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Ice Maiden

by Vera Gajic

I stole her heart away and put ice in its place, at least that is what SHE says and it's why she is shutting me out of her life and our son's life. I will pay dearly for leaving her.

When she wouldn't answer her phone for the twentieth time I went round and wouldn't leave until she answered the door, ringing the bell every 20 seconds like an annoying alarm. I figured she couldn't stand it for long but I was there an hour before she relented and opened the door; she just stared at me, as if she had turned into the ice maiden she'd always been. Maybe her heart was made of Ice but it had been long before I left her. It was why I left her, but no way was she having any of it, there must be someone else, there wasn't.

Two can play at this game I thought and just stared back at her for what felt like an age, stock still, as if we'd both frozen on the screen of life. Bit like that game we played as kids, who'll blink first. I did of course, couldn't keep it up (ha ha in more ways than one she'd have gloated if she talked) but no not a word. I started blubbing on about my right to see my kid and my kid's right to see me and how this would affect him for the rest of his life, but I gradually ran out of steam. as if my engine had no coal left for my puff. I ground to a halt.

God she was tough and cold, freezing bloody cold. Was that what attracted me to her in the first place, the challenge to melt her, soften her edges, as if she was an iceberg broken off from the Artic shelf, looking for something to sink. I was her Titanic; I thought I could melt her before she tore into me. I thought I could reflect the sun so intensely on her with my love that the ice couldn't stay whole.

Nearly melted I remember thinking when she fell pregnant and I asked her to marry me. I wasn't sure she'd say yes but she did and the future looked bright and warm as if all the halogen heater lights had been turned on. I soon forgot about her icy side and all was going well until Jack was born, then the ice returned, gripped her like a vice. Her face started to change, got paler and sharper and lines began to appear as if, someone had skated around on her forehead, they looked deeper every day.

Post natal depression I thought, keep calm and emit warmth but the more warmth I emitted the colder and more brittle she became. Everything I did or said was wrong, even the way I walked and talked was not to her liking. It was as if she thought she'd married a prince charming and had been woken from the dream by the birth of our child to find ordinary me. I could see she would never respond to my warm glow again. In fact my ability to glow at all was diminishing, as if she was turning my dimmer switch. I realised I had to leave before she switched it off completely.

"You were an ice maiden when I met you and you've returned to your natural state, I can't help you," I said and turned away.

Did I hear a sob before the door closed. I couldn't be sure.