

McMinnville Public Library Winter Short Story Contest

*Shadow Secrets*

*By: Julia*

A blanket of fresh snow covered the bodies. The abandoned figures were in the deepest shadows of the yard, hidden from the casual passerby. Alone in their frozen corner, hidden by the darkness of the night, the images from a forgotten day took shape. They had been there so long that it was hard to tell what they had originally looked like. Their faces drooped, their limbs, lifeless as they were, sagged further than the days before. The heat of the sun followed by frozen nights had contorted what began as a father and son.

The person who was responsible for leaving the lifeless figures there had long since disappeared. To him it was just a game, a pastime of sorts. Something he had done before. The house nearby sat empty. No one had been there in days, not a single footprint was visible in the new fallen snow. A lonely silence lay across the yard.

The street was a quiet one. At times of the year, it was vibrant. Bustling with activity, the snow brought visitors from all over. People normally trapped in their offices, chained to their tedious lives, found freedom in the new fallen snow. Children laughed and played in the frosty wonderland. Christmas came and went with the amount of people careening down the busy sidewalks causing the walkways to nearly burst at the seams.

The square in the center of town was a gathering place for many, especially on the weekends. The heart of the village was lined with shops that promised keepsakes and trinkets that once home would soon be forgotten but at the time seemed like priceless treasures. At night, the thousands of lights twinkling below competed with nature's own lightscape as the day refused to give itself to the night.

The backdrop for the festivities that inevitably came and went each week were the mountains that surrounded the town. They rose majestically like silent guardians, stoically surveying the revelry below. Quiet witnesses of things forgotten and things to come.

The vibrance of the winter swell contrasted with the scene at hand. April signaled the end of the activity. The season change was marked by quiet streets, warmer days and a lull that left the whole town holding it's breath.

It was the perfect setting for the scene about to unfold.

As the sun rose, the quiet street yawned. A lone car came down the lane heading for the only house at the end of the street. As the car's lights rounded the bend they illuminated the snow covered drive.

It was the child in the back who spotted them first. The headlights reflected off the garage door and back into the yard. In the far corner, there was something gleaming in the dark. It appeared to be a shovel tossed to the side of the drive. And there they were. The frozen duo staring blankly at the drive, their blackened eyes seeing nothing.

The boy jumped out of the car, ran to the snowmen and marveled at their intricacies. The pair appeared frozen in time, the larger with a top hat and the smaller with a baseball cap to the side. Both fearlessly faced the drive, welcoming the boy to stay and play a while...