

A Search in the Snow

By Josh Noble

A long time ago, in a land far away, there was a little village in the mountains. Right outside the village, there was a dark forest. This forest was no ordinary forest—it was a magical forest. Talking trees, evil icemen, glowing rocks, and the evil, beautiful Snow Enchantress were all said to inhabit the forest, especially in the dark months of winter. Many of the families of the village had horrifying tales to tell their children about the other kids in the village who were kidnapped by the Enchantress, never to be seen again. Most of the stories were thought to be tales to scare the children from going into the woods, as no one had ever seen the Enchantress. However, among the townspeople, there was an unexplainable dread of the forest.

On the edge of the town there was a little cottage, the home of the village blacksmith, Erik. Erik, who was a widower, had one child, eleven-year old Jenny. Erik worked in the blacksmith shop, and Jenny ran the house because of the absence of her mother.

One day in winter, while Erik was at the blacksmith shop, Jenny was working and she noticed the fire starting to die down. A frequent occurrence, Jenny stopped what she was doing and went behind the cottage to get more firewood. Once she got the firewood, she looked into the forest and saw something that was very strange to her. Under the trees, there was something glowing. Knowing the tales about glowing objects in the forest, she decided to get a closer look. Dropping the firewood, she started walking into the woods. As she got closer to the glowing object she exclaimed, “How strange! When I think I am getting close to it, it suddenly looks farther away.” Then she realized it was a trick to get her deeper into the woods! She turned and tried to run back to the house, but her legs felt extremely heavy. She could barely move!

“Help! Help! Help!” Jenny screamed. I must be under a spell, thought Jenny. Then she fell asleep under the spell. Very quickly, the Snow Enchantress appeared from the snow and said a few words of magic. Within seconds, icemen appeared to haul Jenny away to the Enchantress’s ice castle in the mountains.

Hearing Jenny’s cries for help, an elderly neighbor, Frau (Mrs.) Oswald came over to see what the matter was. Looking into the woods, Frau Oswald was astonished to see the Snow Enchantress and her icemen. Before she could

say anything, the Enchantress turned her into a raven! The raven, surprised to be on the ground, flew off into the trees.

When Erik came home at the end of the day, he couldn't find Jenny. As he was looking around outside, he saw firewood in the snow by the edge of the woods. Looking closer at the firewood, he noticed tracks going into the forest. He followed the tracks into the woods until the footprints stopped in an area of trampled-down snow. It seemed as if many heavy men had walked all around the area and then took off into the woods.

"Something must have happened to her here," said Erik to himself, "and I'm going to find out what."

He gathered the supplies he needed: a lantern and matches, food, warm clothes, and his gun. Once he was ready, he set out on his mission to find Jenny. For over a week, he trekked through the woods as he followed the path of trampled snow. As he journeyed through the forest, he noticed many strange and magical things. He saw glowing rocks and trees, and he even saw three snowmen having an iced tea party! One night, Erik was woken up by whispers. Since there was no one around, he was mystified, until he remembered the tales of the talking trees.

After seeing all the strange things in the magical forest, Erik thought it was likely the legendary Snow Enchantress was real as well. Could it be possible the Snow Enchantress had captured Jenny and her icemen had dragged them away? He was unsure.

For over a week Erik followed the "snow trail" through the magical wood as he headed into the mountains. Thankfully, there were no heavy snows to cover the tracks of the icemen.

Unfortunately, on the tenth day of his search, his luck changed, and it started really snowing. Realizing the snowstorm could turn into a blizzard, Erik looked for cover. Finally, he found a little cave made by the roots of a fallen oak tree. He crawled under the roots. Before long, the storm escalated into a blizzard; Erik was thankful for the shelter from the wind and snow. Tired from the day, Erik fell asleep under the roots.

In the morning, Erik tried to crawl out from the shelter, but it was buried in snow! After digging an opening, he crawled out into the forest. He looked around, and the tracks he had been following had disappeared under the fresh blanket of snow. There would be no way he could find Jenny. Devastated, Erik knew he probably would never see his daughter again.

Trudging on in despair, Erik came to a huge tree standing by itself in a clearing. Unsure of whether to go on or to turn back, he sank down at the base

of the tree. As he sat there, he heard a small voice. Unsure of what it was, he asked the voice to identify itself. Upon hearing it was the tree he was leaning against, he asked the tree if it could help him. The tree told him that the icemen had carried away a girl to the Snow Enchantress's castle in the mountains. Erik was dismayed by these words, assuming the Snow Enchantress's castle was very far away. However, he soon found out the castle was only two days' journey away—he was elated. When he heard this from the tree, Erik asked how to get to the Enchantress's castle. The tree told him to climb over the top of the mountain and after descending, he would find the castle.

Erik set out with new purpose and climbed up the mountain for the rest of the day. When he reached the summit, he could see the Snow Enchantress's castle! The next day he spent descending the mountain while getting closer to the ice castle.

In the morning, he traveled the remaining miles to the castle. When he got there, he was amazed how the castle was made completely of ice. He opened the ice gate and walked into the castle. Inside, there was a long, ice-walled hallway. Before he had walked fifty feet down the hallway, he was met by three huge menacing icemen. The very angry icemen were intent on bringing Erik to the Enchantress. They charged at Erik, but he quickly lit a lantern and swung it at them. The icemen, terrified of fire, turned around and ran for their lives. Erik chased them the rest of the length of the hallway and kept chasing them down into the dungeon. Once he got to the door of the dungeon, he slammed it shut, and they were locked inside. With the icemen locked up, he could search for Jenny.

After looking around the castle for hours, Erik came to a huge room where there was a throne and lots of ice blocks. As he looked around, he found Jenny—encased in ice! He had found her at last! But was she alive? Taking a closer look, he saw that she was breathing. Erik did not know how she could be alive in a block of ice, but he knew there was not a second to lose. He started melting the ice with his lantern and breaking it using his gun as a club. When he was halfway to freeing Jenny, he heard footsteps coming from the other room.

“Oh no!” thought Erik, “it's the Enchantress!” He quickly hid behind the throne.

The Snow Enchantress came into the room and saw that someone had tried to rescue Jenny. Angrily, she started making a spell to put her back into her completely frozen state. When Erik saw the Enchantress's back was turned

toward him, he jumped out from his hiding place and attacked. The Snow Enchantress, hearing Erik coming, turned around and cast the spell prepared for Jenny onto Erik. He felt his feet getting frozen first, then he could feel the ice going up his legs. Erik, with his legs frozen, remembered the lantern in his hand. In desperation, he threw it at the Snow Enchantress, and it hit her in the head! Erik was surprised by what happened next. The heat had immediately turned the Snow Enchantress into a statue of ice! Soon all of her spells were broken.

Finding himself free of ice, Erik walked over to Jenny and found her awake! They were joyously reunited. Afterwards, he told her about the events leading up to her rescue. She then told him how she had been captured by the Enchantress and put under a sleep spell. After staying a little bit longer, they began their return trip.

The journey to the castle was long for Erik, and the journey back from the castle was even longer with Jenny. Even though the trip took a long time, they were very glad to be back together and it was a lot more enjoyable. Within three weeks, they found themselves back at their cottage. They were very glad to be back home.

A couple of days after Erik and Jenny had arrived back at their cottage, Frau Oswald visited them. When she told them she had been turned into a raven by the Enchantress, Erik and Jenny were astounded. Then Erik told the story of his and Jenny's adventure and how the Enchantress's spells were broken, and Frau Oswald was equally astonished.

Upon hearing Erik and Jenny's tale (they had already heard Frau Oswald's), the townspeople wholeheartedly believed them. Even today, the ice castle, the icemen, and the frozen Enchantress are all still there for people to see. Erik and Jenny lived happily ever after.