

Sammy the Grunt on the loose again? And just when our favorite people thought it was safe to crawl into bed without first checking under it! Can a severe snowstorm be both a help and a hindrance to an escapee? Lucky takes an unplanned journey, Clara leaves Joe behind to search for him, and Joe, once again, wrestles with the thought that Clara might love her dog more than she loves him.

The Wrath of Winter

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And So To Dream
The Wrath of Grapes
And So To Love
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The Wrath Of Winter

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First Edition

THE WRATH
OF
WINTER

EVELYN ALLEN HARPER

TO LOGAN,
MY NEWEST GRANDCHILD

CHAPTER 1



IN THE WHITE WORLD of snow that was falling like heavy wet cement from a blackened sky, the bolt of lightning followed by a crash of thunder seemed eerily out of place. Except for the police van that plowed through the deep snow, the road was empty.

The solitary man in the back of the van was viewing the whole situation as an adventure. Even though his shackled feet were attached to the van's security bars and his hands were cuffed, he intended to make the most of every minute. This was the first time he, Sammy the Grunt, had been out of his cell since his transfer from an overcrowded federal downstate prison to a much smaller northern one. Huddled under the warmth of the borrowed coat that covered his orange prison suit, he relaxed; the storm was the guards' problem, not his.

Hidden by the pelting snow, the wildly swinging traffic light seemed to appear out of nowhere.

"It's red!" yelled the guard in the passenger seat.

"Can't help it!" exclaimed the white-knuckled driver. "I can't stop!"

The unexpected carnival-like ride sensation as the van slid sideways and fishtailed through the intersection made Sammy grin; the front passengers didn't.

"I don't like the looks of this," muttered the driver. "Man, I'd love to see a snowplow right now!"

"Seems like we've been driving forever," the passenger whined. "Are we there yet?"

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“Are we there yet, Daddy?” the driver mocked in a child-like voice. “You sound just like my four-year old!”

“Well, are we?”

“Almost. The dentist office should be straight ahead, on your right.”

Another bolt of lightning followed by crashing thunder startled them.

“Wow!” cried the guard. “Lightning and thunder in the middle of a snowstorm? Who ever heard of that?”

“Thundersnow.”

The guard whirled his head around and stared at the prisoner. “What did you say?”

“It’s called thundersnow.”

“How do you know that?”

Sammy shrugged. With years behind bars and lots of time to read, he had learned a little bit about many things. What he remembered about thundersnow was that a very powerful winter storm usually followed.

He kept this information to himself as they continued driving into the storm.

CHAPTER 2



THE VINEYARD WORKER shivered and pulled the flaps on his hat down over his ears. The accumulation of snow he'd found on the vines in Sarah and Albert's vineyard didn't worry Clarence; snow would protect them from the freezing temperature. What did worry him was the force of the wind, the depth of the snow, and the distance between where he was now, and where he wanted to be. Never before had the long walk from the vineyard to the house seemed so daunting, and never before had he walked through such wet and dense snow. Each step was a struggle.

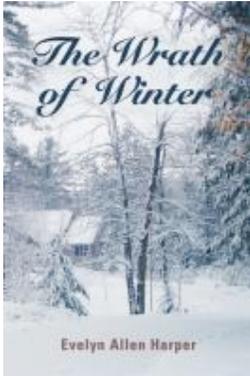
Along with the pelting snow, the storm had brought early darkness. Unable to recognize landmarks, nothing looked familiar; for all he knew, he could be walking in circles. He didn't realize how anxious he'd become until he'd climbed a slight rise in the land and saw, in the distance, a light from the house; he hadn't lost his way home.

Warmth and safety were within reach; all he had to do was walk toward the light. Letting out the breath he'd been holding, he grinned to himself. He could almost feel the heat from the fireplace that awaited him. Just one step at a time toward the light...he could do it.

He stopped walking to watch a streak of lightning as it raced across the sky. Wow! Whoever heard of thunder and lightning in the middle of a snowstorm? Ready to resume his homeward trip, his eyes scanned the darkness, looking for the lighted house.

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What had happened to the light? The fleeting relief he'd felt when he'd seen the lighted house was now replaced by a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. Without a light to follow, how was he going to get home? Had he shifted positions when he raised his head to watch the lightning's trail across the sky? If he hadn't, then all he had to do was walk in a straight line. Putting his head down against the howling wind, he blindly pushed on, one step at a time, through the dense and deepening snow.



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