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Drift

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Drift

By: Joel Rodriguez

Once upon a time, there was a young polar bear named Stella who spent most of her time with her family. You see, Stella had been very troublesome since she was born. She would often play tricks on her siblings, and when they would get in trouble, she would convince her parents that her siblings were playing tricks on her. Stella and her siblings would often just have lighthearted fun, yet they would always get in trouble for something. Stella and her siblings would goof around because their parents would make them walk around for days on end. They never knew why they were always walking around, but their parents knew. They knew, yet they were keeping it a secret. It had been getting harder for this family of polar bears to survive. It was now harder to find enough food to feed the family, and their home had been slowly melting away. Momma Bear and Papa Bear were scared to tell their kids what was going on.

On a particularly warm day, Stella and her family were walking up an icy hill, continuing their trek to find a home left untouched by the effects of climate change.

“How long are we going to keep walking, momma?” said Stella’s older brother Jake.

Momma Bear had a sorrowful look on her face as she realized that even she didn’t know their destination.

“We’ll get there eventually,” she said to her cubs.

As they continued walking, Stella started playing tricks on her older siblings. Again and again, her siblings would get in trouble. They continued trekking across the icy hillside. While they were walking on a hill, Stella suddenly bolted off to the edge of the ice. Stella saw a wounded seal on the edge and wanted to go help it. Normally, polar bears eat seals, but this family didn’t. Stella was always kindhearted, so she refused to eat seals and instead often helped them. Because of Stella’s nature, her family decided to also stop eating seals and helped Stella in aiding the seals.

As they drew closer to the seal, Momma Bear had a weird feeling that something was wrong. When Stella got close enough to the wounded seal, she pounced to its side. There was a loud cracking sound as she landed. At this very moment, Momma’s heart sank as she watched the ice that held her daughter and the wounded seal break off and start drifting away.

Stella was paralyzed in fear and her family was too far behind to help. Eventually, she drifted off to the point of no return with her family yelling for her with distress in their voices.

Stella was now drifting in the ocean on a piece of ice with the wounded seal. After coming to her senses, Stella rushed to the seal and began to help him.

“What’s your name?” she asked as she tended to his wounds.

In a weak voice, the seal replied, “Orville.”

Stella couldn’t fully help Orville, as it was usually her mom who knew how to help and do first aid. All Stella could do was stop his bleeding. She had watched her mom do that countless times before. Being the only two creatures for what looked like forever, the unlikely pair began talking. Still weak from his injury, Orville shared stories of his family and how he got separated from them. He told Stella that he was in the middle of his journey to find his family when a piece of ice fell from a cliff, striking him. He was able to crawl a good distance before passing out where Stella found him. Still being young, Stella shared stories of her family and the countless times she played pranks on her siblings.

After countless days of talking and sharing stories, Orville grew weaker while Stella grew hungrier.

“Stella,” called out Orville in a whisper.

“Yes?” Stella responded.

With sorrow in his voice, Orville said, “I don’t think I can last any longer.”

Tears started to form in Stella’s eyes as Orville continued talking.

“You’ve been a good friend to me these past few days. I may not have been able to find my real family, but I’m glad I’ve found you. I could not ask for a better person to spend my final moments with. I care for you as if you were my sister, so I have one final request.”

“What can I do for you?” Stella replied shakily as tears started to fall from her face.

“I always thought it was weird how a polar bear wouldn’t eat a wounded seal, but the more I talked to you, the more I saw how kind you are. You don’t deserve the same fate as me. Please eat me so you don’t die from hunger.”

Stella began sobbing.

“No, I could never do something like that,” she cried.

Orville gave Stella a sorrowful look. Knowing the end was near, he whispered the word “please” to her just before he took his final breath. After seeing her friend pass in front of her, Stella cried for hours and hours, eventually falling asleep.

Stella awoke two days later in the middle of the night. Barely able to move due to hunger, she slowly crawled her way to Orville’s body. Tears filled her eyes as she began to prepare herself to start eating. Just as she was about to take a bite from her friend’s carcass, she rolled onto her back and stared into the sky.

With tears still in her eyes, she yelled in frustration, “I can’t.”

Her painful yells into the night sky exhausted her, and after a few deep breaths, she was able to calm down. The tears cleared her eyes, and she could finally see the beauty of the stars in front of her. She stared in awe at the stars. Feeling her conscience start to fade, Stella began to hope for someone, anyone, to come and save her. She looked up at the stars once again and saw a strange formation. A certain group of stars looked just like Stella’s mother. Stella saw this group of stars and finally started to feel really alone. Tears filled her eyes as she began to reminisce about her mother and the rest of her family. After sobbing for hours, Stella barely could stay awake. She was trying her hardest because she knew someone would come. With eyes half open, Stella saw a boat in the distance heading straight toward her. Hope filled her body. Stella closed her eyes with relief.

In a weak whisper, Stella said, “I hope my momma is on that boat.”

With eyes closed and a smile on her face, Stella’s breathing slowed and became softer. It wasn’t long before she took her final breath, lying on the small piece of ice that had only been growing smaller as time passed.