

Chapter 10

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

Silver Sky peered into the brilliant blue chamber. If only Rebecca could be here to see this with him, he thought.

Careful not to slip on the slick ice, he edged his way towards the loud stream. The water was crystal clear and moved swiftly across its bed of pebbles. From its origin high up the chamber it cascaded down a stair-step ledge before tracing a zigzag pattern through the ice room and disappearing in the far darkness that hid the remainder of the space.

“All that ice is above me,” thought Silver Sky. He looked to the high ceiling uncertainly, remembering the sight of the vast glacier from above. Despite the gem-like quality of the walls around him, he was quickly becoming tired of snow and ice. It seemed an awfully tricky substance.

“Well,” he pondered, “I can’t stay here all day. I must find Rebecca.” That meant finding a way out. Despite the brilliant blue glow about him, the day must be advancing. Night would come soon. He did not relish the thought of being stuck under the glacier in the dark.

It would be impossible for him to climb back up the way he fell, he decided. The only other choice would be to follow the stream. Its meandering path proved far from efficient, and often Silver Sky would swear it looped back on itself.

The stream-carved tunnel was smooth as a pane of glass. It was all he could do to keep from slipping. On more than one occasion, he found himself sliding down a tunnel on his tummy, legs sprawled out to either side. The tunnel often echoed with his angry growls.

The tunnel slowly descended. What had started as a small stream gradually grew larger, swifter and louder, echoing off the glass-like walls. As the day wound on, the blue walls became darker until it was nearly black inside the tunnel.

Silver Sky’s hopes of getting out before nightfall began to fade. As the last lights were about to go out, the tunnel widened. The ice beneath his hooves gave way to wet sand. The stream raged past, mostly heard now instead of seen.

“Time to call it a night, I suppose. I hope Rebecca is all right,” he fretted.

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Rebecca looked down the hole. It was about the right size for a flailing horse plummeting from a cliff to make. She looked up towards the cliff. The distance seemed about right, as well.

“Silver Sky!” she called, but there was no answer other than the echoes of her voice bouncing off the mountain sides.

The hole was pretty deep, she thought. She untied the rope from the sled and, holding one end, she lowered it in. The rope dangled in midair, not even half way down. She pulled it back up and tied it back to the sled. Could he have managed that without breaking, she wondered.

“Silver Sky!” she called again. This time, the echo was accompanied by a sickly cracking sound, which slowly evolved into a rolling rumble.

The ground around Rebecca began to shake and she quickly backed away from the hole, not wanting to fall in.

Looking back towards the cliff, she stood dumbfounded. The cliff was moving, and quickly. A giant cloud of snow was billowing outward and swiftly approaching. Advancing with blinding speed, a wall of snow charged down the mountain gathering speed and ice with every inch and foot.

“That shouldn’t happen,” she said, pointing in disbelief and surprise.

Clutching at the rope, she ran away from the avalanche pulling the sled behind. It was a futile effort and she knew it. As she gained speed she jumped on the sled just as the wall of ice hit.

She could feel the snow pack closely around her as the sled rose to the top of the river of snow. It carried her at greater and greater speed. The wind whipped at her face and hair as she clutched tightly to the sled, a small brown raft in the midst of blinding white.

Each instant carried her further away from where she had hoped to find Silver Sky. Looking back she could see the spot she had been scant few moments ago. Snow flowed like water untold fathoms deep over where the hole had been. How would she find Silver Sky now?

In despair she looked forward again knowing there was nothing to be done until she came to a stop. Still gathering speed and aiming steeply downhill she held on tight.

In any other situation, the view would have been wondrous. The glacier flowed downhill, ending in the far off distance in a large river and forests. The wide glacier, bounded by dark stony mountains, tapered away into moraines of gray rock and sand.

The sound of the avalanche deafened Rebecca. The end of the glacier was approaching more quickly than she imagined it ever could. The sled raced downhill blurring the surroundings. Holding tightly, she felt the sled lurch harshly. Once more she was airborne. Looking down, Rebecca realized, with a sickening feeling in the pit of her stomach, that she had run out of glacier.

As the sled flew through the air, the snow from the avalanche poured over the side of the glacier like a great waterfall. Below her, however, there were only rocks, and no snow to soften her landing this time.

Closing her eyes tightly, she held onto the rope. With a nauseating crunch and the splintering of wood, the world went dark.

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Silver Sky opened his eyes to piercing light. Slowly standing up, he tried to get his bearings. He had no idea how far he’d wandered before setting down for the night. It was a good deal brighter here than it had been the day before.

The stream flowed much faster here, and descended steeply. He followed the water, carefully watching each step. The water was muddier looking and carved through sand and gravel instead of ice.

As he turned the corner he came face to face with the sun. Squinting, he could make out the tunnel exit. He galloped out of the ice, proud that he had made it out on his own.

It was then that he saw something in the distance that scared him.