Arrow in the Dark

by

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Red blood on white snow. It leaked from his shoulder onto the ground. Teeth clenched he tried to push himself up to a kneeling position but his wounded shoulder couldn't support his weight. Collapsing to the ground he struck his face into the snow.

Rolling to his back his breath hissed out of him. White steam floating up and fat snow falling down into his eyes. Groaning he used his good arm to leverage himself to a seated position. From there he managed, only falling twice, to gain his feet. Squinting against the thickening snow he stumbled farther up the mountain.

~oOo~

"Or'Thani!"

He heard his name called from outside the hut. Rather than answer right away he threw another log onto the fire, the flames caused shadows to dance on the walls. The door flew open on its leather hinges. The man who entered was tall by his people’s standards with an unkempt beard.

"Cousin, didn't you hear me calling you?"

"I heard Tel'Arath. I just didn't answer you. What do you want?"

"Want? No wants cousin. Need. I need your help."

Or’Thani looked up from where he sat and took a good look at his cousin. He was shuffling from foot to foot subtly. One hand was on his belt by his knife and the other was pulling at his beard.

"What do you *need* then?"

"It's the Turathan. They raided our village two nights ago."

"And what does that have to do with me? I haven't been welcome in the village for years."

Tel'Arath grunted and continued pulling at his beard.

“They took several girls.”

“I still don’t see how that affects me.”

"One of the girls they took was Se’Lah. I know you have no reason to care about her but I'm going after them and I need your help."

Now it was Or'Thani's turn to grunt. He began smoothing his own beard.

"They've got two days head start on us. Even if we go after them they'll be over the mountain before we could catch them."

"I don't care! She's my daughter. I'm getting her back!"

“Adopted daughter.”

“Does it matter?”

Or'Thani held up his hands trying to soothe Tel'Arath.

"Relax Tel. I will help you. But we will need more than two of us. Who else is going with you?"

Tel'Arath began kicking the dirt floor. "None. They are all too afraid to attack the Turathan."

Or'Thani grunted again and rocked back. He sat still for a moment thinking, hand on chin, before clambering to his feet. Knees popping he winced as he stood. Tel'Arath must have seen the discomfort on his face.

"When we get Se'Lah back I'll have her draw more tattoos on your knees to help with the pain."

"I'm not sure that even more spells and inks will help. Not at my age."

He picked up his supply bag and began filling it with goods. Kicking dirt over the fire he smothered it causing him to shiver almost immediately. He picked up his shaggy grass cloak and settled it on his shoulders. Grabbing his bow from above the entrance way he turned back to Tel'Arath.

"Come."

"Where are we going cousin?"

"I told you, we need more than two to rescue Se'Lah. I know someone who can help us."

Tel'Arath narrowed his eyes at him but followed outside. The two of them began trekking farther up into the hills.

"Where and who is this help?"

"His name is Kel'Theron and he lives a few miles that way."

Tel grunted again. They walked for half an hour. The moon shone overhead painting the landscape in shades of gray. Before long they saw another hut. A tendril of smoke drifted through a hole in the roof. Or'Thani pounded on the door with his fist.

The door was yanked open and a short man leapt out with a copper axe in his hand. Yelling loudly he brandished the weapon above his head. Tel'Arath jumped backwards scrambling for his own weapon. Or'Thani remained motionless in front if the door.

"Hello Kel'Theron. Is this how you greet a friend?"

Kel'Theron dropped the axe to his side and broke out in a grin. He threw his arms wide and embraced Or'Thani in a bear hug. Lifting him off the ground he spun him around before setting him down.

"Thani, you old bastard! What are you doing here at this time of night?"

"I need help Kel. This is my cousin Tel'Arath. The Turathan have stolen his daughter and we need help going after them."

"The Turathan. Have you lost your minds? Just let her go."

Tel puffed up his chest and stepped forward but Or'Thani held out his hand stopping him.

"That's not an option. She is my cousin’s daughter. I have to go. Will you help me?"

Kel cocked an eye while clenching his jaw. Finally he gave him a stuff nod while saying "Aye, I'll help. We'll probably all end up on their altars but I'll help."

"Good. If we do this right maybe no one will wind up writhing on any altar."

"Huh. Sure. I don't hold out hope though. Alright, come on in. We can't leave tonight anyway. Might as well start when the sun comes up."

~oOo~

Thani jumped at the hand on his shoulder.

"Easy" said Kel as he knelt above him. "The sun is coming up. If we're going we should go now."

Thani grunted as he pushed himself up from his straw mat. Across the room he could see Tel stretching and letting out a yawn.

"Do you have anything we can eat while we move?"

"You mean you didn't bring your own food and want to eat all of mine" Kel replied. "Fine. I have some deer meat around here."

He went outside to his meat locker and came back with strips of jerky packed in snow.

"Now that everyone has food are we ready" he grumbled.

Tel and Thani didn't respond. Instead they shouldered their own supplies and followed him outside. The trio set off with Thani leading the way. Kel complained constantly.

"Do you have to take such huge strides? I can't believe that I agreed to this. Of course it would start snowing."

Every time he would complain Tel would roll his eyes. Finally he asked Thani quietly "does he always bitch so".

Thani chuckled. "Yes. Always. But he is a good man. When I broke my leg last season he carried me two miles to have it set and watched my flock until I could stand again. I never asked for his help and he refused any thanks. He would walk through fire for his friends. Bitching the whole way."

Tel sighed. "Fine. I'll tolerate it for now."

~oOo~

The three of them marched on farther up the mountain pass. The snow fell on them as they reached the highest point.

"We have to move faster" Thani shouted over the wind. "Otherwise we're going to be buried and they'll be finding our bodies when this snow thaws."

Tel didn't answer beyond wrapping a cloth around his face. Even Kel was too busy shivering to complain. The tree of then stumbled strapped on their snow shoes and pushed sore legs and heaving lungs farther.

Thani spotted something in the distance. Motioning to the others that began moving to their right until they reached what he had seen. The mouth of a cave.

"Kel, go inside and begin setting up camp. Tel and I will gather firewood."

The two of them began collecting what firewood that they could find. Numb hands clutched frozen branches as they staggered into the cave.

"At least the wind is less in here" Kel mumbled.

Thani and Tel dropped their loads into the circle of stones he had made. They collapsed against the cave wall shivering. Kel began arranging the wood before stuffing it with tinder. Out came his fire stones.

Click. Click. Click. Spark.

A small spark lit the tinder and he gently began blowing it to life. It took a while but he eventually brought the fire to life. Sap crackled and popped as it melted and ran. The trio huddled around the small flames hands outstretched.

"Come, we need to eat" Thani finally said. He dug through his pack for more deer jerky and small hard loaves of hard bread.

Tel took his and stared down at it a moment before speaking. "What if Se'Lah is already dead by the time we get there?"

"She won't be" Kel answered as he bit into the tough food. "The Turathan only sacrifice at the full moon. That is still a week away."

"But what if this storm keeps us here that long?"

"It won't cousin" Thani replied.

"If it does then we will find a way for revenge" Kel said from the other side.

The rest of the night was passed in silence. They ate and one by one fell asleep listening to the wind outside their cave.

When Thani woke the next morning Tel was already up. He was pacing in front of the opening watching the snow fall.

"Come away cousin. Pacing won't make the storm end any sooner."

Tel sat and ate but he was never truly still. His hands shook and his feet tapped at the floor.

"If you don't stop that incessant tapping I will tie your legs together" Kel snarled at him.

Tel was up like a shot. "I'd like to see you try little man."

Kel was on his feet, still looking up at Tel, in an instant. Both of them had hands on weapons. Thani stepped between them and put a hand to each man’s chest.

"Tel, this man is here risking his life to help us. Calm down." He looked at the shorter man. "Kel, he has lost his daughter. That would make any man tense. Leave it alone."

Both men stared at each other before moving to either sides of the cave. Tel went back to pacing while Kel began sharpening his axe. Thani let out a sigh and took up station at the cave mouth.

The next morning he was roughly shaken awake before dawn.

"Wake up cousin! The storm has broken. We must go!"

"Mmm" he mumbled while he stood. The men wrapped their furs around themselves and walked stiffly out into the predawn.

~oOo~

"There it is" Kel whispered.

The three of them lay on their bellies on a low hill, below them stood the Turathan city. Roughhewn log homes and more important buildings covered in mud siding. Sitting in the middle of everything was the temple. It was a massive wood and stone building decorated with paintings and animal carcasses. Surrounding the city was a massive stone wall.

"That's where we have to get to" said Tel.

"That's going to be easier said than done" replied Kel.

"Not if we are smart about it" said Thani. "We'll wait until nightfall. Circle around to the other side. Slip in right as they close the gate. We'll tell them that we came from the southern tribes and are looking to sell furs."

The three of them slid back down the hill and circled around the city slowly. It took most of the day to work their way around to the southern entrance. They hid in a small grove close to the gate. Reclining against a tree Kel began eating.

“How can you eat at a time like this” Tel demanded.

“Have to eat while I can. Later will probably be nothing but running and screaming with blood everywhere.”

Thani watched the sky grow slowly dimmer. Finally he turned to the others and said "it's time. Let's go."

The three of them collected their gear and walked to the gate. Thani could feel his heart pounding in his chest. Sweat coated his palms and slicked the handle of his bow.

The guard at the gates stepped into the road and stopped them with an outstretched hand.

"Who are you and what is your purpose here?"

"We're fur traders from the lands south of here. We came to show samples of our wares" Thani replied.

"Well armed for fur traders" the guard responded.

"The roads aren't safe these days. It's best to be prepared."

"Well, you've come at a good time. The priests have called for a special ceremony tonight. Afterwards will be a huge celebration and you will probably make many sales."

"What kind of ceremony" asked Tel.?

"A special sacrifice to the old gods is all that I know."

Thani could see Tel tense up and prayed that he wouldn't give them away.

Luckily he kept his composure and simply gave the guard a nod and a grunt.

"Move along then" the guard instructed. "We'd like to close the gate before nightfall."

The three men walked through the gate and into the city. They followed the maze of streets towards the temple in the center. All around them were decorations and lanterns. People were everywhere laughing and preparing for the nights festivities.

After close to an hour they made their way to the temple.

"How do we get in" asked Tel.

"Leave that to me" replied Kel.

He walked directly to the guard at the entranceway.

"I am Kel'Theron. I have been sent by my chief in the south to pay homage to the old gods as part of the ceremony."

The guard cocked an eye at him. "No one told me anything about that."

"Well then go ask one of the priests about it. Quickly!"

When the guard turned to go inside Kel struck him over the head with his axe. The guard fell forward through the doorway. Thani and Tel looked around to make sure that no one had witnessed what hapenned. Seeing no one looking they hurried through the doorway after Kel.

Inside the temple was light by tallow candles that cast a sickly yellow light. The floor was covered with fresh straw. To their right was a small room filled with hanging robes. Kel and Thani drug the guard’s body inside and hid it behind the hanging garments.

Back in the hallway they could hear chanting coming from the inner chambers of the temple. Thani nocked an arrow to his bow while the other two took hold of their own weapons. Walking in half crouches they crept through the halls. Coming to large inner room they could see a half dozen robed priests standing in a circle chanting. In the center of the circle were three pillars each with a young girl tied to it. Tied to the center pillar was Se’Lah.

One of the priests stepped forward drawing a flint knife from under his robe. He approached Se’Lah and roughly grabbed her by the hair. The chanting rose in volume as he brought the knife to her throat. Her crying could be heard even above the priests.

Thani wasted no more time. Leaping into the room he let fly an arrow that took the head priest in between his shoulder blades. He cried out as he fell forward. Tel and Kel rushed past him into the mass of confused priests and set to work with their weapons.

Drawing his own flint knife Thani stabbed at a priest trying to escape the room. The priest caught his wrist and they locked in a struggle over the knife. Wrestling around the room Thani tripped over a body and fell. As he fell the knife slipped from his grip and he felt it slash his thumb. Pain exploded in his hand. Falling to his back he held his hands up to block a strike from above. Suddenly the priest stiffened. He dropped the knife and reached for the small of his back. He fell on top of Thani unmoving.

Rolling him off of him he saw the knife in his back. Looking up he saw the smiling face of Tel. Reaching down a hand he said “couldn’t let him kill my favorite cousin.”

Stretching out his uninjured hand he was pulled to his feet. He could smell the coppery scent of blood. Their surprise was complete though and he saw that all of the priests were on the ground. Cutting off a strip of fabric from the dead priests robe he hurriedly wrapped his hand.

Tel hurried to where Se’Lah was tied while Kel began untying the others. Tel pulled Se’Lah to his shoulder when she was free. She collapsed against him crying onto his chest.

Thani stepped over the corpses to the lead priest and pulled his arrow out of his back. As he did so the priest cried out in pain. Thani stuck a foot under his shoulder and rolled him over. Kneeling down he placed the edge of his knife to his throat.

“Stop. You cannot take the girls” the priest croaked out.

“Tell me why I can’t.”

“Because they are the sacrifice. The ritual to bring back the old gods calls for three.”

Thani grimaced at him. “Why would you want to bring back the old gods? They would devour the world.”

The priest raised his head off of the ground and grinned at him with blood covered teeth. “Good. Let them consume it all. When it is gone I would be a king in the next world.”

Thani snarled at him and brought his knife up above his head. When it came down again the priest was no longer smiling.

“Cousin” Tel called out, “It’s time to get out of here.”

“Agreed. Let’s go.”

“First things first though” Tel said. He walked over to the altar and kicked it over. The burning candles fell to the ground where they caught the straw on fire.

Thani grabbed Tel by the front of his shirt and shook him. “Damn it Tel, why did you go and do that?”

“These bastards stole our village’s daughters to sacrifice to their gods. Gods who if they weren’t banished beyond the world would destroy it. Well, let their temple burn. Let their whole damn city burn I say!”

Thani stared hard at him but finally released him and walked towards the exit. Leading the way he placed an arrow on his string. It briefly registered to him that it was the same arrow he had used earlier. Stepping into the hall he turned the corner to see a guard rushing at him. He quickly drew and released the arrow catching the man in the throat. The man fell gurgling and his feet drumming on the ground. His struggles quickly grew weaker however before stopping altogether.

Jogging down the corridor Thani bent to retrieve his arrow. He was forced to stand on the dead man’s chest for leverage. Grimacing he pulled the arrow free. He swallowed against a sudden rise of nausea and jerked his head motioning his comrades to follow him.

They slipped out a side entrance of the temple. Head swiveling side to side Thani led them behind a house close by.

"Here is what we are going to do. It won't be long before they discover the bodies. We're going to walk to the north gate like nothing is unusual. If we can get out tonight we will. If we can't we'll lay low until the morning."

He looked around at his little party. The girls had mostly stopped crying save for the occasional sniffle. Their eyes were still puffy however. He hoped that no one would look too closely at them.

The streets were still just as crowded if not more so. Vendors had carts set up selling goods. On one street corner a trio was set up with a harp, a reed flute and a hand drum playing music.

With the crowd pressing in from all sides Thani could feel his heart beating faster. He resisted the urge to start shoving people aside and making a run for it.

They had made it halfway to the gates before the shouting started. It was faint at first but it got louder as others joined in the confused shouting. The people around them started moving towards the temple trying to discover what the commotion was about. The crowd began to buffet them around as they moved in the opposite direction.

"Everyone hold hands" Thani called out. He felt Se'Lah take his left hand. He fought back the urge to jerk his hand away from hers. "Keep moving."

Single file they forced their way through to the north gate. The city was in an uproar by this point. At the gate they found a group of guards staring into the distance. Some we're standing on their tiptoes trying to see farther. One was on top of the wall leaning out staring towards the temple.

Thani approached who he presumed to be the leader. It took him a moment to get his attention.

"What is going on" the guard asked.

"There is a fire at the temple" Thani replied. "We are afraid that it is spreading. We're trying to escape. Others are right behind us. Open the gate quick."

By this point the other guards had gathered around them. He could see their eyes go wide. They began mumbling to themselves.

The head guard cocked his head to the side as he looked Thani in the face. "How do I know I can believe you?"

"You can see the smoke from the fires from here."

"That doesn't mean anything. You could" he cut off as they heard ram horns begin to blow in the distance. That blasted out a staccato signal.

"That's the signal to shut the gates." The guard turned to issue commands to the others when Tel rushed forward to stab him in the back.

Thani quickly drew an arrow and let fly at the guard on the wall. The guard lunged to his left but Thani heard him cry out. He spun around to face the other guards. Using his bow he pushed the tip of a spear to the side. It passed close enough to slice the side of his shirt. He stepped in close as he drew another arrow and stabbed upwards with it. It slid under the man’s ribs.

Shoving him aside as he fell he saw another guard drive his spear into Kel's ribs. Kel fell to the ground clutching his side. The guard raised his spear for another thrust when Tel tackled him to the ground. He quickly sat on the man’s chest and slit his throat with his knife.

The remaining guard threw down his spear and ran screaming along the street.

"Quickly Thani, shoot him" called out Tel.

"Let him go" Thank replied. "We need to get out of here while we can. Help me with Kel."

They tore a wide strip of cloth from one if the dead guards robe and tied up Kel's wound. He was pale and his breathing was fast and shallow. As gingerly as possible Tel and Thani eased him up onto Thani’s shoulders. He cried out but fell silently almost immediately. Glancing to his right Thani could see his face. His eyes were barely open and he hung limp.

"Let’s move. We need to put some distance between us and the city before more guards come after us."

"I wouldn't worry too much" said Tel. "It's possible that the fire really will spread and burn the city down."

“Still, we need to keep moving. We need to be half way up that mountain before they realize what's going on."

He could see Se'Lah and the other girls looking up the mountain with eyes wide. The three of them fidgeted with their clothes.

"Don't worry" Thani said to them. "It will be tough but it isn't unclimbable. If an old man like me can make it I know you can."

Starting up the slope there was little talking, with legs cramping and breath steaming out of them there was little air for talking. The group picked up the pace as best they could. Stumbling up the darkened mountain branches slapped them in the face and roots caught feet tripping them up. After an hour or more of moving Thani stopped to look down the mountain.

"Look below us Tel."

Tel did as he was instructed. He could see the city below them burning in the distance.

"Your handiwork" said Thani. "I believe no more will come after us tonight."

They eased Kel off of his shoulders and onto the ground. Se'Lah gasped when she saw the blood on Thani's cloak. Thani hadn't even realized how much had poured onto his clothes.

Kel himself was only semi-conscious. His breathing was shallow and rapid. Peeling back the bandage they examined the wound.

“It is very deep. I'm sorry my friend."

Kel nodded weakly to him.

“We need to make camp. I’ll try to start us a small fire.”

Tel nodded. “I’ll help you. Se’Lah, come watch over Kel while we gather wood. The rest of you stay here. Do not wander off.”

~oOo~

Thani woke as soon as the hand touched his shoulder. Leaping up he had his axe in his hand and his head darted side to side seeking attackers. One of the girls, Al’Kila he believed, screamed from where she knelt on the ground. Her cry woke the rest of the party.

“What is it” demanded Tel. The girl began crying in her surprise.

“It is the injured man” she said between sobs. “He is dead.”

“Damn” said Thani softly. Walking to where Kel’s body lay he knelt stiffly beside him. He touched his neck looking for a pulse but there was none to be found. Thani felt hot tears on his cheeks that quickly turned cold.

"I'm sorry my friend. You were a good man. I wish I had never asked you to come."

Standing up slowly he turned to face the others. The girls were huddled together weeping. It seemed that all they did was cry. He felt his blood begin to simmer.

"If all you can do is stand around and cry, at least do something useful! Find me some damn rocks to cover him up with."

The three girls went even wider eyed and ran stumbling into the dark to do as he asked. Tel's eyes narrowed as they met his. "I know that he was your friend cousin but l'll ask you to not scream at my daughter so. She's been through a lot."

"Been through a lot has she? Don't forget everything I've been through to help you get her back. And definitely don't forget that Kel died helping you."

Tel looked down at the snow. "I haven't forgotten."

"Good" Thani said somewhat mollified. He began stroking his beard while he waited. The girls, with help from Tel, began bringing back armloads of rocks. Kneeling beside Kel's body he carefully constructed a cairn. When it was done he sang quietly over the grave. A song that was older than he. Possibly as old as the human race.

As his song finished the sun peaked above the edge of the mountain. Bracing off of the cairn he pushed himself to his feet. He bent to retrieve his gear and looked farther up the slope.

"Come. We have many miles to go. Home is calling me."

He began walking again not looking behind him. Soon he heard crunching snow behind him.

They walked for hours taking occasional breaks. As the sun began to descend he spotted the cave they had used days before.

"This worked for us once. It should work again."

"I think we should keep pushing on" Tel replied.

"Everyone is tired. We need a break. Besides, the sun is almost down and this is a good campsite."

Tel mumbled but took two of the girls and began collecting firewood. Thani arranged the wood over the ashes of their former fire and began striking stones together until it lit. Tel began pacing again at the entrance of the cave.

"What are you pacing for this time" Thani demanded.

"I'm eager to be home is all. I thought that you were too."

"I am but I'm also not keen on climbing a mountain in the dark."

"I know that cousin! You've made it perfectly clear how scared you are."

"Scared is it? At first it's all help me help me. Now I'm a coward? You ungrateful ass."

Tel stopped pacing and stood over him hands clenched at his sides. “You are a coward!”

Thani leapt to his feet dropping the deer meat that he had been eating. Standing face to face with Tel he shouted back. “I’m a coward? Where were you when I was driven out of our village dear cousin? Hiding in your home that’s where.”

Tel stuck his face against Thani's putting them nose to nose. "Hiding? You deserved to be kicked out. You killed a man."

“He deserved to die. He stole my wife!”

“If you weren’t infertile and had given her the child she wanted she wouldn’t have gone looking somewhere else.”

“Well she got the child that she wanted and don’t act like you didn’t get what you wanted after he died. I notice it wasn’t long before she and her daughter were living in your home.”

Behind him he could hear Se’Lah gasp.

“She came to me because she wanted a real man to raise her daughter. Not a cowardly murderer.”

Thani shoved him backwards. Tel came back with a roar swinging at Thani's head. He blocked the punch and tackled the slighter man to the ground. The two of them rolled on the ground biting, punching and scratching at each other. Finally they came to rest with Thani on top. He raised his fist to strike Tel again but stopped himself short. He puffed out a deep breath and was about to offer Tel a hand up when he was struck in the back of the head.

He fell to the ground clutching his head. Se'Lah stood over him with a branch that had been collected for firewood. She struck him again with her makeshift weapon. He curled into a ball as she rained blows down on him. She made the mistake of stepping to close however and he snuck out a hand to grab her ankle. He pulled her foot out from under her causing her to crash to the floor.

He jumped to his feet and stood over her huffing in gasps of air. Suddenly he felt a lance of pain in his shoulder. Crying out in pain he fell to one knee. Reaching over his shoulder he could feel the arrow buried into his flesh. He was scrabbling on all fours, trying to gain his feet, when the bow clattered beside him. Tel dropped it before kneeling down beside him.

"I'm sorry cousin. I didn't mean for this to happen. But at least this way I can take all the credit. I'll be a hero. They might even make me chieftain."

"You bastard."

"It's true" he said as he stood back up. "I am a bastard." Turning to the girls he said "let's go. Grab everything."

Thani tried to stand. Tried to bite back tears. He failed at both as he listened to the others leave the cave.

"I hope you all freeze on this mountain" he said to their retreating backs. The group never turned around. And then they were gone and he was alone with the arrow in his back.

He reached his right hand over his left shoulder. It was awkward and brought on a wave of agony but he persevered. He could just barely reach it. Taking his knife in hand he went to work trying to saw through the shaft.

It took him hours to get it done. The odd angle didn't help. Neither did the intense pain. He had to stop many times thinking that he might pass out. Finally it fell free. He could still feel the arrowhead grinding against his shoulder blade. Wrapping his shoulder as best he could he leaned against the cave wall and slept fitfully for a few hours.

He woke to the early morning light bouncing off of the snow. Picking up his bow and what supplies he had left he staggered outside. His shoulder throbbed. His hand ached. His head felt like a drum. It was all that he could do to put one foot in front of the other.

He stumbled up the mountain for hours. At some point he must have opened the wound in his shoulder. He could feel warm liquid run down his side and back. Inevitably it found its way to the snow. He kept pushing forward until, lightheaded, he fell to his knees and then to his face. He struggled back to his feet and continued on.

He reached a rocky outcropping that required both hands to climb. He draped his bow crossways across his body and began to climb hand over hand. He was halfway up when his left shoulder gave out. He cried out as he felt himself fall.

The fall was just enough to crack his skull again and drive the breath from him. He tried to sit up but he saw stars and his stomach roiled. Lying on his back was agony however. He could feel the remains of the arrow driving deeper into his shoulder. He rolled over, face down, lying on his arm. With the pressure off of his back the pain subsided slightly. He lay there, head spinning, breathing into the powdery snow.

"Get up" he told himself but he couldn't make his body respond. He could feel his lids grow heavy. "You have to move." He still couldn't make his body respond. At last his eyes closed and never opened again.

About the Author

Stewart Felkel lives in Sterlington, La with his beautiful wife and their three fur babies. He has been a band director, music minister and optician. His hobbies include an eclectic mix of things such as boxing, archery, bow making, medieval combat and writing. For freebies, news of upcoming works and the occasional book review check out his site www.stewartfelkel.weebly.com.