



## Fire and Ice

A Secret Sisters Short Story

Sandra Byrd

“I've got an awesome surprise!” Tess Thomas smiled and patted her backpack. “You’ll *never* guess what it is.”

Erin Janssen, Tess’ best friend, twisted the laces of her rented ice skates. “I love surprises. What is it?” she asked, heading onto the rink.

Tess stepped onto the ice and started to answer, but suddenly stopped.

“Oh no. I’ll tell you later,” Tess whispered. “There’s Lauren and Colleen.”

“My, my, who do we have here?” the tallest of the two, Lauren, said. Her perfect, blond hair was wrapped into a flawless bun. She continues, “The beginners are wobbling onto the rink. Aren’t they cute?”

Then she and Colleen spun perfect figure eights. Lauren sent a spray of shaved ice over Tess and Erin. Before Tess knew what was happening, Lauren clapped her on the back.

“Whoa!” Tess said, almost falling. She caught her balance and looked straight at Lauren’s mean face.

“Sooo sorry,” Lauren said with a smile as she skated away.

“Bye, girls.” Colleen waved as she followed Lauren.

“Those two,” Erin muttered, steadying her friend. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m all right.” They skated slowly to the center of the rink. Open skate day was fun- unless Lauren showed up.

Tess pursed her lips. Lauren was popular. She thought she could push anybody around. Tess’ ex-best friend, Colleen, used to be nice. But Lauren had changed Colleen for the worst.

Tess waited while Erin scratched a bug bite on her arm, and then they skated off together. At the end of the hour, Tess’ skating was stronger, but she had a bigger goal.



“When do you think we’ll be able to do figure eights?” Tess asked. When she could do one, she would feel like a ballerina on ice, softly swirling around and around.

“I don’t know,” Erin said. “I can’t figure them out. Can you?”

“No,” Tess answered. “I guess we’ll have to save our money and take a lesson sometime.”

“Yeah,” Erin agreed. “I guess so.” The girls skated off the ice, and slipped off their skates and put on their shoes.

“So what’s the surprise?” Erin asked. “After Lauren and Colleen skated up, you forgot to tell me.”

“Let’s go outside and sit down while we wait for my mom. Then I’ll tell you.” Tess opened the door. Brilliant sunlight nearly blinded her as she made her way to a bench.

Once they sat down, Tess reached into her backpack and pulled out four tickets. “What are those?”

“Tickets to ‘Stars on Ice,’” Tess smiled.

“You’re kidding! That show has been sold out for months!” Erin jumped up from the bench, shouting with excitement. “And now you get to go.”

“And so do you!” Tess said. “I’ve got *four* tickets. That means, my mom, dad, you and me are going.”

“What about Tyler?”

“Since when does my 8-year-old brother like ice skating? He’s staying overnight with a friend.”

Cold air moved behind them, and a shadow blocked their light. “Hi, Tess.”

Both girls turned to see who was standing behind them.

It was Colleen.

“Hi,” Tess said coolly.

*Where had she come from?*

“Did I hear you say you have tickets to ‘Stars on Ice?’” Colleen said. She acted much sweeter than an hour ago.

“Yeah.” Tess slipped the tickets back into her pack.

“We tried to get some, but they were sold out,” Colleen said. “How did *you* get them?”

*I don’t have to explain anything,* Tess thought. A mean pleasure crept over her. *Maybe I should drag this out. After all, she and Lauren have been totally rude.*

“My dad’s boss got them and then couldn’t use them. He gave ‘em to my dad,” Tess said. “They’re great seats. Erin and I are going to get autographed T-shirts, too.”

“Oh.” Colleen looked toward her feet and fidgeted with her skate strings. “I wish I could have one of those. I mean, I know I can’t go, but it sure would be nice to have one of those shirts.”

*Offer to get one for her*, a voice inside Tess’ heart whispered. Just then Colleen’s mother pulled up.

Colleen left without saying goodbye.

“Don’t worry about her,” Erin said. “She and Lauren think they’re queens of the world.” Erin hugged her Secret Sister, then scratched a bug bite on her neck. “I can’t wait for ‘Stars on Ice!’”

“There’s no one I’d rather go with,” Tess answered.

The next morning, Tess jumped out of bed. It was Friday, which meant only one more day until the ice show. She and Erin would probably spend the whole lunch hour planning what they should wear. When she got to school, Tess sat down and waited for Erin. But the bell rang and no Erin.

An hour later, Tess had a sinking suspicion that something was wrong. By lunchtime she felt deserted. *Where was Erin?* Tess ate alone, chewing a dry sandwich. To make matters worse, Colleen slid up alongside her.

“Here’s my money for the T-shirt,” she said. “I brought enough for you to buy one for Lauren, too. It’s a surprise, so don’t tell her.” Colleen slipped a bill into Tess’ hand, not even waiting to see if Tess agreed.

Tess looked up, and in spite of her anger, felt a tug of friendship toward Colleen.

You really like skating, don’t you? Tess asked.

“Of course, why do you think I spend all those hours practicing?” Just then Lauren arrived.

“C’mon,” she said, yanking Colleen off the bench. “You know we don’t sit with any non-club members.”

Seeing the two friends reminded Tess that her friend was *not* with her. She decided to call Erin as soon as she got home.

“Erin? It’s me. Where were you today?” Tess asked, looking out at the back yard. The sun twinkled merrily, but Erin’s response wasn’t merry at all.

“I’m sick.”

“Sick?” Tess nearly dropped the phone.

“Those bug bites aren’t bug bites. They’re chicken pox.”

“Chicken pox? You’ve never had them before?”

“Nope”

“Oh. Well, you can still go to ‘Stars on Ice,’ because I’ve already had them.”

“Yeah, but not *everyone* has had them. And I can’t infect everybody.”

A long minute ticked slowly by before Tess said the unthinkable. “I guess you can’t go tomorrow night.”

“Nope,” Erin sniffed into the phone. “Buy me a T-shirt, okay?”

“Okay,” Tess said. But inside she thought, *great! Now I’m buying T-shirts for everyone but sitting alone.* “I’ll bring your homework over tomorrow,” she said.

“All right. Bye.” Erin clicked off.

Tess sat for a minute, phone in hand, wondering what to do. She had four tickets. She could waste the ticket, but that didn’t seem right.

“Lord,” she said softly, “what should I do?”

The answer spoke to her heart, and she obeyed. She picked up the phone and slowly began to dial a number she knew well but didn’t call much anymore.

“What’s in the basket?” Erin opened the door to her house early Saturday evening. “My homework?” she asked.

“Your ace is a mess,” Tess teased. “There must be more than a hundred spots!”

“Thanks,” Erin said, “as if I needed to hear that from you, too. You’d better give me my homework and get going or you’ll miss the show.”

Tess closed the door behind her.

“I’m not going.”

Erin’s mouth dropped open. “You’re not going?”

“I didn’t want to go without you. I mean, skating is *our* thing.”

Tess uncovered the basket and pulled out microwave popcorn, some soda and a videotape.

“I thought we’d have our own skating party here,” she said. “I called your mom earlier today to make sure it was okay. I thought about asking Colleen to the show, but you know, I really didn’t want to go without you. I prayed and asked God what I should do.”

Erin sat on the sofa, her look of disbelief warming to a smile. “And?”

“I gave the tickets to Colleen,” Tess said. “I suppose she’ll take Lauren, but we’re going to have more fun here. I borrowed this videotape of the ‘Stars on Ice’ show, and Colleen’ll buy us each an autographed T-shirt.

“Thanks, Tess,” Erin said, grinning from ear to ear.

“You’re welcome,” Tess smiled back. “But I’ve saved the best news for last.”

“What could be better?” Erin said.

“One thing could ...” Tess spread her arms like a ballerina and did a little dip.

“Colleen promised that she’d teach me how to do figure eights.”

Want to read more about Tess, Erin, and their always-in-trouble adventures? Check out the Secret Sisters ebooks, now available for Nook and For Kindle, and only 99 cents per volume of two complete books!

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