

Frozen Chosin is a fictional account of one small episode in the winter of 1950 during The Korean War written by Dennis Maulsby.

The Marines were retreating toward the Korean coastal city of Hungnam, where Navy transports waited. It seemed like months rather than nine days since the withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir. Lieutenant Teigler remembered his shock that first morning when he learned a Chinese force, outnumbering them four to one, surrounded them. Members of the Corps didn't give up. They picked up their wounded and dead and fought through the People's Volunteer Army, lashed by a bitter mountain winter that tried to destroy both friend and enemy with equal ferocity. Yesterday, he and Sergeant Davis had stumbled across a failed enemy ambush—a hundred frozen Chinese dug in along a ridgeline—blue-veined marble hands still gripping rifles and machine guns.

Teigler took a clumsy step. Sergeant Davis noticed. “Better let me look at them feet, Sir, may lose 'em to fros'bite.”

The sergeant glanced back and then dropped to his knees. “Jesus, Sir, we got a Chinese squad on our ass!”

Davis unslung his carbine and pushed Teigler into the ditch at the roadside. The officer pulled at the flap on his holster. It resisted, leather stiff in the thirty below zero weather. The first two Chinese trotted over the rise.

“Shit! Shit! Shit!” Davis cursed as his cold-locked carbine refused to fire.

Teigler pulled out his GI .45—his movements slowed by layers of clothing and the cold. The enemy fired. The pistol was sheathed in ice. He blew on the spur hammer and forced it back to full cock.

The Colt boomed. Pieces of ice flew off to sting his forehead like little razors. Burnt powder singed his nostrils, and the first enemy soldier dropped. Teigler felt a heavy blow against his chest. Rocking back, the gun fired at each of the Chinese in turn. It was magic. He pointed his wand, and the puppets' strings were cut.

Teigler groaned. A bullet had ricocheted off the frozen ground and lodged in his left pectoral muscle. At least it didn't require a bandage. His own frozen blood sealed the wound. Where was Davis? He rolled over. The sergeant sat on his heels, hands twitching, staring, his face a shattered wooden mask.

Teigler's cracked lips quivered as he realized the man's lower jaw had been completely shot off. The sergeant should be dead, but the cold...the goddamned cold had stopped the bleeding.

The .45 became weightless. It lifted his hand and arm, stopping in line with Davis's heart. Teigler struggled to keep from crying—tears would freeze his eyelashes shut, and he would be blind.

First Prize Award, Mary Eastham the Flash Fiction Contest, Soul-Making Literary Contest by The National League of American Pen Women.