

Though fully aware of the efficacy and finality of that bite, the fox set his teeth again, and again, with curious deliberation of movement, into the limp and unresisting form. Then, with his tongue hanging a little from his bloody jaws, he lifted his head and stared, with a curious, wavering, anxiously doubtful look, over the white familiar fields. The world, somehow, looked strange and blurry to him. He turned, leaving the dead mink on the ice, and painfully retraced his deeply crimsoned trail. Just ahead was the opening in the log, the way to that privacy which he desperately craved. The code of all the aristocrats of the wild kindred, subtly binding even in that supreme hour, forbade that he should consent to yield himself to death in the garish publicity of the open. With the last of his strength he crawled into the log, till just the bushy tip of his tail protruded to betray him. There he lay down with one paw over his nose, and sank into the long sleep. For an hour the frost bit hard upon the fields, stiffening to stone the bodies but now so hot with eager life. Then the snow came thick and silent, filling the emptiness with a moving blurr, and buried away all witness of the fight.