**SnowBound**

**By Shannon Mc Menamy – 10S**

I sat up abruptly, my heart beat increasing. I presumed that it was my parents coming back to get something they had left behind. I pulled a sour expression on my face so when my parents entered the tent they would see I was bored. Minutes passed. I sat agitated. Nobody had come into the tent.Frustrated, I viciously pulled back the thin flap to the tent and exclaimed, “What are you doing!” I peered at the empty land around me -there was not a soul in sight. Then I heard a faint whimpering. The air was icy cold and stung to the touch but I was oblivious to this. I clutched my boots and rapidly jumped out of the tent to locate the unnerving sound, oblivious to the icy frost which clung to me like a blanket.

As I trudged through the thick blanket of snow that engulfed what was once grass, I could just about make out a figure in the distance where a misty silhouette was treading through the snow. His features gradually became noticeable. He was a young boy, around twelve. He has smooth, fair skin and hair black like the night. He has tremendous eyes, a deep blue like an ocean, but still, there was a hint of lilac. His eyes were exquisite eyes that would lure you in and put you in a hypnotic like trance. They were kind eyes, trusting eyes. Despite his engaging eyes and prepossessing appearance, he was sobbing and was trembling with fear.

“Are you okay!” I exclaimed wrapping a coat around his chilled shoulders.

”I‘m Ian, I’m lost, take me home please I will show you where I live, I’m scared “he mumbled weakly.

 I tried to ask him further questions but he stayed silent. He kept a blank expression on his face but now there was a hint of fear in his eyes. Hesitantly I agreed to take him home. He pointed weakly to a large thicker of trees ahead I presumed that’s where he lived, I packed some of the needed equipment as we began to walk into the woods. I took the boy’s hand for warmth, but it was completely raw. It felt cold, numb …….. dead.

We had been walking for roughly ten minutes now, just stepping over branches watching out for animal droppings and looking for any lights to appear in the distance. My thoughts were racing, “Who is this boy? Why won’t he speak? Will I get lost?” I hastily reassured myself on the last question as my family came to the site every year to “enjoy the fresh air“ as my father like to say. I knew the whole site, every nook and cranny - snow, sun any weather I could still find my way across the lake, woods, mountains, anywhere. The musty smell of turf and fire drifted over our nose every once in a while. It was beginning to get dark, the sun began to set.

On our walk we had encountered many animals, squirrels, rabbits all sorts of creatures but while the creatures chirped and mumbled, Ian did not, he didn’t say one word throughout those past fifteen minutes. Then something strange happened, Ian was trudging through the snow when he stumbled and fell over a tree stump, I ran and picked him up, he had cut his hand on the tree bark that had left a large gash on his hand with blood dripping from his hands on to the floor below, Ian kept the emotionless look on his face the whole time, Alarmed I turned away to get a leaf to apply pressure and stop the bleeding. When I spun back around to aid to his wound I halted in disbelief, the gash wasn’t there. It was gone, vanished. When I questioned him about it, he shrugged his shoulder, wiped his hand carelessly on his trousers and continued waking, I was mystified. Horrified I ran up to him interrogating him on the incident which he seemed to shrug off. I decided to stop asking questions as the deathly silence was worse than any answer. I kept my distance for the rest of the journey, reluctantly taking his hand to climb over big rocks and branches. Then as we went thicker into the woods, everything switched. The trees shadowed over our heads, the snow seemed to have distorted the ground and the area beyond the trees was no longer visible, I began to feel slightly alone but most of all.. lost.

As the darkness grew thicker my anxiety seemed to shoot up like a thermometer, it was cold and eerie, the darkness stared back at us and the silence was deafening. At this point I didn’t know how we were ever going to find the house, never mind how I was going to get out of the forest. I felt trapped. Apprehensively, I continued to tread through the never ending woods when a sinister feeling dawned on me, someone was watching us. Paranoia began to get the best of me, every sound, breath, step would have me on high alert, I felt that I was going insane until, a large rustle came from the once exotic plant that was now covered in ice, terrified I leaped to my feet and pulled Ian with me. I quickly lifted up a mouldy stick and began waving it around, looking like a complete idiot as I was doing so, then everything went still for just a minute, the leaves didn’t sway in the wind, the snow didn’t scrunch, everything sat still, beautiful, frozen. Just as I was admiring the calm scenery and the glimmering stars a boy leaped from the bushes with dirt smeared across his cheeks, he looked foolish. He had brown hair with a streak of light blonde, he had brown eyes and a dangling earring in one ear.

“Who are you!” I exclaimed, trying to sound intimidating.

“Oh, my name is Gray,”he mumbled.

“Oh uh hi, what are you doing out here?”

He explained that he was looking for a ghost of a boy, the boy was apparently killed by an animal in these woods and the owner of the animal burned the boy’s body to destroy the evidence, legend had it that the boy is oblivious to the fact that he is dead and he wants to be taken home so he can be set free. I stood dead. Staring blankly at the him, how stupid could he be? Ghosts weren’t real, everyone knew that. Gray scanned the area, he met eyes with Ian, he looked long and hard at him until he let out a loud gasp throwing his hands into the air, sending his earring up flying off into the snow.

Gray whispered to himself for a few moments then finally said “Um, where are you going?”

“Well I’m taking this boy home, he’s lost.” I snapped.

His eyes grew wider and wider he eagerly offered to come with us to ‘protect’ us, but I didn’t believe it at all. I was so puzzled with Gray’s interest with Ian, I didn’t understand, I must have denied his request thirty times until I gave up and agreed to let him come with us. Gray began to question Ian on his background and shocking, Ian was replying eagerly, what was happening? As we began to walk again, I ran ahead to get Gray’s earring. As I kneeled down I saw an old newspaper. It was about the boy who had been killed in the woods -was killed on this day 6 years ago.

As I began to read further, I stopped dead, unable to believe what I was reading, the boy’s name was Ian, not only that, they had included a photo … It WAS Ian!

We began to walk, Gray walked beside me and Ian a few steps ahead. Surprisingly, Gray was quite helpful, helping me over branches, holding back leaves for me, in fact he was quite caring, which is something I never would have anticipated, as we kept waking further, I desperately wanted to drown Ian with questions, but it took all of my willpower not to do it, it wasn’t the time, I told myself. As we were walking, a thick, musty fog spread across our feet as the fog swirled round our feet, a black sillouhette seemed to form in the bushes, it didn’t appear to be a person it looked more like an animal. The figure didn’t faze me or Gray, we had seen multiple animals it would have been strange if we didn’t see any. Although we were fine, Ian seemed rattled by this figure, his eyes were no longer beautiful and kind, they were desperate and worried - his face was no longer blank, was frightened. Shaking he grabbed my hand and hid behind me and Gray. What was wrong?

The figure emerged, it was a wolf. It had red beady eyes and had spit slowly slipping out of his mouth, He bared his teeth wide as he began make a low rumbled growl. At this point I was a little anxious but Ian was petrified; he was completely shaken and his face had lost all colour that once filled his face. His eyes were clear , transparent, tense. It was like I could see into his soul and I saw, fear . As we began to slowly move away from the monstrous creature, it began moving slowly towards us, making sudden movements and slow action. All of a sudden it sat still, calm, peaceful. As we began to relax and slowly move away it leaped, flying, its paws through the air, growling viciously at us. We bolted and began to run like our lives depended on it, because they did.

We ran for miles, my side ached and my breath was unstable, I didn’t care, we ran and we ran and we ran. We didn’t stop until we came to a large oak tree covered in glistening snow and breathtaking ice shapes stringing from it branches. The wolf was gone, but our problems weren’t over. It began to heat up, I thought it was from all the running but then it grew warmer and warmer eventually the heat was unbearable, sweat lashed out of Gray and the terror In Ian’s eyes was the strongest it had ever been. I felt hot coals against my arm, the panic set it. I turned to find a blazing fire, raging and burning everything around it. It spread fast. I pulled Ian and Gray and again we began to run. The violent flames were hard to escape. What was happening? Random fires? Wolf attacks? It was all too much.

After miles and miles of running, we reached a long narrow path with cobblestone bricks, Ian smiled bravely, “We are here, just down this path.”

Thank god, finally. I had been so shaken up from everything that had just occurred I was just ready to get home. Morning was beginning to arrive and I couldn’t have been happier to see the sun. We began to walk along the path. I would be a little sad to leave Gray and Ian but at this point it was all too much. Finally we reached an empty piece of land, There were some old ruins of what I assumed was once a house.

“Is this a joke!” I yelled agitated.

 “Calm down Jenny.” reasoned Gray. I was infuriated, I had come all this way, endured all this trouble just to come a house that didn’t exist anymore! I looked round at Ian, he was confused but overall sad.

I put it together, the newspaper, the wound, the wolf, the fire, the picture… it was all finally coming together. Earlier wasn’t the time but now was the time.

“You’re dead Ian!” I exclaimed. I didn’t mean for it to come out like that I was just so annoyed I couldn’t hold it anymore, Gray’s head spun round as he watched eagerly like a child at a movie.

 Ian looked blankly at me, “What?” he questioned softly,

“You know, but it’s okay. You just needed someone to set you free. You can be free.” I said trying to comfort him. “How did you die?” I asked.

He stared blankly for a while, I didn’t know if he would ever speak. The silence was deafening.

Eventually he began, “I used to live here, I went into the woods to play with my friends who lived in the campsite, a wolf attacked me, I wasn’t fully dead. The owner came out. He didn’t want anyone to take away his wolf or to make him pay money for my death, so he burned me, I have been trapped here for years. I needed to be home at peace. My parents moved away soon after. They burned the house at it reminded them of me, I’m sorry for the trouble but now I can be at peace,” he explained.

I stared at him wide eyed. Although it was crazy, I understood, I looked round at Gray, a tear filled his eyes. Ian and I said goodbye, I didn’t expect him to walk into a bright white light or any of that stuff from the movies, he just walked into the woods, but I knew where he was really going, we all did.

Gray and I have been close ever since. They moved back home beside me. Everyone thinks we are just good friends that met on a camping trip but we know the truth. Yes we did meet at on a camping trip, but it all started with a boy, one boy, who would watch over us

forever ….