ADVENTURE TIME  
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It is a lazy Saturday afternoon. The steady beat of the rain comes down quietly on the roof of the old farmhouse: the one with the "u" shaped driveway and the front door that always sticks during the summer. Inside, Abigail sits at the dining room table reading the fourth Harry Potter book to her grandmother. The little girl glances out the window, her mind wandering. "What I wouldn't give to play outside right now," she finds herself thinking. Abigail turns her attention to her Nana, attempting to meet her eyes, willing them to look back at her, to see her. A few unexplained minutes have gone by since she stopped reading, but Abigail knows that her Nana doesn't mind, that she probably hasn't even noticed. Nana's vision fully left her twenty years ago, and since then her time has been spent sitting alone at this dining room table, checked on every now and then by her in-home nurse or her daughter when she happens to be passing through. Abigail sits looking at her now, trying to see the person who used to inhabit the hollow shell in front of her; before she had to sacrifice her life as a social worker, a profession that brought her endless joy, before she was forced to give up tennis, her one true passion, before she was sentenced to a life of monotony, solitude, and captivity.

"I'm going to go outside, okay Nana?" Abigail says in a raised voice.
"Okay, my Little Abigail," Nana replies, her pale blue eyes glued, unseeing, to a spot on the floor. Abigail eagerly dons a yellow raincoat and boots, ready for her next adventure.
"What I wouldn't give to see you right now," Nana whispers, almost to herself.
"It's okay, Nana," the eight year old girl replies, already halfway out the door, blind to the true meaning of her Nana's words.

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Abigail sits in her classroom, reading the fifth Harry Potter book to her class of sixteen fourth graders. The rain, now transforming the red and yellow playground into a kingdom of dark brown mud, has been coming down steadily all day long. She never tires of reading with her kids. She finishes the chapter and announces that story time is over, to the dismay of the children. As she gets them ready to go to lunch, she is struck by how much joy her job brings her. How much she loves entertaining and befriending her students, how much she loves helping them when they don't understand right away, how much she loves seeing the smiles on their faces when they finally sound out a word or figure out a math problem on their own. Most importantly, she loves having the opportunity to prepare them for their next adventure, whatever that may be.

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The world rushes past. The deep green of the trees blends with the pure white snow, dazzling even on a gray, rainy day such as this one. Abigail streaks down the hill, weaving
around other skiers who gawk as she goes by, amazed by her speed and skill. She finishes her run before her friends are even halfway down the mountain. Laughing to herself she looks around, enthralled by the different shades of the warm brown logs that envelop the lodge, the imprints in the snow where people have fallen, the lone black glove lying beneath the chair lift waiting to be reclaimed by its numb-fingered owner. A few more minutes pass. It begins to rain. Abigail skis back and forth, stealing glances at the mountain every few seconds. She wants to get one more run in before the rain makes it too icy, but her friends are taking forever. She is ready for her next adventure.

'I'll catch up to them, no problem,' she reasons as she re-enters the lift line.

The world rushes past. The deep green of the trees blends with the pale, hard ice, especially treacherous on a gray, rainy day such as this one. Abigail streaks down the hill, competing against herself to lap her friends. Suddenly, her ski slips, the smile she had been sporting under her face mask melting away. She is going too fast. Other skiers gawk. All she sees is a cacophony of sky, skies, snow, trees. Her head makes contact with the ice. The world disappears.

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Abigail sits at the dining room table in an old farmhouse in the country. Her granddaughter reads to her as she listens intently. The rain composes exotic rhythms on the roof and the room smells of burning wood from the fireplace. The little girl pauses, looking out the window.

"Why did you stop?" Abigail asks her granddaughter.
"I was just thinking that I would give anything to go outside right now!" the eager little girl replies.
"Can we pleeease, Nana?"

Abigail summons her old seeing eye dog, Sasha, who had until then been sleeping very contently in front of the fireplace, and steps outside. Abigail can't see her, but she doesn't have to. As she listens to her granddaughter's laughter she knows how beautiful she is. Standing there in the pouring rain, Abigail tilts her head back, feels the wetness on her skin, and enjoys her next adventure.