I had been walking in the heavy snow for a day or two, trying to find somewhere to rest. Snow wasn’t forecast and in the haze of white that I had been seeing whilst constantly walking, I had lost all sense of time and place. Stupidly at this time of year I had left my house because I wanted to explore and was bored of staying in the same place. I desperately needed to rest and my eyes were hurting from looking at white snow which was reflecting the sun, the onset of snow blindness. Suddenly, I stumbled upon a village. It seemed a calm village, lots of people running about enjoying the snow and skating on the icy lake. I watched in wonder at the happy times they appeared to be having. I advanced further. The people looked at me with expressions on their faces that plainly said ‘who are you, why are you intruding’. I smiled at them.

A few days later, the village had calmed down. I went to the nearest house I could find which was, like most of the others, made of straw and thatch. I explained who I was and that I had come from another village, a few days walk from there, to clear my head. ‘Why do you come here?’, the woman said. ‘I have already explained that to you, Madam’ I replied, letting the matter drop. ‘Is there anywhere in the village I can stay, it is terribly cold outside?’ I asked. ‘No,’ the man of the house said angrily, ‘off with you!’. ‘Y-y-es,’ I stammered, ‘of course Sir, I apologise’. I obediently left, they seemed old fashioned. Soon, I came across a girl who was about my age, we talked. She said her parents were very nice and welcoming and she invited me to come to her house. Her parents, after demanding to know more about me, agreed that I could perform servant duties to earn my keep and stay for as long as I liked. I was immensely grateful. ‘Thank you, Sir’, I said to the girl’s father with a beaming smile. The girl escorted me upstairs and showed me to my room. ‘Er, where is the bathroom?’ I asked quietly. ‘Just through there,’ she said nodding her head slightly to the left and laughing. I smiled and went through. A few minutes later, I explored my room. It was a good size, lots of shelving and space to hang my clothes. I looked out the window... what a lovely view, I thought!

I stayed at this house for a few weeks, enough time to think and clear my head further. I thought it was about time I left after a few weeks, I had consumed enough of their food and did not want to use anymore. I announced to them one morning that I had to leave and they insisted that I stay. ‘I cannot, honestly.’ ‘Yes, Isabell, yes you can’, they confirmed. Unsure, I agreed. They were pleased. I kept the same room and continued to do things around the house.

I continued to explore the village; I was getting on quite well. My friends were very accepting of my rather odd ways. We were reading quietly when I heard screams of sheer terror which broke the silence when the ice cracked on the lake and people plunged into the depths of the lake. Panic took over, the inhabitants rushed to the lake, screaming. There was nothing anyone could do. Now, in this state of panic, I looked around. There were people everywhere, screaming, not knowing what to do. The lack of organisation was frightening, there was no communication. People were cold and seemingly hungry, pale and frightened for the people in the freezing lake who were fighting for their lives against hypothermia and drowning. The majority of them could not swim. There were no survivors, the tears and screams of pain and suffering were awful, I could not stand it. I ran to the furthest corner of the village that I could see.

A few days later, to add to the grief everyone was feeling over the casualties in the lake, I received a letter from my mother saying that my father was very ill and that I had to return. I did not want to go back, I loved my life now, but I had to. I ran back to the house, I told the family of my sad news. ‘I am sorry, Sir, my father is ill, I must leave’. I went back to the village that day and ran into the hospital. I got the terrible news then. My father had died that morning. My mother was unresponsive and I sobbed into the nurses’ hair. I travelled slowly, distraught, sobbing, back to the other village and I stood in my room. No one came to comfort me, I felt more alone than ever in that few hours. I slept.