The Griffin

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Dawn. A reddish gleam appeared along the hills. Pale haze swept over the frozen slopes, catching on the gaunt pines that made the forest, twisting, rippling apart and reforming. The thick snow clung forlornly to the ground and the trees. It was very cold.

The griffin padded quietly, yet swiftly through the snow, her ugly snout-beak testing the air before her, her rudimentary wings pressed tightly to her back. The trees towered above, gaunt in their winter coat of brown-green needles. Their tops hung lost in the mist. Everything, save only the meaning, ever shifting wind was silent.

The scent which the griffin sought reached her from across the waste. Man! And something else. The beast's snarl of hatred sent beaked lips writhing back. Her long, poisoned fangs gleamed in the dim light and the feathers between her wings rose. Cautiously she followed her trail.

Creating a hill, she locked down. A house was there, a cabin, with a shed and, and there, there in that enclosure by the shed.... She began softly to hum a spell of sorts for capture and death, she sang slaughter. Murder incarnate, the griffin slipped silently down the slope.

"Why'r them horses screaming so?" complained the Old Woman as she bent by the hearth frying her Old Man's breakfast.

"Can't say that I know!" he snapped back. He stood up slowly and paced over to the door, pulling up the door covering. "They're actin' might odd," he said, scratching his head, "pawing around. I suppose it might be a bear. But they aren't usually that bold. I don't know."

"Goodman... Squire O'Neal's son said he saw a, a griffin over Connacht way. You don't think...?"

"Hell no! The last griffin 'round here died fifty winters ago. Bears is bad enough without no damn griffin!"

"Goodman, there's a sound on the wind. Do you hear it? A singing of sorts." He moved to the door, pulling on his great coat. "Goodman, when a bear or other natural beast attacks or hunts, it makes no sound!"

"Where's my axe? I'll take a look around."

Weapon in hand, he trudged out into the snow.

The griffin stood panting against the fence. The great muscles of her back and neck rippled with expectation. The hideous tune she sang and the strange vitality of her eyes hypnotized her prey. Occasionally a horse shivered nervously. Screaming the griffin attacked. Her small wings spread wide and slammed down, chasing her up and over the fence. Her hellish jaws which could rend a wolf or a man tore into the paralyzed horses. The animals shrieked wildly, but were hopelessly trapped by her spell. Try as they might, they couldn't move.

Death followed swiftly and horribly.

"Damn monster! I'll get yeh!" The Old Man swung wildly. The axe bit deep into the griffin's back. There was a scream and a huge black shape spang up from the torn, red carcass of a horse. Wildly it twisted about howling, and attacked. The Old Man swung again, opening its skull before it destroyed him. The monster fled over the fence and away. Soon nothing of it was left save a distant echoing howl, and a faint trail of blood flying off into the mist.

"Old Man," she screamed from the door, "how do you?

Redness and pain. She dragged herself slowly up the hill. Home, she must get home. Her hind quarters useless, one wing torn off, the griffin crawled forward on two legs. Bleeding from two great wounds, each enough to kill a man or any other beast, she clung tenaciously to life. She crawled on, with her last strength pulling her home. She tried, but even her fantastic vitality wasn't enough. The griffin died there, on the hill crest. Her eyes set on the wilderness and home. Without her to feed them, her chicks would soon die too.

That was a Narnian breeze, from somewhere beyond the Lone Islands, from the last reach of the Dawn Treader's voyage into Utter East. And it blew precisely thru this Missouri window, carrying the scent of lillies from the Silver Sea (where Reepicheep cast away his sword & entered the Lion's exhilarating Land).