

Dancer

“Stand still,” she said.

I thought I was standing still. I didn’t even wiggle.

I turned my head just a little until I could see mom standing there. Her neck, her shoulders, slim, had cruel lines — lines like a robot programmed to stick needles in people’s eyes.

“Eyes in the corner!” Her jet black hair bounced when she talked. She was too tense.

I looked back into the corner—two walls at right angles, perfect from top to bottom. There were smudges from all the times before. I heard the scraping sound of the sifter and an even layer of flour began falling around my feet. She would be leaving soon.

I put my arms straight at my sides. I was before the evil Ice Queen, pleading the case for my planet. Her snow falls all around me, encasing me in a prison of ice. She breathes her frosty breath and I am frozen in my shoes—a statue forever. But the planet is saved.

“I’m going shopping. You better not move.”

I already knew. Then she would come home and go into the bedroom. Then she would go into the kitchen and get the green broom from the closet. Then, if there weren’t any naughty footprints, she would sweep away the flour and tell me to go out and play. Till then I was a prisoner.

She walked into the hall. Her keys jingled in her purse. The front door closed; the engine vroomed. When the car left the driveway I turned around to face the room.

I was used to it, in the corner with the sifted flour on the floor so she would know if I snuck out. The shiny silver sifter was on the counter in the kitchen. I could see it. I always tried to figure a way to sneak, but escape was impossible without the doom of discovery.

I crouched way down and looked at the flour. I put my eye as close as I could without touching the fine flecks. My breath blew too hard on the flour so I stood up. Not enough to get in trouble. Mom was reasonable.

I played prisoner for a few minutes. Then I played Ice Queen again and stood frozen for as long as I could stand it, without even blinking my eyes. I started singing:

*There's a kind of hush, all over the world
All over the world, it's the sound you hear
Of lovers in love. . .*

Sometimes mom leaves the radio on accidentally when she leaves and I'm in the corner. I started dancing, pretending the radio was on and I was on American Bandstand. I flung my arms up and down.

*Come on everybody let's make a train now,
Come on bay-ba, do the loca-motion.*

I danced like a lunatic without moving my feet. Some day I would be on American Bandstand. I danced as hard as I could, stomping on my little space of the cold wood floor. I got all sweaty. I became a madman, flailing forward away from the walls, swimming for safety. I tried to jump up and spin all the way around, but I bumped into the wall and fell straight into the middle of the flour.

I stood up and started to cry. She would never believe that I fell. She would say that I was lying, then she would kill me, so I ran into the kitchen and grabbed the shiny silver sifter. There was still a little flour in it and I ran back into the corner and sifted over the spots where I fell.

I thought, *Why didn't I think of this before?* You could still tell a little, but not unless you looked real close. Perfect.

Then I started to cry again. The shiny silver sifter was in my hand and not on the counter. And there were little white footprints running back and forth from the kitchen. She would know and I would get in worse trouble for trying to fool her.

I was sick and tired of it. Now she would kill me no matter what.

I jumped high, stomped straight down into the flour and made two Ked prints. They looked like the perfect pink skin-prints of a

stinging slap. I ran into the kitchen, opened a bottle of R.C., left the fridge door open on purpose, turned on the T.V. full blast—McHale's Navy—turned on KHJ full blast—Mama's and Papa's—drank R.C. and danced around the living room, leaving my smudgy white snowprints on the shag carpet. I was an escapee from the ice prison, dancing like a free man, sweating like a lunatic.