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From the Window

by Alison Fry

From the window all that can be seen is a blanket of white. The tent flaps wildly as the blizzard batters us, showing the full fearsome force of Everest enraged. There is nothing to be done but sit tight and wait it out. We were due to make our way back to Base Camp following our acclimatisation trek to Camp 1 but to go out in this weather would be tantamount to suicide.

Tenzing Sherpa brews some tea, warming the tent a little. I miss feeling warm. I can't wait to get back to Base Camp and bathe in the afternoon sun.

Cal is still asleep but Johnny has woken and sees me shiver.

"It will pass soon," he offers, without me asking, "I give it an hour before we can start making our way down."

"Do they scare you?" I ask.

"The blizzards?" he responds curiously, "when we're prepared, not at all. When they hit you unexpectedly they're terrifying." He says this without a hint of fear, though, more with an excited glint in his eye. But then you have to thrive on risk to make it here.

As if someone has flipped a switch it all goes quiet. The tent is no longer being pummelled by the wind, merely stroked by snowflakes. The sun breaks through the clouds. It is beautiful.

"See!" smiles Johnny. For a mere second there is just he and I, caught in a glorious moment of serenity. I break eye contact. There is enough danger on the mountain without the risks involved in acknowledging the tingle of butterflies spreading through my stomach.

The moment passed Johnny claps his hands. "Rise and shine gang," he shouts, "time to get back to Base!"

No-one seems very enthusiastic today. Between the bone-chilling cold and the noise from the blizzard sleep hasn't been easily found. We sip quietly on Sherpa tea, nibble on chocolate and begin pulling on our boots. I keep catching Johnny's eye. I don't want to keep looking but I can't help it, it's as though some kind of magnet is drawing us towards one another. For me the tent is empty of everyone except he and I.

I imagine what it would be like to be alone on the mountain with Johnny, just the two of us, reaching for the summit. I'm pulled out of my reverie as Cal grabs me roughly from behind and whispers embarrassingly loudly in my ear, "I cannot wait to get you alone in the tent back at Base Camp."

I force a coquettish smile and bat his hand away playfully. "Behave Cal!" I chastise, "at least until we get back," I add with a wink. I must remember that *this* is my life. I'm here to save my marriage, not slip away into a fantasy.

As Johnny unzips the tent my nose tickles as a waft of frosty air hits. My eyes squint at the bright sunlight. I step out, enjoying the crunch of fresh snow underfoot, and excitedly begin the trek back to the Camp that I've learned to see as home.