

# Cabin in the Cold Smoke

*Haven Andres*

The crackle of ice under the car tires, and the whistle of wind fill my ears as we roll along the frozen road. I stare blankly at the snow-capped mountain ranges and the iced-over treetops as they blur across my vision. I wipe down the fogged up car windows with my coat sleeve, Montana's forests and creeks coming into view.

"WOOHOOOO!!! Yeah, high score!!!!"

I jump in my seat and turn my head, gritting my teeth. "Grant..." I hiss, "Do you really need to scream out to the whole car every time you win at a video game?"

Grant swiveled his head to face me, his small fingers still tapping away on his iPod. "Well, you're not the boss of me, Olivia. So I don't have to listen to you." He smirked, straightening the zipper on his space cat hoodie.

I growl, and lurch forward, snatching up the iPod from Grant's hands. I wave the device right out of his reach and chuckle. "Who's the boss now??" He thrashes in his seat, reaching for the electronic. "Give it back, Olivia!!" Grant whines, his crimson bangs falling over his eyes.

"Why are we even going to a musty old cabin for winter break?" I snort, as Grant rips the iPod from my fingers. Mom turns to face us from the passenger seat, her green eyes sparking with irritation. I immediately regret asking.

"Because you and your brother spend way too much time with your eyes glued to the TV." She glares at the two of us in the back seat. "This is the perfect opportunity to spend time as a family. And just in time for the holiday season!" Mom beamed teeth and all.

"This better be worth all the time and money we're sacrificing for this 'Family-Bonding time', Emma." Dad retorted. I could see his brow furrowing in the rear-view mirror, panic quickly set in. "I could be in my office, working on my business offer for Realtors of America. But instead we we're going to some outmoded wood cabin with absolutely no nation-wide internet!"

"You already spend far more time online talking to your clients than you do talk to your own family, Travis." Mom snarled.

As Mom and Dad continued throwing around accusations, a twinkle of metal caught my eye. I turn my head to see a stout wooden sign on the edge of the road. *Silver Pine Lodging* was scrawled out in copper on the front.

"Guys, I think we're here."



I slumped onto the rickety bed inside our cabin as we finished bringing in the last of our luggage. “What luck!?” Squealed Grant. “We got cabin #13!!”

I roll my eyes. “Yeah, if you consider getting your soul eaten by a ghost lucky, then yes, we are.” I grin, sitting upright on the top bunk.

“What do you mean??” Grant squeaked, his tiny hands trembling.

“Have you never watched a horror movie? Every time it is the poor campers in cabin 13 that get haunted by the soul of a malevolent phantom and are forced to watch as they are killed off one by one.” I see the terror in my little brother’s eyes and I know it’s working. “And it’s always the little ones who go first.” I whisper.

Grant’s face pales, his eyes as wide as holiday strobe lights. “Mama.....” Grant whimpers as he runs and hides behind Mom. I double over, clutching my stomach as I laugh. Mom glares at me, and I clamp my hand over my mouth.

My eyes switch over to the glassy windows of the cabin overlooking the forestry beyond. I place my palms on the window, my breath steams across the surface of the window. A thick blanket of fresh snow covered the ground.

“What do you think that Inn keeper meant about a winter storm watch?” I questioned, turning to Mom and Dad.

“Oh, you know, just a few inches of snowfall over the night. Nothing to hinder us from the Montana Experience!” Mom declared, reciting a tacky quote on the *Silver Pines* visitor’s pamphlet. “Now, you two need to get into bed so we are rested for the first of our activities tomorrow.” She bent over and kissed each one of us on our foreheads. “Goodnight.”

Dad walks over, his phone raised to the ceiling, frustration written across his face. “Ugh.... No bars!” he hisses. Mom scowls in his direction, and suddenly elbows him in the side. “Ouch!!” Dad growls. Mom nods her head in our direction. “Oh, yeah. Night kids.” Mom rolls her eyes and switches off the kerosene lamp, dipping the cabin into the darkness of night.



Beams of shimmering morning light fill our petite cabin. I rub the sleep out of my eyes and groggily climb down from the top bunk and onto the wooden floor boards. No one else is up yet, so I

trudge over to the kitchen and pour a mug of coffee. I blow the steam away from the drink as I walk to the window. My eyes look to the window and my limbs turned to ice.

Snow did fall last night... ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP OF THE WINDOW!!!!

My coffee mug slips from my fingers and crashes onto the floor, echoing through the cabin. I hear sheets rustle behind me, and I turn my head. Dad sits up in his bed, eyes red under his creased eyebrows.

“What are you doing, Olivia.” He grumbles.

“We’re snowed in!!!!” I shriek, my voice wavering. Dad’s eyes bulge as he darts out of bed and over to the door. He clamps both hands on the door handle and rattles the bolt back and forth.

The door won’t budge.

Mom stands by her bed in her lavender colored bath robe, holding Grant’s hand. “Travis, what’s going on?” Asks Mom.

Dad turns to all of us, hands shaking. “We are snowed in.”

“WHAT?!?!?” Mom screams, pulling Grant closer to her.

“Are we going to stay stuck in this old cabin, FOREVER?!?” Grant cries, tears welling in his eyes. I step over to Grant and set my hand on his shoulder. “It’s going to be alright,” I reply, straining to make the claim as believable as possible.

I look over to the firewood crate beside the minute chimney. Stepping over the spilled coffee, I walk toward the crate. “Well, first things first, we should start a fi-.” I lift open the lid and panic swells inside of me. Dad walks over and stands next to me. “I don’t think three logs of wood would make much of a fire.”

“At least we have a little more for food.” Mom chimes in. We turn our heads in her direction. Mom stands by the pantry, pulling out items by the count. “A pint of steel cut oats, three cans of pinto beans, four packets of freeze-dried fruit and half a bottle of vitamins. Delicious.” The last comment lacked her notorious enthusiasm.

“And we are almost out of this sticky oil we put in the tiny lamps.” Grant declared, lifting up the kerosene vessel, the last bit of precious paraffin sloshing inside.

I look around at my family. Red eyes and shaking fingers, but here. As a family. For the first time, not screaming at each other or fighting to get their way since I can remember.

“Well,” I began quirking a smile, “If you’re looking for the Montana experience, I can’t think of a better one.”

Laughter breaks out through the cabin.



It has been seven days since the blizzard. We ran out of wood four days ago. Kerosene was used up two days ago. And we are to the point where we have to huddle together to keep warm, and we can only lick the remaining powder from the vitamin container for food. We had just about reached our wits end... then they came.

The rescue helicopter arrived to the lodges on Christmas Eve. What luck, right? I am willing to bet that coming in to retrieve a nearly starving family in the remote forest of Montana is about the most exciting thing they've done all day. Since the snow did not grant us the luxury of melting over the week, the rescue team had to hack their way through the walls with hatchets.

During the flight to the station, Mom and Dad asked the officers about how they knew about the storm and if they found anyone else. Grant and I mostly sat in silence.

"You know, Grant, this experience has made me realize that I haven't really been the older sister you should've deserved all these years." Grant lifted his head. Even through his tangled hair and tired eyes I saw my little brother. "You're the only sister I could ever want, Olivia." He squeaked.

Without thinking I pulled Grant into a tight embrace. Mom and Dad turned to look at us, smiling. They wrapped their arms around us, becoming a family once again.

