



# ***CRYSTAL SILENCE***

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## *Crystal Silence*

There are days when the mountains call you with a voice that drowns out everything else. Not with words, but with wind-sculpted silence, with the shiver of snow under your boots, with the sun slicing golden lines across jagged ridges. That morning, the world below me—its traffic, its noise, its smudged routines—had faded like fog in rising sunlight. All that remained was me, my skis, and the slope.

It wasn't a slope you find on ski maps. No dotted lines, no warning signs. Just a vast, untouched expanse of white, terrifying in its beauty and steep enough to make your lungs forget how to breathe. I stood at the edge of it, the wind pawing at my jacket like a dog unsure if it should bark or bite. Below me, the descent dropped like a breath held too long. But I was drawn to it...Because I live for that drop.

I pushed off, and the mountain came alive beneath me. Snow sprayed out in sheets, each turn more defiant than the last. My legs burned, but my spirit soared. The slope didn't welcome you—it tested you, asked if you really wanted this, if you understood what it meant to dance with gravity on its sharpest stage.

And then the world cracked. I didn't see it.

One moment, I was carving clean arcs into the powder. The next, the ground beneath me gave way. A sound like paper tearing through the core of the Earth filled my ears. The snow groaned, collapsed, disappeared. I shouted something—instinct, not language—and suddenly I was falling. Not tumbling. Falling. Air rushed past my face like a scream with no throat. My limbs flailed. My mind shattered into fragments, each one screaming a different prayer, a different memory. I saw my mother's face, lit by warm light. I saw my dog, ears perked, waiting by the door. I saw the stars above my first night run. And then I saw the wall of ice: smooth, sheer, impossibly close.

I was falling beside it. A narrow vertical crevasse had swallowed me, and the walls raced past like frozen blue ghosts. Time stretched thin. I reached to my side—automatic, desperate—and my fingers found my ice axe. I didn't think. I *dared*. With a cry ripped from the core of my being, I swung. Metal bit ice... Pain sang through my arm as the jolt hit me. My shoulder wrenched. But I held. I didn't stop falling. The axe didn't stop me like in the movies. It slowed me. Tore through layers of ice as I clung to it like a soul clings to its body. My feet slammed against the crevasse wall. My helmet clipped the side. But I was no longer

in free fall. When I finally came to a halt, dangling from the axe embedded in the frozen wall, the silence was absolute. The kind of silence that reminds you how close death really is. I dangled there, chest heaving, the sharp taste of metal in my mouth. My vision blurred. I looked down—darkness, endless. Looked up—light was far, far away, unreachable.

But I had chosen to live.

Every inch of ice I struck with my crampons, every tug on the axe, was a battle between surrender and defiance. I screamed sometimes. I cried sometimes. I didn't care. The mountain didn't care either. It simply *watched*. With each blow into the ice, I came closer to life. And when I finally pulled myself over the lip of the crevasse, back onto the snow-covered slope, I collapsed. My body curled into the earth like a newborn. I cried, face buried in the snow, grateful that tears were still possible. I didn't move for a long time...When I finally stood, everything had changed.

The sky, once just blue, now burned with depth. The sun no longer simply shone—it *sang*. The snowflakes drifting lazily from above each felt like a tiny miracle, soft and alive and pure. I looked at the trees below, their branches bare but noble, and felt as though I were seeing them for the first time. A raven croaked in the distance, and its voice broke my heart with its simplicity. I was alive. I was *aware* of it.

It's funny how we live most of our lives not truly seeing what surrounds us. The quiet beauty of a cloud passing overhead, the way light moves through pine needles, the feel of wind on your cheeks—it all becomes wallpaper. But nearly dying... nearly dying strips everything bare. Hence life reveals itself as the masterpiece it has always been, right under your nose.

As I stood atop that slope, where death had reached for me and missed, I felt no fear. No dread. Just gratitude, as deep and wide as the sky itself. I breathed it in like it was oxygen I'd been deprived of for years. And I swore, not aloud, but in the language of the soul, that I would not forget. Not the fall, not the ice, not the climb...And certainly not the miracle of still standing.