

### "Warm Welcome"

By the time Idmon had been pushed away from twenty three houses, he suffered a broken leg, four eye pokes, a burnt scalp and more scrapes and scratches than he cared to count. His back ached. "Get out!" they would shout at him, when they had words at all, but most often they simply screamed and struck out, trying to rid him from their spaces, even the planet. He knew their hospitality so he was usually prepared, but sometimes he wasn't quite quick enough. A warm space, that's all he wanted. Somewhere in from the wind, somewhere that wouldn't make him too tired to move and freeze his skeleton to the sidewalk. A little food, too. That would be nice.

He knew he was intimidating. For his size, he was stronger than anyone ought to be, and they didn't much like his cunning, either. They didn't see that he could be of great help, a vigilant night watchman, and keep order in the depths of their households. His very survival depended on watching, but here he was again, broken. His entire body throbbed and he had to drag himself onward after an old woman in hair rollers went after him with an umbrella all the way to the end of her driveway, where a man then tried to run him over with his car. Still, he never fought back. What was the point? So here he was, on the doorstep of house number twenty four. Idmon looked up, hopeful. *Please have mercy on my soul. Take me in and let me be of service. I promise I will make you happy until I die.*

Firelight glowed through the windowpanes and Idmon yearned to be within. He took a few painful steps, winced, and drug his broken body toward the front door when a small boy leapt out of the house, scarf and hat falling away as he chased a restless dog onto the lawn. "Help me. Please. Angel of heaven!" Idmon begged the child. The boy bent over to retrieve his hat and

regarded Idmon for the first time, slumped there, spasming in pain. Like the others, the boy was wary, too, but little boys were good at seeing past ugly exteriors. They knew ugly could be useful.

The dog sniffed Idmon's face, but the boy held the dog away, patting its rump back up the stairs. "Go. Go in!" Then the boy reached out to Idmon, leading him with gentle hands into the safety of the house and away from the crippling cold. "Merciful God! Thank you for this boy!" Idmon cried with happiness as the boy smiled down upon him, carried him upstairs, and deposited him into a glass box. Then Idmon was quickly swallowed by a lizard. Spiders were useful after all.

