

Junior Division (15 & Under), Prose

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The Big Change (an excerpt)

The church glowed with gold and white light as Mary White stepped through the wooden doors, her hands trembling around a bouquet of roses. At the altar stood David Shugmus, his eyes fixed on her as though the rest of the world had disappeared. When she reached him, he leaned closer and whispered, "You look like my dream come true."

That day marked the beginning of their forever.

Life after the wedding was simple yet full of promise. David worked long days repairing boats while Mary filled their small apartment with music as she taught piano lessons. When their daughter Layla was born during a stormy night, the tiny house overflowed with lullabies, and the soft scent of baby powder. To them, she was their little star.

But when Layla's baby sister Shayla arrived a few years later, the rhythm of the family quietly changed. Exhaustion crept in as bills piled up. Layla, once the centre of their world, slowly began to feel invisible.

Her loneliness turned into mischief. She glued cups to tables and broke rules just to hear someone say her name. At school, she finally found comfort in a girl named Emma, who understood her restless heart. Together they laughed, whispered secrets, and became known as the "Twin Tornadoes."

Yet the storms at home only grew louder. One winter evening, after a broken vase and a shouting match that shook the house, Layla ran outside into the cold night air, tears burning her cheeks.

And for the first time, crouched behind the garden wall and staring at the glowing window, Layla wondered something she had never dared to think before; how long does it take to remain invisible?