

Winter Wonderland

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Jasper stared out his window and sighed a giant sigh that started at the tips of his toes, travelled all the way up his body and escaped through his mouth with a giant **whoosh.**



It was January. But it was hot and sunny. *Again.*

Jasper couldn't stand it anymore. He went into the spare bedroom and opened the closet, which he hadn't looked inside since they'd moved to this place eight months ago. He rummaged through the outgrown clothes, fondue pots, old puzzles and games with missing pieces until he found what he wanted. He pulled on his snow pants and parka, then jammed his feet into his snow boots. He put on mittens, a toque and a pair of ski goggles. Finally, he filled his arms with everything else he needed and headed outside.



When Jasper got to the backyard, his older brother, Milton, was floating on an inflatable chair in the pool, sipping lemonade. Milton stared up at him, open-mouthed.

"Why are you dressed like that?" he asked.

"Because it's winter," Jasper said.

Milton looked doubtful. "It doesn't feel like winter," he said.

Jasper struggled to attach snowshoes to his boots, then he began tromping around the backyard.

"Don't snowshoe on my orchids," their mom called from her pool lounge chair. "I couldn't grow orchids when we lived up north. I don't want you trampling these ones."

"Why are you wearing snowshoes anyway?" Milton asked.

"Because it's fun to wear snowshoes in winter," Jasper said. Then he tripped and fell flat on his face.

"It doesn't look very fun," Milton said.

Jasper yanked off the snowshoes and attached skis to his boots. He tried to glide across the yard. It was less a glide and more an awkward stumble. He kept going until he fell flat on his face again.

"Is skiing also fun in winter?" Milton asked.

"Are you both wearing sunscreen?" their mom asked.

"Yes!" Jasper said. It sounded more like a shout. A really frustrated shout.

Jasper pulled off his skis, grabbed his toboggan and walked up the small hill in their backyard.

"Watch out for the palm trees!" their mom called.



Jasper sat on the toboggan. He wiggled his bottom, urging the sled to move. It slid forward a few centimetres, then halted. Jasper shifted from side to side until the toboggan began sliding forward again. It worked up just enough speed to run right into a lawn chair.

Milton opened his mouth to ask a question. When he saw the look on Jasper's face, he closed it again.

Jasper yanked off his boots and pulled on his ice skates. He grabbed his hockey stick and began hitting a puck around the yard. He imagined he was Sidney Crosby, scoring the winning goal in the Stanley Cup. But he might have been a little less coordinated than Crosby. Skating in grass was tricky.

"You look like our cousin Isabel learning to walk," Milton said.

"Don't hit the orchids!" their mom called.

Jasper tripped and fell. For a while he lay with his face in the grass and thought about home—the home they used to live in, up north, before they moved. With a sigh, he sat up and trudged into the house.

When Milton found him, Jasper was sitting in the kitchen, sipping hot chocolate.

"Want some lemonade instead?" Milton asked. Jasper kept sipping.

Jasper had run out of ideas. After he finished his hot chocolate, he slowly took off his winter gear and stuffed it back into the closet. It was obvious he wouldn't need these things anymore. The thought made him want to cry. How was he going to make friends when there wasn't even a hockey team here?

Jasper shivered. A chilly breeze ruffled the curtains, so he slid the window shut and crawled into bed.

The next morning, Jasper got up and went to the window, but he couldn't see outside. He pulled it open and looked out at the yard. Snow! It was snowing! It hadn't snowed in this southern town in 20 years!

Then he heard voices coming from the yard next door.

"Wow, it's snowing!" a girl said. It was his neighbour Cara.

"Brrr! I guess we can't go to the beach today," said her brother, Miles. "I'm not sure what we can do in the snow."

Jasper thrust his head out the window and shouted, "You won't believe all the things you can do in the snow! And I can show you!"

He ran to get his winter gear and hurried to join his neighbours outside.

"Hop on my toboggan, guys! We're going to have so much fun in the snow!" And that's exactly what they did.

