

**Anais (Year 7, James Allen's Girls' School)**  
**DLF 2017 Winter Short Story Competition entry**

**Out on the Ice**

The lake looks beautiful this winter. The ice that sparkles in the winter sunshine is thick, thick enough to hold you even if you jumped on it. At least that's what I was told. It's cold but I like the sharp wind that blows my hair onto my face and makes my cheeks pink. There are unclad trees all around the ice-water except for behind me where the village is.

Oliver and Toby, my older and only brothers, are already there. Their black and red ice skates glint in the sun and the blades leave small tracks for me to follow. Though I know what they look like because I've looked at them many times before, I gaze down at my own skates. They're a pattern of light and dark blues - my favourite colours.

"Come on Iris!" Toby yells, "Stop being a sissy!" He knows I'm not scared, they both do but still I grin and jump up. It's easy to walk in ice skates now; after all I've been doing this since I was three years old.

Still smiling, I make my way to the ice. And then, like every year, I step onto the coldness. I race as fast as I can towards my brothers who have come to a stop in the middle of the ice. I aim straight at them. They grin from ear to ear like drunken men. When I'm just about to slow down they dodge to the side and I zoom right past. I stop a few seconds later and although I've gone quite far, I'm still close enough to hear their laughter.

Oliver yells, "That's not what I expect from a thirteen-year-old! Come on, you're it!" And he darts off like a bullet in the distance. I look at Toby and lunge for him. He smirks at me before joining Oliver about twenty meters across the lake. I sigh but I can't help the smile that spreads across my face when I skate after them.

After a while I take out the flapjack that mother gave me before leaving, and split it three ways. Then we're up again, dodging aside from each other and darting away. All the time we're laughing and joking like idiots. I stop for a moment to catch my breath.

It's then that I hear the sound. I look down; massive cracks are forming around my skates. The fissures widen. I try to move away but I'm not quick enough. I hear my brothers scream my name but I'm already in the water. The bitterness of the liquid turns my body numb.

Two figures dive in after me. Oliver and Toby try to reach me but I've sunk too low, too quick. Everything goes black and I close my eyes. We all know that it's too late. That I'm already too far from reach.