

The Winter Queen



By Anna Suarez

To listen call:

Winter arrived swiftly with its chilly winds and the fairy lights that decorated the houses. Aria loved the wintertime, especially when the full moon hung in the sky, surrounded by the stars. This winter was different. Aria's grandma's favorite time of the year had been the winter too. Her grandma suddenly passed away before Christmas, causing her to miss the wintertime festivities with her beloved granddaughter. Aria was heartbroken. She would miss their nights beside the fire, reading their favorite books, and drinking hot chocolate. This winter left Aria with a heavy heart.

Aria would look up at the moon and remember her grandma's words.

When you look at the moon, remember that no matter where I am, I'm looking at the same moon.

She wondered where her grandma was and how the moon looked in her world.

One day, Aria was sorting through her grandma's things with her mom. As they shuffled through books, trinkets, and photos, Aria found a mysterious leather book. Aria's mom did not notice the book, so Aria quickly put it behind her back.

"I'll be right back, Mom, I'm going to get some tea."

"Okay darling," Aria's mom said distractedly.

Aria ran up the stairs with the book, excited to see what hid behind the mysterious leather cover. Aria walked into her bedroom and hopped onto her bed with the book. The first few pages were very strange. There were odd symbols and ingredients for potions. She won-

dered what her grandma had used this for and what she had kept from her. After flipping through several pages, she found something that caught her eye.

Inside was an illustration of a woman with long black hair like a raven, wearing an ivory dress and a deep red cloak. Elegant script above the drawing read, *The Winter Queen*. Underneath, there was a paragraph that caught Aria's eye.

When you summon the Winter Queen, she will grant you one wish, but only if you are polite. Thank her for her presence and listen carefully.

Underneath, there were directions for a summoning spell. It was very detailed and involved putting winter herbs and plants into a cauldron-like pot and using them as an offering, along with colorful candles. It must be completed on the night of the Cold Moon that arrived in December, the longest night of the year.

Aria was surprised at the secrets her grandma had kept from her, but she knew her grandma must have had a good reason. After a while, Aria's mom began to wonder where her daughter was and called out to her. Aria realized a lot of time had passed and she hadn't even made the tea she'd promised. She quickly brewed some tea and walked downstairs to help her mom finish sorting through her grandma's things. They shelved her books and selected some clothes for Aria to wear when she was older.

Her mother said, "Grandma would be so proud of you."

When Aria went to bed that night, her head was spinning as she thought about the Winter Queen from the spell book. She knew what she needed to do.

The Cold Moon was arriving in a week and the days dragged slowly. Every day, Aria waited patiently till the night she could summon the Winter Queen for a wish.

The night of the Cold Moon finally arrived and Aria was so excited. Earlier, she spent the day preparing while her mom was running errands. She gathered cedar, in the forest beside her home, holly from the wreath her mother made, and cinnamon and mugwort from the spice rack. Aria mixed them in a large pot and poured the mixture into a jar.

That night, the moon shined brightly in the sky as Aria tiptoed through the house, trying not to make noise on the creaky floorboards. She slowly made her way to the backdoor with her basket of supplies. The grass was decorated with snow, sparkling in the moonlight.

Aria found a tree and sat under it with her basket. She followed the directions from the book and waited for several minutes. "Oh no, I was afraid this wouldn't work," Aria thought. As she frowned, she saw something red from the corner of her eye. Her heart started racing as she looked up. The Winter Queen walked toward her wearing a shining white dress and a red velvet cloak. Aria thought she was the most majestic person she has ever seen.

The Winter Queen said in her enchanting, musical voice, "How can I help you, my child? I have come a long way."

Aria hesitated, then she took a deep breath and said "I have a wish."

The Winter Queen smiled. "What is your wish, dear?"

Aria tried to regain her confidence. "Please bring my grandma back. I miss her so much."

The Winter Queen sighed. "Unfortunately, my child, I cannot grant your wish. We cannot control the cycle of life. Your grandma loves you very

much and watches over you. The best I can do is ask her to come to you in your dreams.”

A tear dropped from Aria’s eyes. She had hoped that the Winter Queen would have the power to grant her wish. She did not fight back because she remembered that she must be polite.

“Well thank you for coming here, Winter Queen.”

“As you wish,” she said smiling.

A flashing light appeared in front of the Winter Queen and she disappeared. Aria sat in the snow and cried; she had been so hopeful that her grandma would come back. She finally got up, poured out the potion, and blew out the candles. When she reached her home, she climbed into her bed and fell asleep.

Then she found herself in a snowy forest with lights twinkling all around her. The snow looked untouched and powdery. She has never seen such a magical place. She wandered through the woods until she saw a figure standing beside a white tree. At first she felt scared, but as the figure approached, she realized it was her grandma.

Ariella exclaimed, “Grandma!”

“Hi honeybun!” Her grandma smiled.

“Oh grandma, I miss you so much. Will you please come home?”

“Oh Aria, I wish I could, but I must stay in the world I’m in.”

Aria started to cry. “Oh dear, don’t cry,” said her grandma. “Though I am far away, I can still visit you.”

“When will you visit again?”

“When I know you need me. I am always watching over you.”

Aria hugged her grandma and felt a joy that she hadn’t felt in a long time.

“I must go now, Aria. Don’t forget that I will never leave you.”

Aria shed a tear as she watched her grandma walk away. Then the forest started fading away and then Aria woke up in her bed. She was disappointed that it was only a dream, but she tried to remember what her grandma had said.

To her surprise, she felt a lump under her pillow. Aria reached under her pillow and found a red box tied with a white bow. She opened a box and saw the most beautiful necklace with a red stone. It was garnet, her-grandma’s birthstone. Beside the necklace, was a note.

I told you that you would see her again. Take this necklace and whenever you are sad or lonely, hold it close to your heart. Your grandma will come to you.

Love,

The Winter Queen

Though the winter would be long and cold this year, Aria felt a little warmer knowing her grandma was always watching over her.