

Cora Finn

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW

The first things Dennis saw when he awoke were brilliantly colored leaves falling from the trees and swirling in the air before they touched the ground. Then, boom! His hearing came back and his ears filled with horrifying screams. The peacefulness was short lived, as it always is when your friend is a zombie.

Startled, Dennis jerked upward and immediately sat back down. His head throbbed. He waited for the pain to subside and then took in his surroundings. It wasn't pleasant. Dennis heard what seemed to be Jeremiah's horrified voice. Jeremiah was scared out of his mind. Dennis immediately started searching for a way out of the wrecked truck. He squeezed himself out of the seat and climbed through what used to be the windshield. He touched down on the glass covered ground and grabbed ahold of a tree branch to steady himself. A branch from the same tree that destroyed his truck.

Meanwhile, Mac was consumed by his own trouble. The crash launched him through the windshield and onto a hillside. His left arm was broken and his whole body was covered in burning cuts. The side of the hill was dangerously muddy and he wouldn't be able to get down safely with his disabled arm. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a sturdy piece of cardboard from Dennis's supply box. His eyes lit up thoughtfully. Mac snatched the cardboard and used it to slide down, just like he was surfing as a kid in California.

"Whack!" Pain swelled in Dennis's nose. Anna prepared for another strike. Just as Dennis was about to be knocked unconscious for the second time that afternoon, Mac darted toward the brutal scene and tackled Anna. "Dennis, I need help!" he shrieked. Mac knew he couldn't handle her alone, so he backed off and tried to think up a plan. It would have to be a good one.

Anna was up rapidly. Thankfully, that was enough time for Dennis to grab a fallen tree branch and ready himself. He remembered playing baseball back in high school in New Jersey. Instantaneously, the branch turned into a bat and he tightened his grip. Anna darted towards him and Dennis swung.

Anna lay sprawled on the ground, glass littered all around her. Her leg had turned a deeper purple. Mac and Dennis bound Anna's hands and legs silently. Their attention then turned to Jeremiah under the truck. "Jeremiah, it's okay," Mac coaxed, "Anna won't hurt you now." Jeremiah sniffled and crawled out from under the truck. As always, he was tough.

Dennis continued, "See, you're all right."

"Is Anna dead?" Jeremiah mumbled fearfully as Dennis's face softened.

"No, she'll be okay." Mac fixed his gaze on an unconscious Anna. He knew why Dennis hadn't killed her. The friends still had a small hope that Anna would be cured, but that hope was dwindling. Would Anna be okay? Would any of them be okay?

The stars glittered and Mac stared aimlessly up at them. He was assigned to be lookout for that night. The trio slept in the truck bed, while Anna lie tied up on the ground. Something abruptly caught his eye and Mac shifted his attention. His stomach fluttered. How'd they forget? They were less than a mile from the ranch, the Greersons' ranch...home.

Suddenly, Dennis awoke to something startling. He jumped up as he opened his eyes. Snow coated everything in sight. Dennis shook Mac awake. "Hey, Mac, your gonna want to see this." Mac jerked upward hastily. He started to nudge Jeremiah, but suddenly stopped, scrambled to the edge of the truck, and peeked over the edge.

Dennis started, "Mac, what are you-"

Anna's teeth chattered as her eyelids deliberately opened wider. Her vision focused. Dennis and Mac peered over the edge of the truck and stared at her, their mouths agape. Her eyebrows knit together. She looked to her side and noticed the pristine white landscape, but something was off. Outlining Anna's body was a ring of purple snow. The remnants of her disease. After all, the cure was at their fingertips the entire time. It was the cold.

The battered team made their way up the mountain together. In the distance, they spotted a snowy ranch house emitting a cozy glow. Mac and Dennis glanced back down the side of the mountain at their "Footprint in the Snow", and remembered how that fateful song was the beginning of their run.