

Jake's lungs burned as he collapsed on the front porch, gasping for air while mentally reminding himself he wasn't dying. Not that his body was listening. Out of shape, he'd taken Carrie's challenge to go for a run with her this morning, and he'd left her two blocks behind shouting about it not being a race. Yeah right. Hadn't she said something about New Year's resolutions and how he should join her? Well, no way was he going to lose to a girl — much less one pushing a stroller with a giggling toddler in it. Especially if she was his little sister.

Despite the snow on the ground, his t-shirt stuck to his back as he tugged his sweatshirt off and used it to mop the sweat off his face. The sun shone overhead, but did little to warm the frigid winter morning. An icicle hung above him, and an icy drop of water landed on his cheek. He yelped and swiped at it before standing.

Carrie was half a block away now, stride as steady as when he'd left her. He held his breath trying to calm his heart rate. No need to let her see he'd nearly killed himself getting back before her. He stretched and rolled his shoulders. Tugged his t-shirt off his clammy skin and pulled his sweatshirt back on. By the time she returned, Jake was breathing normally again.

"Told you I'd be fine," he said.

"Dude, you know I've got a Ring doorbell, right?"

Word: breath | Action: hold

