

Elizabeth Whitfield

### Stepping on Ice

They were walking for a while now, past where their hunting grounds ended. If there were any sort of official border, the fallen log they passed marked it. But there are no official borders, just trees and snow and smells known or foreign. The snow fell, small thuds in the silence, too small to shatter.

Bent to be silent, the three moved with calm over uneven footing, peering out from covered faces and layers of wool and cotton. Nothing was sharp, the world seemed still, cold, and edge-less. A stream frozen over and under inches of fallen crystals looked barely any different from the solid ground surrounding it. Teb was in front.

Blue, grey, and white thundered. The air intruded between water and ice, breaking blue.

He put out his hand, stopping Parah and Ket.

“Not this way.”

“Ice?”

“It’s not frozen in. We will go around.”

They moved away, and Parah thought of their home and their winter fire, and the cat that ran away.