

NIGHT PATROL

by Maurice Givens

This is the second winter William has spent at this outpost on the lakeshore. He was thinking about how much he hated night guard duty, especially in the winter. This winter was particularly severe. The temperature was ten below zero, there were twenty inches of snow on unplowed streets and unshoveled sidewalks. The weather whipped everyone into submission. With the wind whistling at thirty five miles per hour, the wind chill factor was minus forty degrees. At the lake, the waves that normally attacked the shore furiously were huddled beneath the frozen lake surface, afraid to face the onslaught of this January.

Trudging through the snow, William walked the compound perimeter. He stopped periodically and strained to listen for sounds in the night. He heard nothing. He pulled his coat tighter to ward off the cold winter air, and continued his patrol.

Myron watched William from his hidden lookout spot. He was not bothered by the cold. He watched William do his march along the perimeter, timing his route, and waited for his chance. Myron knew that the extremely cold air froze the snow on the ground. He knew that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to surprise William when each footstep would crunch the snow loudly.

William stopped and again strained to hear anything. Even though William heard nothing, he had a very uneasy feeling. He looked all around. He saw nothing, he heard nothing. Still, the hairs on the back of his neck were standing at attention, signaling danger. He cautiously returned to his patrol.

Seemingly from nowhere, William heard the crunch of footsteps on the frozen snow behind him. He took a deep breath, and readied himself for the inevitable conflict. He quickly turned to see a river of flame coming toward him. On nothing but instinct, he evaded the initial onslaught and advanced toward his attacker, swinging his broadsword.

Myron blocked William's thrust and set himself for his next attack. William swung again. Myron blocked the blow, breaking William's sword arm. Myron then grabbed William around the throat, choking and killing him. Myron sat in the snow and composed himself.

When he caught his breath, he picked up William's lifeless body, carried it to his home, and hung it in his meat freezer, a hook behind his home. Seeing this, Myron's wife thought what a lucky dragon she was to have such a wonderful provider for a husband.