

The Guard

By: Andrew J. Hill

*For when Icarus flew to close to the sun,
the wax melted and he fell into the sea.*

*But what if Icarus didn't die
and was forced to walk the ground
after flying to great heights in the air?*

Day 1,856

It was warm in the asylum. Uncomfortably warm, even for the dry heat of west Texas. The kind of warmth to make a man sweat but not give him the satisfaction of a hard day's work. The shift had just started but Eddy Brooks was already daydreaming. He had been a detective before his life went to hell. Before he was demoted to a security guard over the loonies. It was embarrassing, they could hardly be considered to have higher brain function. On most days, he would just help pass time by pretending to be the voices for Crazy Old Jim, but today it was simply impossible to even find enjoyment in that.

There was no enjoyment in his job at the asylum. Eddy yearned for his glory days as a detective. He was a hound dog, finding the worst of criminals and bringing them to justice. He ruined it just like he did with everything. He accused the wrong person, a completely innocent man, and now he had to pay for it. The Captain told him to leave as if there was anything there to hold him to the precinct, and away Eddy went into the unknown. A few weeks later he scored a decent job here at the asylum and that was that. Years later and he could feel every brain cell slipping away every time he put on his new uniform. This job was a joke, "securing" the barely functioning inmates who were already locked anyway. He wanted action, he wanted some excitement in his life, anything but just staring at the pale, yellow wall across from him, paint chipping further and further with each year he spent in the godforsaken prison.

“I should have joined the damn war,” Eddy whispered to himself. “At least then I would be doing something with myself instead of just rotting here *these* people.” He mumbled to himself a little more as Darlene, his favorite doctor, passed by. A petite woman, though she didn’t seem so with how she commanded a room. She had skin like milk, raven hair, and vivid green eyes that could stare into your soul. Eddy could have sworn he was falling in love with her.

“Mornin’ Darlene. How goes the rounds?” he called out.

“They’re just fine Ed. No problems over here,” she said with a hint of a smile. God, he did love that smile.

“Good. Just checking in, you know? Wanna make sure I don’t need to go have a talking with Old Jim again.”

“Don’t you torment that man enough?” she said with a look.

“Well I, uh, I just kid with him is all. We have fun” Eddy chuckled.

“I don’t want it happening again.” No smile this time.

“Yes ma’am, it won’t.”

“Good. The last thing we need right now is a lawsuit for malpractice on a patient. We don’t want to get shut down, especially because a security guard was messing around with a patient.” Smile this time but Eddy knew it was sarcastic. What a woman.

“I promise, nothin’ will happen with him again ma’am.” With a quick sigh and a smile Darlene walked away, and Eddy was left to his thoughts once more.

Bored and with nothing to do, Eddy made himself a cup of coffee and began reading the paper. *Boring, dull, nothing of interest* ringing through his mind as he flipped through the pages when finally, something caught his eye.

“Detective Murphy Cracks Another! The Lakeside Lyncher Brought to
Justice!”

Oh, great thought Eddy, another story about “Detective” Murphy.

“Det. Murphy, a 5-year veteran of the force has cracked yet another case involving the murder of 17 young women from Lakeside. The Detective was brought on to the force following the ‘Fiasco of the False Accusation’ led by former detective Eddy Brooks...”

Fiasco? Eddy thought. The only fiasco was that the Captain wouldn’t let me continue solving that case. It was MINE and he decided that it wasn’t “worth our resources” to continue following.

Following his reading, Eddy got up to stretch and walked around the building for a bit. Past the main hallway, through the cafeteria, and finally to the electrotherapy room. Eddy paused for a second there. The room always gave him the creeps, all the wires everywhere. It was a sparse room, just a chair and a metal box full of dials and wires. The grey walls gave it an ominous feel when the red light was on and you heard the hum of the machine. People changed from who they were when they entered this room. They never came out the same, some could

even say that the person they were died in this room only to be replaced by something new, something different, something that wasn't even there before all of this.

Before he could think about it anymore, Eddy left the room with a shiver and went on his way. He needed something to cheer him up. Eddy thought for a second and finally figured out what it was: he needed to pay Old Jim a visit. Eddy knew he promised Darlene, but it was only one more time. Besides, last time he did it he didn't know it would be his last. It had to be the biggest one yet, something to remember. He walked down the main hall back to his office so that he could grab his key and on he went.

Eddy was practically skipping when he arrived at Old Jim's cell. Giddy as a child, Eddy peered around the corner into Jim's cell where he saw the man backed up and facing the corner. Jim wasn't the tallest man in the world, nor was he the skinniest. His ash grey hair fell to about his shoulders onto his white hospital garments. His beard had been unshaven for a couple months and had finally filled out his face. He was muttering to himself in that corner in a language only he could understand. *Perfect timing* Eddy thought.

"Jiiim" he whispered in a sing-song voice. "Jiiiiim. What are you doing Jim?"

"Please go." Jim cried out. "I just want to be alone for a little bit so I can finish saying goodbye to the wall. He says I'll be going soon along with a lot of the other people here."

"Now where would you be going, Jim? You'd just leave all of your friends here? No no no, I think you should stay right where you are. In fact, I don't like you thinking that you're ever leaving." Jim stayed quiet for a minute. It looked like he was pondering what to say next to the voice.

“But... But I don’t want to be here anymore. I want to be out in the world so I can talk to the birds again. So I can hear the trees songs again. Please just let me go listen to all of them.”

“NO!” Eddy boomed. “You know why you’re here, Jim. You kept listening to your oven about how hungry it was. So, you took your granddaughter and shoved her into that oven at 500 degrees. You cooked her alive and when her parents came to pick her up, you were happy that she went to feed your oven. You *killed* her.”

At the last word, Jim shook a little. “I didn’t... I didn’t kill my baby. I would never...”

“Are you crying, Jim? How do you think that your granddaughter felt when you, her grandfather, shoved her into an oven and cooked her alive? Do you still hear her screams at night or do the voices help drown her out? Is that really why you want to leave, just so you don’t have to be stuck in a damn cell hearing her skin catch fire over and over while she screamed for help?” Eddy left as he heard the old man start to shudder.

That night Jim would cry himself to sleep and embrace his last day on earth. Eddy went home and fell asleep, content with his justice that he imposed.

II

The Dream

Eddy's dreams were always interesting ever since he lost his job. More like memories than actual dreams. Past experiences that he had all just clumped together, jumbled in his head. Tonight was no exception, but tonight was also different from the other dreams. Eddy never dreamed about his father, much less the hunting trip.

The Wyoming Teton range was always a sight, but the snowy mountains were unforgiving in the winter. Of course, that's when dad wanted to take Eddy and his brother, Charlie, out elk hunting at the Grand Teton National Park. While this was in no way legal, what were the boys to do? Say no? They were 10 and 8 at the time and their father was always looking for an excuse to beat them. Their mother had left shortly after Charlie was born so it's not like the boys could stay anywhere else. To the Tetons they traveled hunting gear in hand and in search of elk to eat.

The dream, as dreams do, flashed forward. Eddy sat near a tree, rifle in hand, looking for any signs of life. Dad had spotted some tracks the day prior, but so far nothing came of it. Eddy hated being out here, he just wanted to be back home. The hunting and the guns didn't bother him so much, he just found no enjoyment from it. There was no joy to be found while he was out here.

"Boy, you see anything yet?" his father whispered to him.

“No sir. Not yet. You?”

“Nah trust me, if I had seen anything you’d’ve heard a shot by now right? Think before you speak damn it.” He was just as grumpy as usual.

“Yes sir” Eddy mumbled. He really did hate it out here.

That’s when he saw it. A huge female elk, a “cow” as the ranger had called them when they arrived. Easily 5 feet tall up to the shoulder, her copper coat could not be missed. Eddy whispered to his dad, “Hey, I’ve got one over here.”

Dad shuffled around the tree they were up against to get a better look. *Was he smiling?* “Alright son. You saw it, so it’s your shot. Aim where I told ya, breathe, and pull the trigger okay?”

It was at that moment when a second, smaller elk showed up around by the cow. A calf, probably no more than 6 months old. The baby elk was with its mother. Suddenly the idea of shooting the elk just felt so wrong. It was one thing to shoot an elk, but its another to shoot a cow while it’s right next to its calf. Eddy looked at his father in horror, “You want me to shoot that?”

“Boy, we gotta eat. We either shoot that elk or we will starve. Now go on take care of it.”

“But... Dad, I’m sure more will be around soon I just...” The sound of a gun went off as Eddy’s father aimed his own rifle and shot the cow through the eye. A good, clean shot. The calf cried out and ran away. Eddy’s father looked at him in disgust, smile gone and walked away, leaving Eddy alone to skin the mother.

At this point the dream shifted to a different scene. Eddy was older, that nasty business in the Tetons well behind them. He sat in a room with the Captain and they were discussing a case

just like the old days. The Captain, with his smug look and mousy brown chevron mustache. The man had an aura of superiority about him that no one could ever quite match. Superiority or quite possibly arrogance. Eddy despised the man with every fiber of his being, and he was sure the Captain felt the same way.

“So, Detective Brooks,” The Captain started. “You’re sure of this plan of action, are you? You know you will catch this crook that you’ve been chasing for the past eight months? Even if all leads have seemingly vanished and the murder charge itself is speculative?”

“Yes sir Captain. I’m sure of it. I know it was murder and I know I can prove it if I just have the right evidence. I know I can.” The Captain sighed at this and looked down at his desk.

“Look son, we can all prove anything we want with the right evidence. I just want to make sure you’re looking at the actual evidence and not looking too far into this.”

He doubted me. He always did. Never thought I was worth anything. I’ll show him, I’ll find the right man, and I will bring him to justice. “Do you doubt me, Captain?”

“Eddy it’s not that I doubt you, I just want to make sure we’re following the right leads and finding the right people is all. You’re very close to this case with the victim being your father and I shouldn’t have let you on it to begin with. I’ve already told Burton to start filing everything away, and with Murphy’s help maybe we can get you on something more beneficial to the department. What do you say?”

Eddy thought for a second, pondering the words. *He’s already packing up? But I’m so close. I’m sure I’ll get the man’s name, but he won’t even let me try to arrest him... What if...*

“Captain... Were you involved? Did you kill my father?”

Eddy woke from his nightmare in a cold sweat. That long forgotten memory of his father and when he accused the Captain. He knew that the Captain had something to do with the crime. Eddy knew he wasn't crazy, he couldn't be. That had to be the only reason he would ever try to just shut him down when he was so close. He had to be involved. After that accusation, the corrupted Captain had Eddy kicked off the force and left him with nothing. He took the job at the asylum and ruined the rest of his career. It's all his fault.

Eddy got up took his shower and went on his way to work. Another boring day wasting him away. Eddy deserved more, He always did.

You're right Eddy

Of course I'm right he thought as he pulled into the parking lot. Eddy walked into the asylum, clocked in and took his post in the office. The wall was a little more chipped from yesterday as it always is.

You always deserved more. You fought your way to the top, you deserve that.

I do deserve that. I worked so hard for the force and that's how they treated me. Eddy sat down, already bored from this dead-end job. He didn't sleep well the night before, looked at his watch and decided he could take a nap. When Eddy awoke, he stretched and got up from his seat. Eddy checked his watch, *Crap!* He realized that more time had passed than he had thought. It

had already been a couple hours which meant that Darlene was about to arrive and do her rounds. She swung around the corner and said hi with a smile. *God, that smile.*

It's a shame, Eddy. That is a pretty smile.

Eddy began to realize that the voice he was hearing wasn't exactly his own. "H-hello?" He called out. No answer.

He tried again starting to feel as though he were falling. "Is anyone there? Hello?" Silence.

Starting to get annoyed, Eddy called out a third time. "Look answer right now or I'll call the police. Are you still there?"

I'm here Eddy. I'm always here.

Eddy heard Darlene scream, a sound which could curdle his blood. The asylum alarm went off and the room flooded with red, flashing lights. The world went black as Eddy heard the sirens and saw the red lights flashing. The paint cracked a little more as he hit the ground.

III

The Nightmare

Eddy woke up looking at that beautiful angel of a woman covered in red. Darlene was dead. Her dull, green eyes glazed over no longer holding the life she had. Yesterday she was fine, full of life. Now, she was a corpse with a bleeding wound in the chest. And Eddy was holding the knife.

“But I wouldn’t do a thing like that,” he mumbled to himself in his panicked state. “It’s a setup. Has to be. One of the inmates killed her after he knocked me unconscious and planted the knife. Yeah...Yeah, that makes sense.” Eddy didn’t know if the things he said would calm him or terrify him more, but he had to get his head on straight. He had to use that detective brain of his and figure this out. *Think damn it, think. Get ahold of yourself.*

Oh, but Eddy, the fun was just starting.

The voice again, louder this time. “Who are you?” he cried out. “Why are you doing this to me?” The voice had no response for him, so Eddy walked on forward. If it was an escaped inmate Eddy Brooks was going to find him. He started down the hall towards Old Jim’s cell. It was open along with the rest of the cells in the area. Upon arrival, the foul scent of Old Jim hit fast. Jim had been there for a while, unlike Darlene. He was strung up with telephone wire tied to

the top of his cell gate and split down the middle. *What kind of sick bastard would do this to the man? He may have killed his granddaughter, but he didn't deserve all of this. Did this happen while I was asleep?*

Oh, he wasn't fun. Practically begged me to do it. But still, what a rush. What a delicious rush.

Eddy thought of hurling. This monster was horrible. No one deserved to die this way. Not even Old Jim. Eddy walked down the corridor finding bodies left and right all done in a similar fashion. All bodies, no lives. It was horrible. Eddy had to leave and returned to Darlene. Eddy could see the look of terror on her face and tried to imagine her last thoughts as she bled out. *What would have caused her to be so scared? Why am I still alive? Why did I have the knife?*

Is the answer not obvious Eddy?

“Please, just tell me. Why am I here? Why are you doing this? What did they do to you?”

Why? They annoyed me. Every day it was all the same, I simply had to change things up a bit.

“But why am I still alive?” Eddy demanded. “What could I possibly do to deserve all of this? To wake up next to a corpse holding the murder weapon? What did I do to you?”

A long pause occurred before the voice started talking again.

Do you really not understand Eddy? After all of this, have you not been paying attention?

Who am I? Well, the answer is quite simple: I am you.

Eddy was stunned. “Me? That’s... That’s not possible. I think I’d know if I killed all of these people. No, no, you have nothing to do with me. You’re just another loon and you’re just trying to get in my head.”

Am I? you don’t remember when I was first created because I willed it to be so.

“I was born when you killed your father”

Eddy realized that the voice that said that was his. Out loud. He had said those words. Yet he didn’t even think them. They spilled out of his body, but he had not said them. “What do you mean when I killed my father? I would never... I couldn’t.”

“Oh, but you did. Whether or not if you meant to, you killed him and then I came along.

I helped you by making you forget, by leaving a trail for you to follow.

You always needed another case, so I gave you the best of your life.

You were a detective because of me and nothing else.”

Eddy couldn't believe it. *I killed Dad... Did I really kill him?* “What are you doing here?”

“I'm protecting us. We needed some excitement in our lives. We needed to play a little.

Even you know that this job is beneath you. Had you not taken it,

I may not have ever been able to come back out to help you.

So, for that reason alone I am grateful. You need me to live Eddy,

I bring excitement to your life. And so what if a couple people had to die?

They were meaningless. We are all that matter.”

Eddy was dumbfounded. “But all these people... We killed all of them... for fun?” Eddy couldn't believe it. He couldn't accept that he had killed so many, much less for a reason as macabre as delight in their death. “Will this be the end of it?”

“I don't think so. I'd like to keep going. So many people out there.

So many new deaths to give. In fact, let's go deal more justice out on the world!”

“Justice?” Eddy stammered. “You call this justice? What did Darlene do? What did the other officers do to deserve death?”

“I told you. They annoyed me. Not Darlene though, She just didn’t want to join in on the fun.

She was threatening to kill us, so I killed her.”

Eddy sat for a second to think about what to do next when he realized what he must do.

“No. I think this is enough.” Eddy began walking across the building.

“What do you mean to do?”

“I won’t let you kill any more innocent people.” Eddy reached the room he was looking for. The electrotherapy room, damn cold as always. Today the cold metal was inviting, spooky but more inviting than the blood-stained walls he passed to get here. Eddy walked over to the chair and began strapping himself in, thinking of Darlene’s horrified face the entire time. *I’m so sorry.* Eddy was halfway through strapping in when he started to feel the room swimming. The Monster was struggling for control.

Eddy, you need me. Don’t do this we can live together. I won’t let you continue.

Afraid he would pass out soon Eddy finished preparations and began turning on the machine.

NO!

Eddy sat down and looked up at the ceiling. He imagined Darlene as she was yesterday, full of life. He did love that woman. He was beginning to lose consciousness; the Monster was winning his fight. He cranked the amps up as high as they went and closed his eyes. *Detective Eddy Brooks' finest hour.*

YOU CAN'T!!!

He opened his eyes and took a deep breath

Eddy flipped the switch and the world went black.

END