

# WILD SKIES

When Nava's mother passed away eleven years ago, the sound of knuckles rapping the wood of her front door that had once been so familiar, became no more than a distant memory. The last time she had opened the door to a friendly face had been when the neighbours came offering condolences in the middle of a snowstorm.

Nava nearly felt her heart skip a beat at the sound of the slow and gentle knocks that sounded from the front door, filling the silent house with nervous energy. Her father had left for work hours ago, and with a glance to her coffee that sat on the floor beside her English assignment, she reluctantly clambered to her feet.

Her slippers dragged noisily on the ice cold tiles beneath her feet and her fingers shook as she placed her hand on the rusted golden doorknob. Her mind raced, imagining the countless possibilities that might await her on the opposite side of the wooden door.

When the door finally slipped open, its hinges creaking quietly, Nava's hazel gaze landed on an elderly woman standing in the doorway. Her wide green eyes shone, and by the warm grin on her face, Nava couldn't help but believe that this woman was more than another stranger in Jasper, Alberta.

After what seemed to be hours, she stood on the front steps with a curious smile on her face, allowing for her eyes to travel over Nava's body. It took a moment for Nava to find her voice, at a loss for words. She pulled the sleeves of her sweater past her wrists as the cold wind passed over her skin. "May I help you?"

The old lady nodded her head slowly, glancing over Nava's shoulder as though another figure stood behind her. "Yes, you may..." she paused, looking back to Nava now. "Is this the Jones' residence?"

Nava nodded her head, unsure of how she knew their family name. "Do I have the pleasure of speaking to *Nava Jones*?" the old lady spoke her name gently, aware of the answer without Nava having to speak a single word.

"How about you tell me what you came here in hopes of finding before I—"

The old lady raised a wrinkled hand, silencing Nava at once. "May I come in? I mean no harm."

Reluctantly, Nava ushered her inside, closing the door quietly behind them.

"I don't want to cost you any time, Nava," she began, glancing down at the coffee and pages that littered the living room floor. "So I will be quick."

She paused, leaving suspense in the air between them. "I'm the grandmother that I am sure you never heard much about. Or, as you may know me by, your mother's mother, Claire who raised her out in St. Johns."

Claire paused, leaving Nava's heart hammering wildly in her chest. "I'm here with information about your mother that you'll appreciate." Nava could only nod.

"Your mother was an adventurous girl.. When she was small, there was an Amusement Park in the heart of British Columbia that she loved by the name of *Wild Skies*. The park is being torn down after sitting abandoned and overrun in the forest for years. While the park is entering its last days, you might want to pay it a visit for a piece of your mother's past."

Nava was breathless and confused, sure that her heart was going to beat out of her chest. “What do you mean?”

Claire shrugged, seeming to resemble Nava’s mother more each moment. “That’s all that I can say. Visit the Park, Nava. You won’t regret it.”

And with that, Claire turned her back and opened the door, ushering herself out of the house. She still wore the smile, although her cool voice was filled with hope. “Good luck.”

Nava rushed forward. “Wait! Can you tell me more about her?”

Claire shook her head. “I’m sorry. You will find the answer at *Wild Skies*.”

Claire stepped beyond the front steps, and when Nava scrambled forward to bid her farewell, she seemed to have disappeared, leaving Nava standing alone on the steps, with nothing but a sliver of hope and the promise of a rain storm.

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Nava awoke days later to her alarm, sending a wave of hope down her spine at the thought of the promised piece of her mother’s past. After rising from her bed easily and preparing for the day ahead, she draped her bag over her shoulder and headed for the kitchen where her father stood. He leaned against the counter casually, though he was anything but.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” he asked, though it was a redundant thought. He offered her a bowl that consisted of oatmeal along with a spoon, which she took gratefully.

“Is that even a question? I have to do this; it’s what mom would want.”

They both fell silent, as Nava tried to eat as much of the oatmeal as she could manage. She glanced to the wall clock, her knees going weak at the sight of the numbers 7:11am. She set the bowl down and made her way to the doorway where she hugged her father goodbye.

“Be safe.” he whispered faintly.

“I will,” she pulled away, smiling weakly. “I love you.”

“I love you, too, Nava.”

Nava stepped onto the front steps that Claire had stood on days ago, bringing her as close to her mother as she’d been in years.

“Bye, Dad!” she called as the taxi that she’d ordered only last night pulled into the driveway.

Her father waved farewell to Nava from the doorway, his smile more proud than the sun.

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After nearly two hours, Nava’s flight landed in British Columbia, making her one step closer to her mother. She followed the trains of people scattered across the airport until she made her way onto a bus that took her into the heart of the city, where she hoped to find a way to get to *Wild Skies*.

British Columbia was a beautiful place, mesmerizing Nava while the bus eventually slowed to a stop by a tourist information center. The many tourists aboard the bus began piling out of the bus until Nava was left alone surrounded by nothing but empty seats. She willed herself to her feet before following everyone else off the bus.

Friendly receptionists sat at the front desk, handing pamphlets out to the many frantic tourists. Grabbing one quickly, Nava found the courage to ask the nearest receptionist about Wild Skies.

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By the time a crisp autumn evening was upon her, Nava found herself standing in a forest surrounded by nothing but mile-high trees—maples, oaks, evergreens... filling her nostrils with the scent of sap. She'd acquired the information that Wild Skies was located in just a short distance off the edge of the forest, and she could nearly feel the presence of the park as she carried on through the woods, the sun beginning to dip below the horizon.

As the wind began to howl in the grey sky above her, she caught sight of the top of a Ferris wheel in the distance. Nava began to run toward the wheel that she was sure belonged to Wild Skies. With her heart pounding and hope rising in her chest, she eventually slowed to a stop at the entrance to the park. A colorful Balloon Race stood proud to the left while a Booster was positioned off to the right. Many of the carts of the Ferris wheel had fallen to the Earth floor, while the seat of the Booster seemed to have frozen in the middle of a drop.

But what caught her eye was the Bumper Kart arena, which she made her way over to out of extreme curiosity.

Nava assumed that there had once been countless karts in this arena, but could only see a handful. She made her way over to the one painted blue, slipping into the seat as though it called to her. Brambles tangled themselves within the kart, vines dangling from the ceiling brushing her cheeks.

When Nava glanced down to her sneakers, her gaze landed on a silver glitter between two planks of wood. She reached down with a hand mindless to the hundreds of splinters that posed a threat to her skin. Her fingers curled around a silver chain that still shone after all the years of sitting in the kart that showed on its locket.

Nava opened the heart-shaped locket to find a small photo of a beautiful woman. Even with the years taken away from her face, she was unmistakable.

Nava's mother.

Nava smiled down at the picture, holding the locket to her chest as though it was in fact her mother. She may have passed, but Nava would never stop loving her.

And with a piece of her mother's life hanging around her neck, she didn't feel so gone.