

Even Finn Hale, strong as he was, fire lord of Ravenstone though he was, could not withstand such bitter cold for long. If only he could sleep, just lie down and sleep. No. From somewhere deep inside, his indomitable will conjured that one word. Right now, sleep was death to him so he had to keep going. He must reach her, the beautiful snow queen. Failing that, he had to find shelter, but there was nothing, had been nothing, not for miles. He might well die, but he swore he would die fighting. He would not give up until his very last breath. Clinging to consciousness, he wrapped his heavy wool cloak about him and stumbled on.

Though it hardly seemed possible, the snow increased while the temperature decreased. Visibility dropped from slight to nil, presenting a whole other host of problems. It would be very easy for him to walk right into a tree or place one foot wrong and end in a crevice with a broken leg. Worse yet, he might even fall right off of the bloody mountain.

It focused his mind a trifle to concentrate on her, his possible future wife. The fact that she was surely aware of his presence and was clearly trying to keep him from going any farther motivated him more than a little. Well, by all the gods, he had come this far and he would not be deterred.

Yet even his resolute spirit could not resist the inevitable. His sense of reality began to waver then it fractured.