

Monstrous it was beyond any dragon of gold and fire and green. Its scales were painted ice on its colorless hide, its fangs blue-ice and its eyes like a frosted pane. Its breath came in frozen flakes and its talons moved with the sound like the scrape of ice on a lost ship's bow. With a roar like snow down the rocks the monster reared and plunged. Conrad leapt with his keen knife high, struck—and an ice chip turned from the tempered steel. Deep in that mountain cavern thick with the monster's breath, the man's swift feet made game of that dragon's bulk. And often and often he struck and the green ice flew.

The tusks glitter it lurched and flung him down. But lying there crushed by its hulk, as though by an avalanche still he clipped and splintered the great green throat that roared like a cataract in his dreaming ears, and ever he squirmed from the talons of cutting ice

Crash of frozen and and crusted snow, slither and thud of ice, and no more the dim white rocks cried at the dragon's cry. The staunch arm of Conrad fell to his aching side. He crawled from beneath the headless hulk of his foe and rose and gazed through the gloom. All seemed so strangely still. There lay the dragon of ice like a winter hill. Then lowered the cavern walls, and above them hung a sweep of the frozen sky and the lovely moon. Conrad with aching hands unstrapped the skiis, flung them, one cracked across the back, and drew into his stiffling breast the dragon's breath that filled the cavern like a cold white cloud.

With the hard, tough toe of his boot and his hunting knife he carved out niche on niche in the cavern walls, and clambered out to the stars and the thin clear frost.

And now he sped again. Urged by the long delay he kept his ski unbound, nor did he wipe the crimson from his face but took his race on swift feet by gorge and crag and ledge. Above the grind, crunch, grind of slender skiis came the cry of the wind in the pine and the wilder cry of goblin to goblin over the chasmed snow.

Turning with body's swing a sudden bend Conrad saw in the narrow path an old hunched dwarf that sat with head against a sullen rock and dangled spindled legs above the gorge. His face was yellow and a fearful look lurked in his eyes, and his bony hands tore lonely gruesome tunes from a worn harp of some lost hero's bones.

"Good-day," he said, "my harp is very old, see how the green mold clings upon the frame, but it still gives a gay and lively tune. Perhaps you have a wassil song to play?" He thrust the thing into the youth's strong hands, and Conrad, struck the first note of a brave ballad of Viking revelry, and woke a wail within the dark ravine below.

Then seeing the dwarf's eyes shift and sudden dart of meagre arms to clasp his legs he flung the rattling bones against the ancient head, and he was off along the windy pass.

*(To be Continued)*