

Cold Hands

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Cigarette smoke swirled in the air of my grandparent's kitchen. Its tiles were worn and yellowed. My family's smiles radiated through the smoke like headlights shining in a rolling fog. I braced myself as wisps clung to my lungs. The cold seeped in from the window behind me. They fused together baring claws to chase me away. I wouldn't let them.

No frigid hands or toxic breaths would drag me from the chair where my feet barely scraped the floor. I was fixed on fluttering fingers. Talking hands swept through the air, captivating my eyes. They were soundless, but oddly loud. It was strange how those signing hands generated so much noise from a person living in eternal quiet.

I felt as though my fingers and palms were too small to paint the words my family used. I wanted to mimic their colors and movements, but the cold trickled its way to my shy fingers. Across the wooden table my grandfather slid me a wink followed by the one sign I knew. The ring and middle finger folded down to the palm. "I love you."