

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## Cold

by Rosalyn Hurst

Well now, one winter it was so cold that all the schools closed for a whole week. The old people muttered constant warnings to keep the children indoors, for their lungs probably would freeze if they played out in the street and certainly if they rode their bikes around the houses, along the silent deserted streets.

The week started with a huge snowstorm, the like of which had not been seen for years. The snow did not fall like gentle kisses, promising sledding, snowball fights and fun, but lashed down with menace, piling into doorways, crushing roofs, imprisoning the anxious, killing the vulnerable. And when it ceased, there was always the implicit threat of a more violent return. Silence fell on the city, broken only by brief cries of babies, quickly hushed in case it attracted the wolves that surely must be on their way down the mountains, the pack cautiously skirting the avalanches, leaping from rock to rock, following the sheltered trails, their movement hushed deep snow.

The second day was more malevolent, the cold unnoticed for the sun rose to a brilliant sky, and the mountain outside the city was bathed in glorious pink; shadows glistened in deep black and vibrant blues. There was movement in those lights, like a tribal skirt twirling in the wedding dance. The ice shone down, glistening from the mountain ledges, just as the bride adorned with long earrings, falling like icicles, moved arms and fingers to catch the light on her bangles and bracelets. The citizens were entranced, as they looked to this spectacle of the morning light, bewitched as surely any evil spell could cast. 'Be careful, stay inside' the warnings continued. 'Do not be deceived, the temperature is dropping,'

But some did venture to clear the snow from the door, or to stamp a path to the baker. And the baker, always sensing an opportunity had fired up his ovens, and did indeed customers crept out, some for bread and many just for warmth. And that sly lugubrious trader, just made the flat loaves a little smaller for the old price, but no one dared complain.

The third day brought real danger. Where the sun from the day before had hit one side of a street that had for an hour or two been sheltered from the winds, the snow had melted, then froze. Sheets of ice now covered the pavements, the roads, smooth as any surface prepared for Olympic winter ice skating, but as dangerous to cars, regardless of their ice tyres, their snow chains, and lethal to any one on foot. Fear gripped the city as surely and slowly as the shards of ice that broke from the high roofs and shattered on the streets below.

The baker looked out from his doorway as cars slid in a macabre dance, sometimes avoiding each other and more often not, the drivers staring with intensity through the windscreen as if they could move any obstacle in their way by the power of thought. 'On their way to the hospital all with passengers,' thought the baker for even the ambulances were reluctant to move from the safe haven of their garage.

On the fourth day around noon, a sound penetrated the northern parts of the city. It was unusual for the street curs to start their calling at this hour. And in no time at all those domestic pets took up the cry, from burly Alsations to miniature poodles all started the same calls. The baker looking out from his silent shop, turned towards the mountain.

"They are on their way,' he muttered, "drop down the shutters, close and bolt the doors, but keep the oven warm."

The assistant hesitated, he had never known the baker close up before the usual hour, and for his hesitation got a cuff around the ear, followed by a gentle, "go home now lad and make sure all the children are inside."

On the fifth day, paw prints encircled the little baker's stall. The baker was found dead beside the cold oven, money box, like a block of ice, in his arms.