

# Daddy's Little Girl

*By J. J. Silvers*

The snow swirled around her feet as she stood in the shelter of the trees. The wind ripped through her coat. It was like no other winter she could remember. She had taken three, maybe four steps from the house. Now, she was lost. It had not been long, so she could not be that far from home. Trying to remember her last step and then the one before that, Ginger wiped the tears from her cheeks before they could freeze. Through the trees, she saw a glint of light. She turned toward it and started to count her steps. One, two, three, the light was gone.

Pivoting 180 degrees, she took back the three steps and clung to the tree once again. Listening for voices calling her, all she heard was the wind. It laughed at her as it moved the snow from one pile to another. She called out only to hear her own voice echo back through her jacket hood.

She took off her right mitten and felt the fur in the edge. It was soft. She pulled it closer and buried her face into the velvety lining. Quickly she put her mitten back on and rubbed her hands together. It did not seem possible, but the cold was getting colder. Above a street lamp shone momentarily through the snow. She glanced up and quickly bowed her head down out of the blast of wind.

Her mother had always told her to stay where she was if she ever got lost. However, it was getting more difficult to do that. She needed to move, to try to keep warm. As the wind changed directions once again, she moved to the next tree over. It was larger and offered better shelter.

Mother, she thought. Why is mother always right about everything? Even these terrible footed pajamas she wore under her boots. Her feet would be frozen off right now if her mother had not insisted that she wear them. Now she did not care how foolish they looked, their warmth radiated through her whole body.

She knew now that she would never find Whiskers. He had either hidden under the porch or climbed into one of the corners protected from the snow. Again, Mother was right. Nevertheless, she had to be the hero. After all, it was because of her that Whiskers escaped. The snow looked so pretty from inside. The white world called to her. What could one peek hurt? Then it happened so fast. The wind blew the snow into the house, Whiskers jumped out of her arms and whoosh, he was gone.

Mother tried to stop her from going after him, but conceded to let her go only if she would dress warmly. She opened the back door ducking her head into her hood to avoid the blast of snow and headed out. She stepped to the edge of the patio, called for the cat and listened. There was no answer. Stepping off the patio onto the lawn, her boot sank to the grass. The boot almost disappeared. She lifted her leg and shook off the snow. Losing her balance, she landed flat on her back on the cushiony snow. Once she realized that nobody had seen her, she got up, wiped herself off and continued her search.

The fence held back some of the wind and snow as she made her way to the gate. She had to push the gate pretty hard to open it. Maybe that should have been a sign to her to go back. But Whiskers was out there and she had to find him. Stepping out onto the sidewalk, the snow seemed a bit deeper. The wind had picked up to more of a fury. She couldn't tell if it was snowing up or down. Maybe it was both.

She turned to her right and walked three steps to the big oak tree and called for whiskers. No answer. She thought she hear a voice, but ignored it. Taking one more step, she stood between the two trees. It was like a fortress. The wind could not get to her there. The snow was still. Turning to look over the fence to the house, she slipped and fell onto the roots of the tree. Tears streamed down her face as she realized she hurt her knee. When she stood up, she was lost. Where was the gate? She couldn't see the fence.

The wind had gotten worse. She wiped the streams from her face and stopped. She felt a wisp of snow fly past her legs. Then it was in back of her. The snow brushed her knees, her ankles and her toes. It danced around her like a gypsy. As she began to look up, she saw the light

again. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the snow at her feet. It wasn't snow, it was whiskers. He had found her.

Just as she picked him up and cuddled him, she felt herself being lifted off the ground. Before she could be frightened, she turned and saw her daddy's face.

"You come into the house you little hero. It is time for some hot cocoa and bed."