

STARRY NIGHT

By: Williamina Deneault

The snow falls gently on my boots and I look up at the sky. I sit on the cold sidewalk; my nose is cold and probably as red as Rudolph's nose. The tips of my fingers have gone numb. People walk by me and I can tell they notice me but they pretend that they don't. My sign hangs over my knees and I wonder if they notice what is written on it. The people walking by don't even know me... they probably think I'm just a run of the mill teenager that caused trouble at home so I got kicked out. What do they know about me? The truth is that they read me before they even take a closer look, just like the other kids at my school used to do. The truth is that I'm alone, hungry and cold.

My name is Isabella Bernard. My few friends used to call me Izzy, but now I'm alone. I ran away from home after my Dad died and my Mom didn't know what to do except drink and go out with guys who treated her badly. One day in June, I was getting ready for school when my Mom and her then boyfriend, Jeff, got in another argument. I could tell he was obviously drunk and that he didn't care what he did or what happened. He started yelling at me and my Mom was crying in the background. She had a bleeding nose and I could tell he had hit her. I saw her shriveled up in the corner and as he yelled more and more I went for him. I took his arm and tried to swing him around, but he was stronger and pushed me to the ground, I tried to fight back but he was too big. I could hear my Mom in the background yelling at him, telling him to get off me, to leave me alone. He started hitting me and all I could see was my Mom coming up to him. She pulled him away from me and told me to runaway. I ran and as I ran all I could hear was my mom...

I've been on the run for 6 months now... I haven't turned back once. I've tried to go back to school but all I get is funny looks and I've missed so much school that I don't think I could ever catch up anyway. I used to love school, friends, and popularity... well at least I had friends. Now I'm cold, sick and hungry and all I can think about is where I'm going to sleep tonight.

Suddenly a woman walks by and hands me a shiny toonie. I thank her and she smiles. "The snow is beautiful... isn't it, dear?" "Yeah." "You take care dear." With that she walks out of site and the people start to disperse and the shops are starting to close. Time to find a place to sleep.

I find a shelter for homeless youths. Inside are a bunch of other teens lining up for food and some are sitting around in a circle on the floor. I see sleeping bags and the few belongings of some teens strung out around the room. I walk to the line and wait for my turn to be served. Although these teens may be homeless and hungry they look happy. I see a boy, about my age, sitting in the corner of the room. No one is talking to him and he is eating his food with a backpack next to him. I decide to go and talk to him, maybe he just needs a little prodding. I walk over and he looks up at me. He has bright blue eyes and his toque covers his hair so I can't see the color of his hair. His eyes pierce right

through me, but I still go up to him. "Hi... I saw you here all alone so-" "So I'm all alone and you can leave now." He goes back to eating his food and he doesn't look up again. I walk away and sit by myself in the opposite corner. Occasionally I can feel his eyes look up and over at me, but I pretend that I don't notice him. I finish the food, the mashed up peas and old carrots and stale rice cakes. I curl up with my sweater and jacket on top of me and I fall to sleep.

The sun rises through the windows and I can smell tobacco smoke and I can hear voices. I slowly open my eyes to see that the shelter is half-empty. I look at my watch and it says 1:30pm. I look across at the opposite corner and there sits the same quiet guy, he stares at me and winks. I get up and go over to the kitchen counter. "What would you like dear?" I look up and notice that it's the woman who gave me the toonie. "Oh... um can I have a coffee." "Oh well hello, I saw you yesterday didn't I?" "Yes." "Ok, well here you go, take care of your self." "Um excuse me?" "Yes dear?" "Could you tell me the name of that quiet guy in the corner," She looks over my shoulder and looks back to me, "Which boy dear?" I look to where the guy used to sit... but he's not there. I hear the door open and he walks out into the street. I run to grab my stuff and follow him out the door. Suddenly he turns around and says; "I was wondering when you were going to join me." "Oh..." He looks at me with his bright blue eyes and a smile comes to form at the corner of his mouth. "Sorry about last night, I thought you were like the others, you know... feeling sorry for your self and for me." "Yeah, that's ok." "You're different you know that don't you?" I look at him and he begins to walk, "Come on beautiful." I follow.

"Wow that was so much fun!" I look over at my new friend as he pulls out a lunch from his bag; "By the way," I ask him, "what's your name?" "Oh you can call me Jay." "Ok." "What's yours beautiful?" "Um... Izzy." He smiles and hands me a sandwich. "So you liked the snowball fight huh?" "Yeah... it sure beats being alone and having to beg for money that people won't give you anyway." He looks away and nods his head. I look up at the sky and I hear birds in the background. For the first time in a long time I feel happy and relaxed.

The shelter is packed and everyone is getting ready for New Years' Eve, the one event that makes everyone feel free and enjoyable. It's the best time of the year, because a year has gone by and you feel so happy that your still around and that you have a whole other year to change. Some people start to leave the shelter and others start to get ready to watch the old little TV. that sits on an old wooden table. Jay takes my hand and he pulls me out into the street where we can have full view of the concert and festivities going on. We listen to the band that plays and Jay holds me close to his side. I look up to the sky and I see the stars... the few that are out. Suddenly the band stops and Jay looks at me. "Maybe next year will be better. You know you're so beautiful." I look up at him and smile. Slowly the count down starts and Jay and I both join in. "10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1!" With that Jay kisses me and we hold each other tightly. For the first time in ages I feel happy and loved.

My name is Isabella Bernard. My friends call me Izzy and I am loved.