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Stay Frosty

by Bob Hart

Aspen and Jack stood at the center of the hotel room, their lips frozen as they stared at the shimmering glass on the carpet. The snow fell heavily outside the hotel window, which muffled the sounds of the summer beach and quickly transformed the world into a silent wonderland.

"Who cares?" Jack said after his lips warmed up with courage, "It's just a stupid gimmick. I can't believe we wasted money on this trip."

Aspen's eyes blazed with anger. "We wouldn't have to waste money on trips like this if you wouldn't keep doing this to me!"

Jack rolled his eyes. "Oh, here we go again. Can we just forget about that and move on?"

Aspen shook her head. "No, we can't just move on. You broke it, Jack."

Their eyes were locked in a battle of wills as they struggled to reassemble the shattered pieces. Aspen's fingers trembled; she had always been better at delicate tasks like these, but her

face was puffy and red, evidence of her earlier tears. Her auburn hair was disheveled and her once-beautiful features were now twisted in a mask of frustration.

Jack was more of a brute force kind of guy. His jaw was set in a hard line, his salt-and-pepper hair mussed from running his hands through it. But tonight, they were both equally inept as they sat on the carpet in their swim suits.

"I can't believe you would do it," Aspen said, her voice barely above a whisper.

Jack sighed. "It was just a kiss."

"Just a kiss?" Aspen's voice rose in disbelief. "You kissed someone else, Jack! That's cheating in my book."

"I didn't mean for it to happen. I was drunk, I wasn't thinking straight." His breath became visible as he ran his shaking hands through his hair again.

"Typical," Aspen muttered under her breath.

The air in the room was suffocating, like a cold blanket that refused to be lifted. As they worked on the object, neither of them noticed the icicles that crept down the window, like decrepit fingers straight out of a nightmare.

Jack sighed heavily and rubbed his forehead. "I know I messed up, but can't we just try to move past it?"

Aspen's lips pressed into a thin line. "You think it's that easy? Just forget about it and move on?"

Jack's hand stretched out, but she flinched away. "No, it's not easy," he stated, determined. "But I'm willing to give it a shot. For us."

The silence hung heavily between them. They moved to sit shoulder-to-shoulder, goosebumps prickling their skin as they drew closer. Their warmth trickled out like a feeble stream from a dying heater.

Jack coughed, breaking the stillness. "I'm sorry I broke it."

"You should be. This mess is all your fault," Aspen snapped.

"That's not what I meant," Jack said. "I should have been more careful."

"Damn right you should have," Aspen muttered. She leaned in, and her arms slithered into his jacket. Jack sensed that she would slip inside his skin if she could. She yanked the hotel brochure out of his pocket and tossed it aside. It floated to the floor, like a feather in the stagnant air around them, while they continued to construct the shattered pieces.

"I won't break it again, I promise."

Aspen watched as Jack's hands seemed to get the job done in assembling despite their shaking. "Can I trust you not to?" she asked. "Can I still trust you?"

It wasn't until they finally managed to reassemble the snow globe that they noticed something was off. Instead of the familiar scene of a snow-covered cabin, there was a miniature version of the hotel room inside the globe.

"What the hell?" Jack exclaimed, holding it up for Aspen to see. The world inside the snow globe was a perfect replica of the hotel room they were in. Through the little window, they saw the bed, the TV, even the sparkling glints on the carpet from the glass inside the tiny room were all there.

"Cold Shoulder Counseling" was emblazoned on a bronze plate at the base of the object. The title was also printed on the beach side resort pictured on the paper that rested below them.

A chill went down their spines as they read the print “For the couples who want to be close forever. Stay Frosty!”

END