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Frozen

by Mari Syrad Grieves

When I wake up the other side of the bed is cold. Your body can no longer warm it; instead your icy skin sticks to the sheets which become damp as the sun begins to light the room. I try to keep the it cool; I quickly pull the curtains and crank up the fan on your bedside table. "I will keep you safe," I promise. I assume you can hear me: your eyes follow me even though you're caught, rigid, in the last position you laid your beautiful form. You cannot speak.

Months later, I'm woken in the middle of the night, startled by a crackling sound and pressure in my lungs. I see smoke funnelling hungrily under the bedroom door. The room is hot, I cover my nose and mouth. Fire. Fire! 'Oh my god.' I reach for you, your fingers slick with water. Terrified, I try to lift you from the bed where you have been a prisoner for almost a year. Your body, usually solid and cloudy white becomes translucent as the heat takes you. I cannot lift you. You slip from my grasp. My usually delicate handling of you is impossible now and I snap your fingers in the struggle. I can't breathe.

I get a hold on you; I have never been so strong as in that moment. I drag you to the window as the house begins to fall apart. With the fire growling ferociously at the door, I lean your dripping shoulder against the window frame and wrap your diminishing form in the duvet. Climbing out onto the window ledge, I take a deep lungful of air. I know that once I begin to pull you through, we're going down and I must keep you safe. At the mercy of the inferno, I look to the ground and with my arms around you, we fall.