider.

“Don’t do that Allie!”

I barked sharply, and she retaliates with another stomped foot, shattering the thin ice beneath us. A rushed scream escapes her as I reflexively shove her away. She slides across the ice and onto the solid ground. I can’t control my movement now, and I’m slipping uncontrollably across the shattering pond. I skitter my feet, but it only makes my fate more definite. A crack races towards me, leaving me helpless to the deadly waters beneath.

Suddenly, a woman is in front of me. Her gallant dress of deep purples and stunning blue trails behind her, ending at torn edges. She moves with a purpose, something you only ever find in the wise and aged. She raised her hand and the ice reacts listening to her commands. Somehow, the once exposed water freezes again. Allie gasps and sobs. Once the pond is restored with deadly thin ice and a marble resting in the middle. The ethereal woman turns to me. Her eyes are hidden behind long bangs, but strong eyes still make contact.

“Goodbye.”

In the time it takes for my heart to jump, she is gone. I scurry to the middle of the pond, pocketing the marble. Allie is still crying.

“I’m so sorry, Jennin, I’m so sorry. You could have died because of me. I’m sorry Jennin. I won’t drag you out on these stupid trips anymore, I promise. I’m sorry.

My eyes are wide as I stumble off the ice, in a daze.

“It’s okay, Allie, it’s okay. I don’t want you to change. You saved me, with your silly child’s tales.”