

A Thousand Miles Away

by Kyle Hemmings

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She was strolling in the park, thinking about her son, a thousand miles away. He died when she was young enough to still dream snow babies. If she could stop time, wrench seasons from the cycle, what would he look like? A perfect ice sculpted child who wouldn't melt with a rise in temperature? Around her were trees reduced to their skeletons: dogwoods, windbreaks, spruce, perennials in the shape of spires. She took the long way home.

In the house by a kidney-shaped lake, her grandfather was speaking to a stranger about a foreign war that had never ended, had spread close to home. His wife's hands, he said, were so lifeless after he had returned. The insides of her palms, he said, no longer resembled tributaries, supply routes.

Sipping a cup of tea made from rose hips and ginger root, she walked in on their conversation. "What about the war orphans?" she said. "There must be a whole country of them."

The stranger turned and studied her. His face was white as her tea cup.

She stood peering over their heads, out the window. The snow fell in clumps from the trees. The snow fell in clumps. The snow fell.

