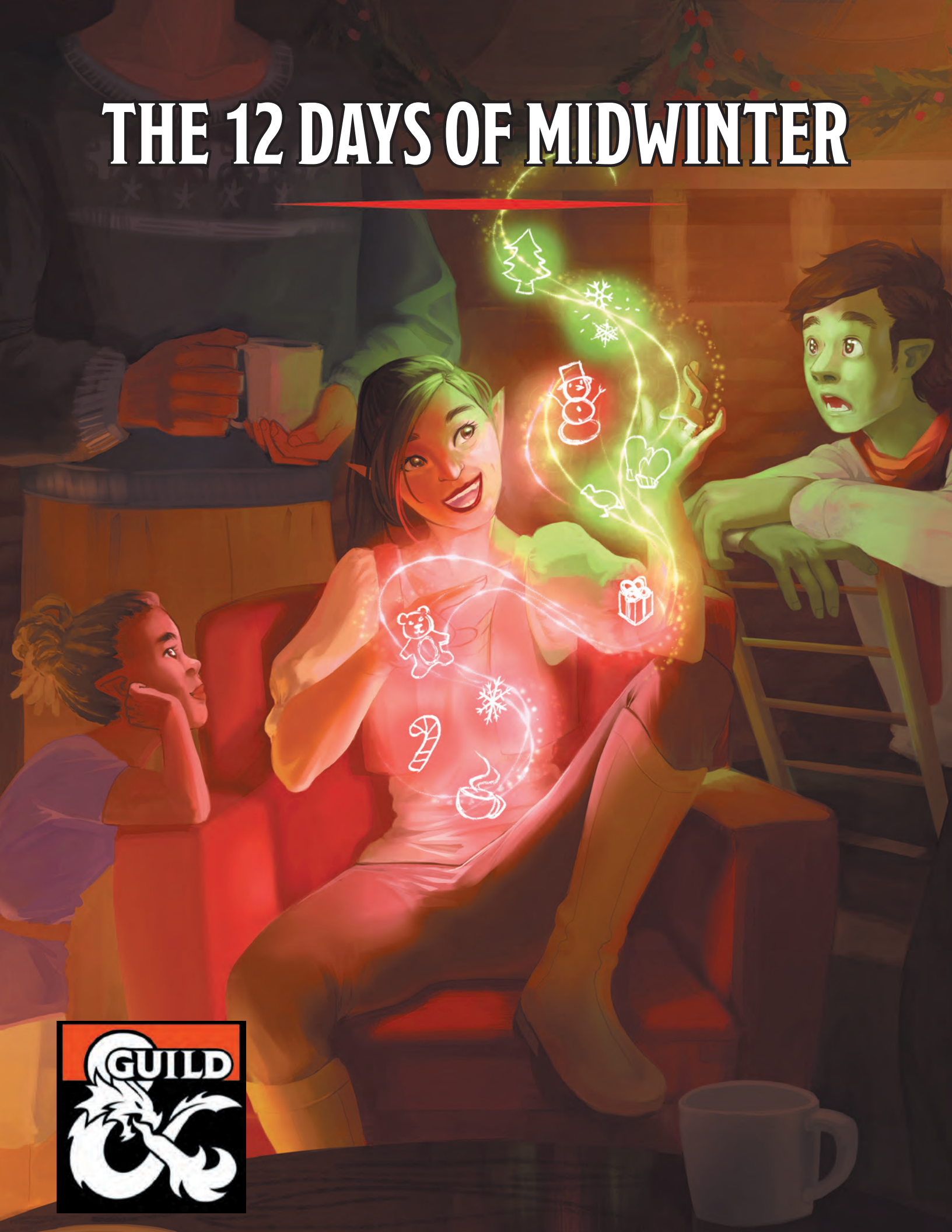


THE 12 DAYS OF MIDWINTER



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INTRODUCTION

The 12 Days of Midwinter is a collection of *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures inspired by the mythology, traditions, and lore of the Winter season. This collection features adventures designed for every Tier of play, for characters between levels 1 and 20.

Each of the twelve adventures is a setting-agnostic one-shot, which can be run as a stand-alone adventure or dropped into a preexisting campaign. The adventures in this anthology are not related to one another but, with a bit of ingenuity and DM-discretion, could be combined into a festively epic campaign.

Festive magic items, trinkets, and a Wild Magic Table are found in the appendices at the end of this collection. These tables may be used in conjunction with the twelve adventures, or adventures of your own making, to provide additional festive flavor.



THE UNVEILING

A DARK FIEND IN A RARE SHIELD

Introduction: Three noble families of Baldur's Gate meet during Midwinter to forge a new trade alliance. Unfortunately, the Knights of the Shield, an information network led by the fiend Gargauth, have seen fit to sabotage the meeting by holding The Unveiling - a night of infernal slaughter to honour their patron. Can the PCs keep the family members alive and close the infernal portal?

A 3-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR PLAYERS WITH 1ST - 4TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY JVC PARRY



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

This section provides the adventure's background, a list of prominent NPCs, an overview of the adventure in play, and hooks that you can use to introduce your players' characters to the action.

BACKGROUND

The adventure begins in the **COINSHARE HALL** in **BALDUR'S GATE**, a neutral ground for merchant families to meet and arrange trade deals in relative safety. **THEODREI HAMMERGRAVE**, a renowned merchant of no small esteem, has organized a meeting here with two other heads of mercantile houses; **KIARA ORTANIA** and **MADRIN GRIMEST**. She has chosen to hold the meeting now, during the Midwinter celebrations, as tradition holds that deals made in this season will be prosperous for all.

Unfortunately, Midwinter is revered not just by merchants, but by other, darker factions in Faerûn. One such faction is the **KNIGHTS OF THE SHIELD**; an order dedicated the fiend **GARGAETH**, who is imprisoned within a magical shield. The fiend uses telepathic communication to manipulate the leaders of the order to enact his deeds in the world. While these are often acts of subterfuge and political assassination, it is tradition to host *The Unveiling*, a ritual of infernal bloodlust, each Midwinter.

Unbeknownst to the other merchants, Kiara Ortania is a high-ranking member of the Knights of the Shield and sees this meeting as a perfect opportunity to host *The Unveiling*, and eliminate two of her greatest rivals without ever shedding a drop of blood by her own hand.

The player characters (PCs) have been hired by Coinshare Hall to act as bodyguards and keepers of the peace during the trade negotiations. It's an easy job that pays well.

EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over 3 **Episodes** that take approximately 3 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1: Infernal Summoning.** The PCs hear a disturbance in the lobby of the hall and discover an infernal portal has been opened. Devils spill forth and force characters to retreat. This is the **Call to Action**.
- **Episode 2: Closing the Portal.** The characters, with the help of the NPCs, move throughout Coinshare Hall in search of artifacts that will help them close the portal. The PCs should try to keep the NPCs alive and avoid the barbed devil that stalks them in the shadows. After the characters

discover an item that can help them close the portal, allow them to level up.

- **Episode 3: Removing the Veil.** The characters successfully close the infernal portal, causing the devil pursuing them to disappear. They may also have uncovered enough clues to apprehend Kiara Ortania.

EPISODE 1: INFERNAL SUMMONING

(CALL TO ACTION)

Estimated Duration: 10 - 30 minutes

*The clerics of Gargauth honour two holy days. One of these is *The Unveiling*, which occurs each Midwinter night. This horrific ceremony, rumored to involve gruesome, humanoid sacrifices and heralds the imminent time when Gargauth seizes Faerûn as his unholy kingdom and transports it to Baator, forming the Tenth Pit of Hell.*

—*Faiths & Pantheons*

THE RITUAL COMMENCES

The PCs are serving as keepers of the peace in Coinshare Hall in Baldur's Gate. They have been hired through either the Zhentarim, the Harpers, or by Hammergrave House, whichever is of most interest to everyone involved. Provided none of the merchants are injured during their time at Coinshare Hall, the PCs are to be paid 100 gp each. For each injured merchant, the pay is docked by 30 gp each. Should any merchant die, no payment will be awarded.

It has been three long hours since trade negotiations began. The jovial Midwinter decorations are doing nothing to improve the mood. The three powerful merchants, Theodrei Hammergrave, Kiara Ortania, and Madrin Grimest, have apparently not yet managed to agree when their potential deal should start, let alone what it actually entails.

Suddenly, a loud crash from outside your present chamber breaks the conversation. The three merchants look to you expectantly.

The expectant look from the merchants should be enough to prompt the PCs to investigate the noise. If they fail to act, Theodrei Hammergrave slides her chair back from the table noisily, stands, and says "Do I seriously have to investigate that myself?"

The characters should end up in the lobby of Coinshare Hall. Read or paraphrase the following:

You emerge onto the inner balcony of Coinshare Hall's lobby. In the wood-paneled room beneath you a swirling vortex of green magic has coalesced into a portal. Standing before the portal are three figures dressed in blood-red robes. Each has the lifeless corpse of one of your fellow guards in their grip, their blood spilt over the floor before the door where the portal has formed.

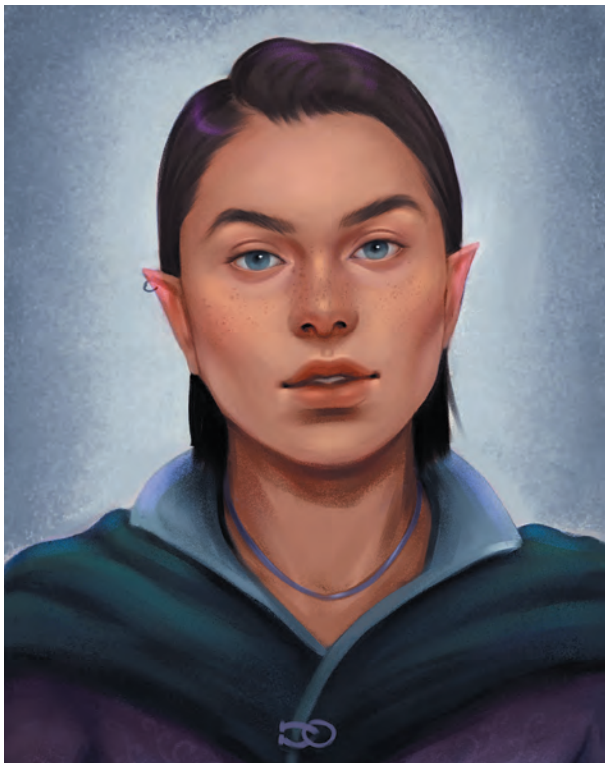
REMOVING THE VEIL

During the adventure, the characters may notice Kiara Ortania acting strangely. Not only does she provide false information, but the devils avoid attacking her. At the DM's discretion, she can even attempt to reveal the characters, such as by knocking over Midwinter decorations to make a racket.

Any time Kiara lies to the characters or does something to reveal their location, the PCs can make a Wisdom (Insight) check contested by Kiara's Charisma (Deception) check. If the characters succeed on three of these checks before failing three, they become convinced that she is lying, and have enough evidence to pin her as a member of the diabolical cult.

The PCs may choose to take justice into their own hands or incarcerate her and give her into the jurisdiction of the Flaming Fist.

PCs who expose Kiara come to learn that she is a member of the Knights of the Shield, a cult dedicated to Gargauth the Outcast. In addition, they should gain an additional 500 XP each or, if using milestones, level up.



AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The lobby is twenty-five feet tall with twin stairs leading to an interior balcony at a height of ten feet. There are four doors at ground level, and a corridor leading to and from the balcony which opens to rooms including the meeting chamber.

Senses. The portal forming in the chamber gives off a feeling of static, making hair stand on end. The chamber smells of fresh blood thanks to the slaughtered guards.

Lighting. The chamber is well lit by two chandeliers hanging from beneath the balcony, each bedecked with Midwinter decorations.

Creatures. There are two **cultists** and a **cult fanatic** in the chamber.

Portal. The open portal has already dispatched devils into the hall, which have spread throughout the ground floor searching for humanoids to slaughter. Each turn, there is a fifty percent chance that it spews out an additional 1d4 **lemures**.

CULTISTS OF GARGAUTH

The lower ranking members of the Knight of the Shield are little more than debased cultists searching for whatever power the devils can offer them. They fight to the death to please their master Gargauth, who they believe will reward their eternal souls in the Nine Hells.

If the characters can take a cultist alive, they can gather the following information:

- The cultists worship Gargauth, the Outsider.
- They were let in by a master of their order, but they never reveal who.
- The portal cannot be closed without magic which the PCs are not capable of casting.

When the PCs return to the chamber to tell the merchants what is going on, those at the meeting are in disbelief. Despite this, the merchants do exactly what the PCs ask of them. The merchants also know a few pieces of information that might be helpful to deal with the current problem (see Episode 2).

EPISODE 2: CLOSING THE PORTAL

Estimated Duration: 60 - 120 minutes

Once the characters have seen the portal they will realize that there is no way out of the house until the portal is closed. The merchants remind them that there is only one door into and out of Coinshare Hall, and there are no windows. All these measures are to protect those within from spies and assassination attempts. Normally, only cleared guests may enter.

Thankfully, each of the merchants knows (or claims to know) of a way to close the portal:

- Madrin Grimest (**noble**) knows of a hidden storage space within the archives that is rumored to contain an ancient sword of immense power. This could perhaps destroy the infernal portal.
- Theodrei Hammergrave (**noble**) knows that there is a secret passageway in the library that provides access to a storage vault of magical items. Rumour has it there is a wizard's tome within filled with warding spells. Maybe this could help?
- Kiara Ortania (**cultist**) claims that there is a secret trapdoor in the banquet hall that leads to an escape route from Coinshare Hall. This is untrue and an attempt to get the characters closer to the portal and the devils.

THE BARBED ONE

Stalking throughout the corridors and chambers of Coinshare Hall is a **barbed devil**. Fighting this foe is beyond the capabilities of the PCs, and each time it appears the DM should describe it in a way that makes this obvious. It could perhaps execute a guard in a gruesome manner, smash through a door with ease, or hurl a ball of flame into a pile of Midwinter decorations.

The barbed devil tracks the characters throughout the hall, trying to kill them before they get the chance to close the portal. If they manage to close the portal, the devil is drawn back through it and destroyed.

The closeness of the devil's pursuit is measured by a pursuit level. It begins at 3, with the devil not far behind the characters. If the pursuit level reaches 5, the devil catches up to them, and engages them in combat not long after. The pursuit level cannot drop below 1 unless the devil is destroyed.

Characters can increase or decrease the pursuit level in the following ways:

- Decrease the pursuit level by 1 when the PCs succeed on a group Dexterity (Stealth) check while moving between rooms.
- Decrease the pursuit level by 1 if a character spends time covering up the party's trail when they move

between rooms, requiring a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check.

- Decrease the pursuit level by 1 each time the characters use a secret method of movement, such as hidden stairs or false bookcases.
- Decrease the pursuit level by 1 if the party splits into two or more groups.
- Increase the pursuit level by 1 each time the party has a combat encounter with one or more creatures, unless the encounter is bypassed or avoided entirely.
- Increase the pursuit level by 1 each time the party creates a loud noise or commotion, such as casting certain spells, moving heavy objects, or shouting to each other.

The players might come up with additional ways of evading pursuit. Adjudicate these as you see fit.

Whenever the barbed devil catches up with the characters, it attempts to kill one of them, or one of the NPCs they are accompanying.

If you want to give the PCs an easier time, have the devil be unaware that Kiara is on its side, and allow it to attack her. If you want them to have a harder time, give Kiara the chance to lay clues for the devil, or assist it in combat.

The idea of a pursuit level assumes the devil's actual location is abstract, and it catches up when narratively appropriate. If you prefer, you can plot the devil's movement on your own map.

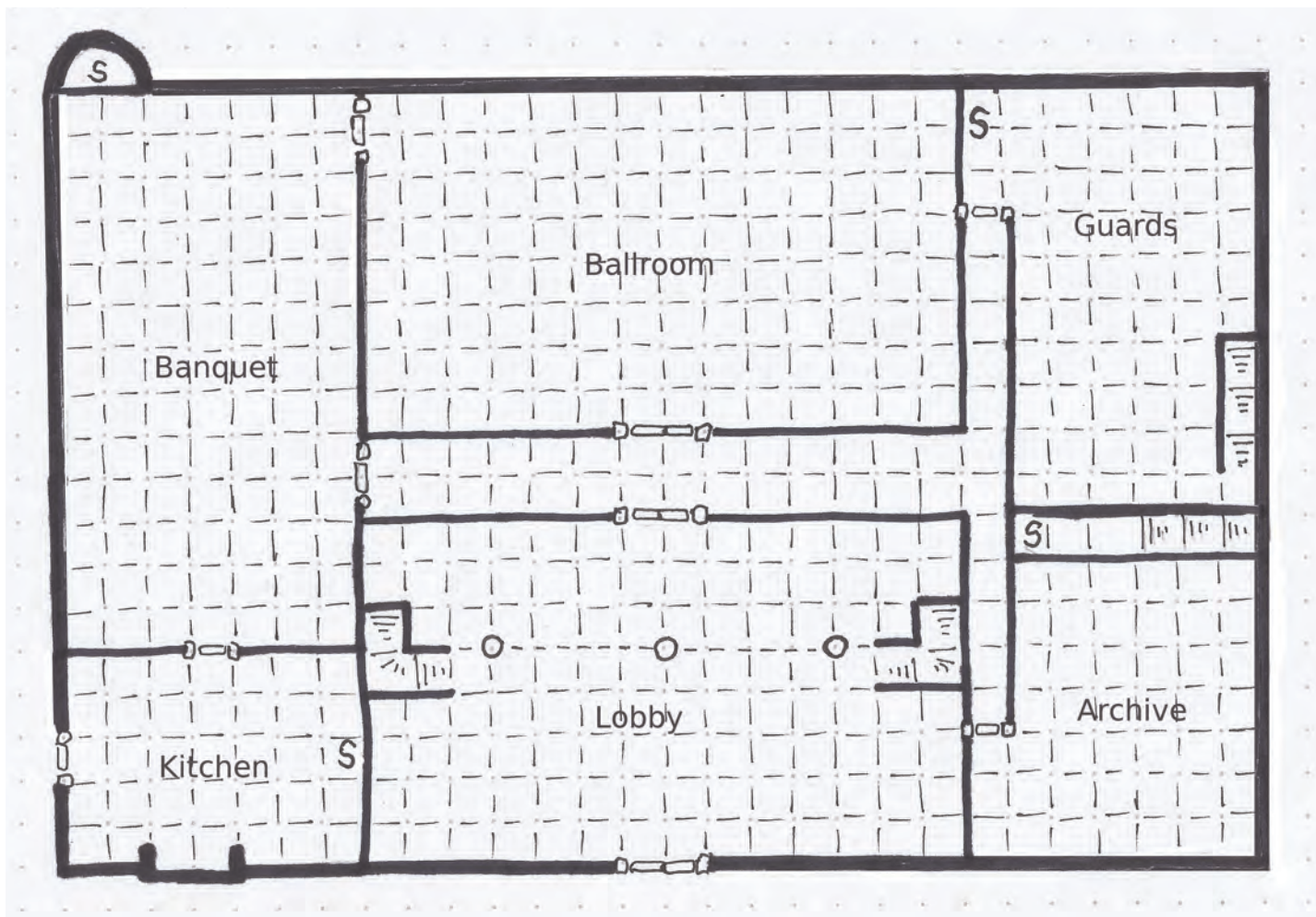
If the characters miraculously manage to defeat the devil through canny tactics, award them the experience as usual or, if using the milestone levelling system, level them up.

ARCHIVES

Shelf after shelf of wooden crates filled with paperwork separates this room into distinct corridors. In an attempt to add a festive touch fresh garlands of holly and pine have been strung across the shelves. Unfortunately, the greenery does nothing to mask the musty smell of dusty parchment.

Creatures. Clanging around in the chamber is an **infernal armour animus** (appendix A) accompanied by two **lemures**. They seem to be searching for something, giving them disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to notice the characters.

Hidden Staircase. Madrin Grimest knows there is a concealed storage space somewhere in the archives. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 13 or higher, or who succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, notice that a large, empty



cabinet stands over a staircase cut into the floor. The cabinet requires a DC 10 Strength check to move, and reveals the staircase which leads to the Museum.

Treasure. Much of the paperwork is worthless. Characters who succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check discover that one such contract can also be used as a *spell scroll of arcane lock*.

BALLROOM

The polished wooden floor of this spacious ballroom has been scratched in places by the claws of some infernal monstrosity. Hanging from the ceiling is an enormous chandelier holding perhaps a hundred flickering candles. Hung from the fitting is a panoply of glass baubles painted with winter scenes. Several of them have dropped to the floor and shattered.

Creatures. Two **imps** throw baubles around the room with glee (+5 to hit, range 15/30 ft., one target, dealing 4 (1 + 3) piercing damage on a hit).

The imps happily make deals if threatened. Provided the characters keep them alive, the imps can accompany the characters and reveal the locations

of hidden doors or passages to them. When the imps point out secret doors, they do so by causing explosions of green flame to shoot out around their edges, drawing the attention of any creatures in the vicinity, and increasing the pursuit level of the barbed devil by 1.

Hidden Staircase. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 15 or higher notice that the parquet floor has some inconsistent gaps in one corner. Characters who succeed on a subsequent DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discover a pressure plate that causes the floor to descend and slide aside, revealing a staircase. The staircase leads down to the Museum.

Secret Door. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 18 or higher notice a draft around the ornate fireplace in the corner of the room. Characters who succeed on a subsequent DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check discover that compressing an ornament atop the mantelpiece causes the fireplace to swing aside. Alternatively, the fireplace can be dragged aside against the mechanism with a successful DC 16 Strength check. Beyond is the Guardroom.

BANQUET HALL

Three broad oak tables stretch the length of this chamber. You can picture the incredible banquets that must take place here, but currently the tables are covered instead with decorations; red table runners, golden painted pinecones, and reindeer made of straw. A magical effect makes it seem as if snow is constantly falling. The rear of the chamber is sectioned off by a heavy curtain.

Creatures. Six **nupperibos** charge along the tables, sending decorations flying. They swarm on the first creature they notice that enters.

Secret Staircase. Hanging on the rear wall of the hall are three portraits of previous Grand Dukes. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 16 or higher, or who succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check, notice that the edge of the left portrait is well-worn. Moving it aside reveals a hatch, and beyond lies a spiral stair that leads to the Gallery.

Kiara's Lies. Kiara has lied to the characters about a secret trapdoor in this chamber. After the characters have attempted Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) checks to locate the trapdoor and discovered nothing, they might push Kiara about her information. She claims that it must simply have been a rumour.

If the characters come to suspect Kiara, see Episode 3: Removing the Veil.

GALLERY

Hanging on the walls of this chamber in ornate golden frames are several masterpieces depicting jovial and festive winter scenes. The room also contains two marble busts, one of the Grand Duke, the other of the legendary Balduran.

Creatures. Perched atop the bust of Ulder Ravengard (the Grand Duke) and shooting spines into that of Balduran is a **spined devil**. The devil takes to the air to attack any intruders.

Secret Staircase. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 14 or higher notice that one of the wood panels on the rear wall is slightly askew. Characters who succeed on a subsequent DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check notice that slightly turning the bust of the Grand Duke causes the panel to slide aside, revealing a spiral stair. The panel can instead be smashed with a DC 15 Strength check. The staircase leads to the Banquet Hall.

Treasure. Characters who examine the bust of Balduran and succeed on DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check realize there is a small button inside his ear. Reaching and pressing the button requires a successful DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. When the button is pressed, the wooden stand twists to reveal a hidden compartment, which contains two *potions of healing*.

GUARDROOM

This chamber is equipped with a small fireplace, atop which a kettle whistles, a small desk and bookshelf filled with worn books is also present, as well as a wardrobe, and a single bunk bed from which a pained groaning emanates.

Creatures. Lying on the bunk is Talein Oathcrown (LG non-binary Chondathan human **guard** with 1 hit point remaining). Talein Oathcrown was grievously wounded by the barbed devil and will die unless they receive immediate medical attention. A character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Medicine) check can stabilize Talein to stop them dying. Restoring Talein's hit points also prevents their death.

If stabilized, Talein can tell the characters that they were attacked by a green, humanoid creature covered in vicious barbs. Talein can also reveal that Kiara Ortania permitted the cultists entry.

Doorway. The western wall has a peculiarly-shaped door which leads to the Ballroom (see that area).

KITCHEN

This room is considerably colder than the others, perhaps because of the tiled floor and thick stone worksurfaces. Copper pans hang from hooks around an enormous unlit fireplace and stove. On the eastern wall are two large marble cupboards.

Hidden Treasure. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 18 or higher notice that one of the floor tiles in the room is slightly depressed. The tile has been mortared into the floor to conceal a cavity beneath. Pulling up the tile requires a DC 16 Strength check. In the cavity beneath the tile is a *wand of secrets*.

Concealed Exit. The right-hand marble cupboard is empty and has a false back indicated by the handle in its center. Beyond is the Lobby. The left-hand marble cupboard has a metal tray of ice beneath racks of fresh food.

LIBRARY

Built into walls of this library are row upon row of bookshelves. They have been adorned with paper chains in alternating colors; green, red, gold, and white. Taking up most of the floorspace are hefty desks, atop which are parchments, magnifying glasses, and small hooded lanterns.

Secret Door. Theodrei knows there is a secret door somewhere in the library. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 12 or higher notice a false bookshelf. Characters who succeed on a subsequent DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discover that pulling a book causes the shelf to swing open, revealing the Storage Vault.

STUCK FOR SECRETS?

There is a possibility that characters might fail their rolls to discover the secret passageways that give them access to the items capable of closing the portal. Fear not. Throughout the rooms of Coinshare Hall are a myriad of other hidden passageways that the characters might stumble across to give them access.

If the characters have yet to find the secret access points and are getting frustrated, or time is running out, have a serendipitous event reveal one to them. Perhaps the barbed devil knocks a panel off the wall revealing a corridor beyond, or one of the NPCs leans on a statue that pivots to reveal a ladder.

Although these events may be less satisfying for the characters than discovering them for themselves, they are certainly better than allowing the story to stall entirely.

LOBBY

A broad balcony looks down over this wood-paneled chamber. The corpses of three Coinhall Guards lie in a pool of their own blood before a vortex of swirling green magic. The glow of the portal illuminates the portraits on the walls, giving them a sinister countenance.

Creatures. There are two **cultists** and a **cult fanatic** in the chamber.

Portal. The portal is open, and has already spewed devils into the hall. The devils have since spread throughout the ground floor. Each turn, there is a fifty percent chance that it dispenses an additional 1d4 **lemures**.

The portal can only be closed in three ways:

- Casting the augmented *magic circle* spell from the Tome of Degrodel the Aegis.
- Attacking it with the Sword of Eldrith the Betrayer.
- Killing the **barbed devil** and the infernal cultists.

Once the portal is destroyed, characters can escape Coinshare Hall, hopefully with the innocent merchants in tow. For more information about Kiara Ortania, the instigator of this sanguine ritual, see Episode 3: Removing the Veil.

Secret Door. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 16 or higher notice that a particular wooden panel in this room is colder than the others. Characters who succeed on a subsequent DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check discover a hidden handle along the skirting, which causes the door to unlock. The door leads into marble cupboard in the Kitchen.

MEETING CHAMBER

A marble-topped, circular table surrounded by a dozen small wooden thrones occupies most of this chamber. Boughs of pine have been laid out in the center in a stylized snowflake pattern – a classic Midwinter decoration. The lack of windows is made up for by sconces which line the walls, the flickering magical light of each reflected in the mirrors which hang on the walls.

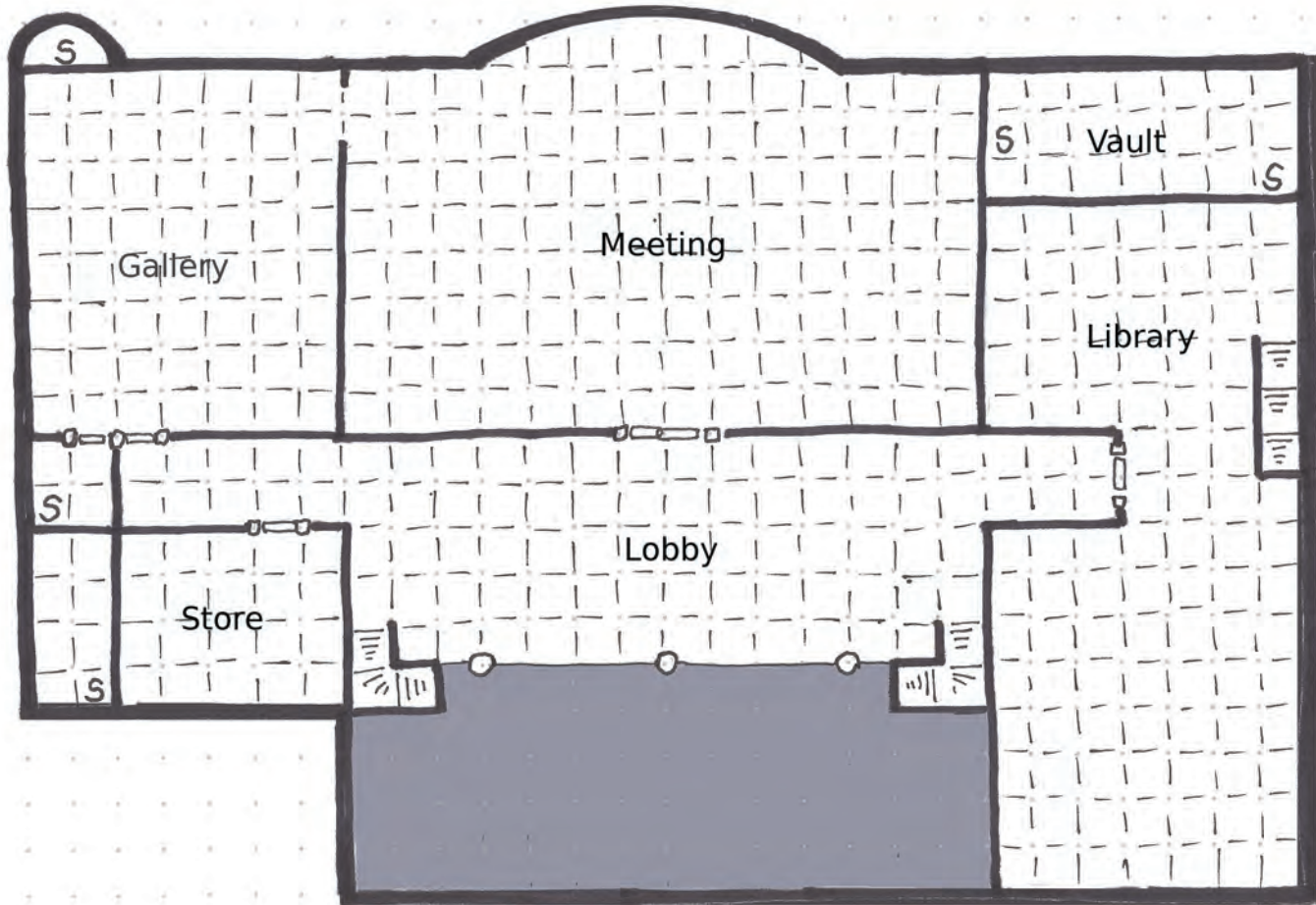
Creatures. Three **lemures** hide under the table. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 10 or higher notice the devils.

Secret Door. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 18 or higher, or who succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, discover that behind a mirror on the eastern wall is a locked door. The door can be opened with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or a DC 14 Strength check. The door leads to the Vault.

MUSEUM

Beneath the ground floor of Coinshare Hall is a stone cellar that houses items of importance to Baldur's Gate. Each is kept in a glass case with a copper plaque detailing the contents.

Treasure. The museum contains four locked glass cases. The cases can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, a successful DC 13 Strength check, or by attacking the glass (AC 13, 4 hit points). Each case is also warded with an audible *alarm* spell that alerts anyone in the building that the museum has been compromised.



The glass cases contain the following:

- *Balduran's Hammer*. This average-looking hammer is purported to be the very hammer that Balduran used in the construction of the great granite wall that became Baldur's Gate.
- *The Founding of Coinshare Hall*. This long scroll is wound around a wooden roller capped at each end with the sigil of Coinshare Hall in gold and enamel.
- *Flaming Fist Helm*. Although this specific helm is of no particular note, it is kept here as a reminder of all that the Flaming Fist have done for Baldur's Gate.
- *Sword of Eldrith the Betrayer*. This +1 longsword gives off a thin, black smoke from its onyx blade. The powerful weapon can be used to attack and destroy the infernal portal.

STOREROOM

This sequence of rooms is linked by ornate wooden archways. Inside are barrels, trunks, glass-fronted cabinets, fancy dressers, and practically any other kind of storage you can imagine. Some are covered in dust, though others are clearly regularly used.

Treasure. Characters who search through the room and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence

(Investigation) check discover a vial containing *dust of disappearance*.

VAULT

Hidden at the rear of the first floor of Coinshare Hall is a fortified vault. The walls are coated with hammered lead sheets, and the place is empty save for a single marble plinth. Atop this plinth, surrounded by a shimmering blue field, is a battered, leather-bound tome.

Treasure. The book is the Tome of Degrodel the Aegis, a powerful abjurer who once lived in Baldur's Gate. The book contains several abjuration spells, though they are written in a cipher. The only spell written in Common is an augmentation of the *magic circle* spell, which closes any portals within its area of effect. It can be cast from the tome by any creature, without requiring a check. Once cast, the spell cannot be cast again. This spell can be used to close the infernal portal.

Characters who spend 1d4+4 hours examining the cipher can attempt a DC 20 Intelligence check, deciphering it on a success. Doing so reveals the

following spells: *arcane lock*, *pass without trace*, *protection from poison*, *warding bond*.

The tome is surrounded by a forcefield that cannot be penetrated but can be dispelled with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If the check fails, the forcefield can still be dispelled, but doing so emits a thunderous boom, alerting anyone in the building that the vault has been compromised.

THAT DOESN'T BELONG TO YOU...

Upon closing the infernal portal, some less scrupulous characters might feel inclined to keep the Tome of Degrodel the Aegis or the Sword of Eldrith the Betrayer for themselves. Doing so openly is immediately questioned, as the merchants and Flaming Fist expect the items to be returned to Coinshare Hall.

If the PCs subtly sneak the items out of the hall, they are soon discovered to be missing, and the Flaming Fist don't take long to catch up with the thieves. First they send a detachment of four **guards** led by a **veteran**. If the characters refuse to give up the items, and continue to evade arrest, more elite members of the Fist are dispatched to capture them.

APPENDIX A: CREATURE STATISTICS

INFERNAL ARMOR ANIMUS

Medium construct, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances cold

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 6

Languages understands Infernal but cannot speak

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

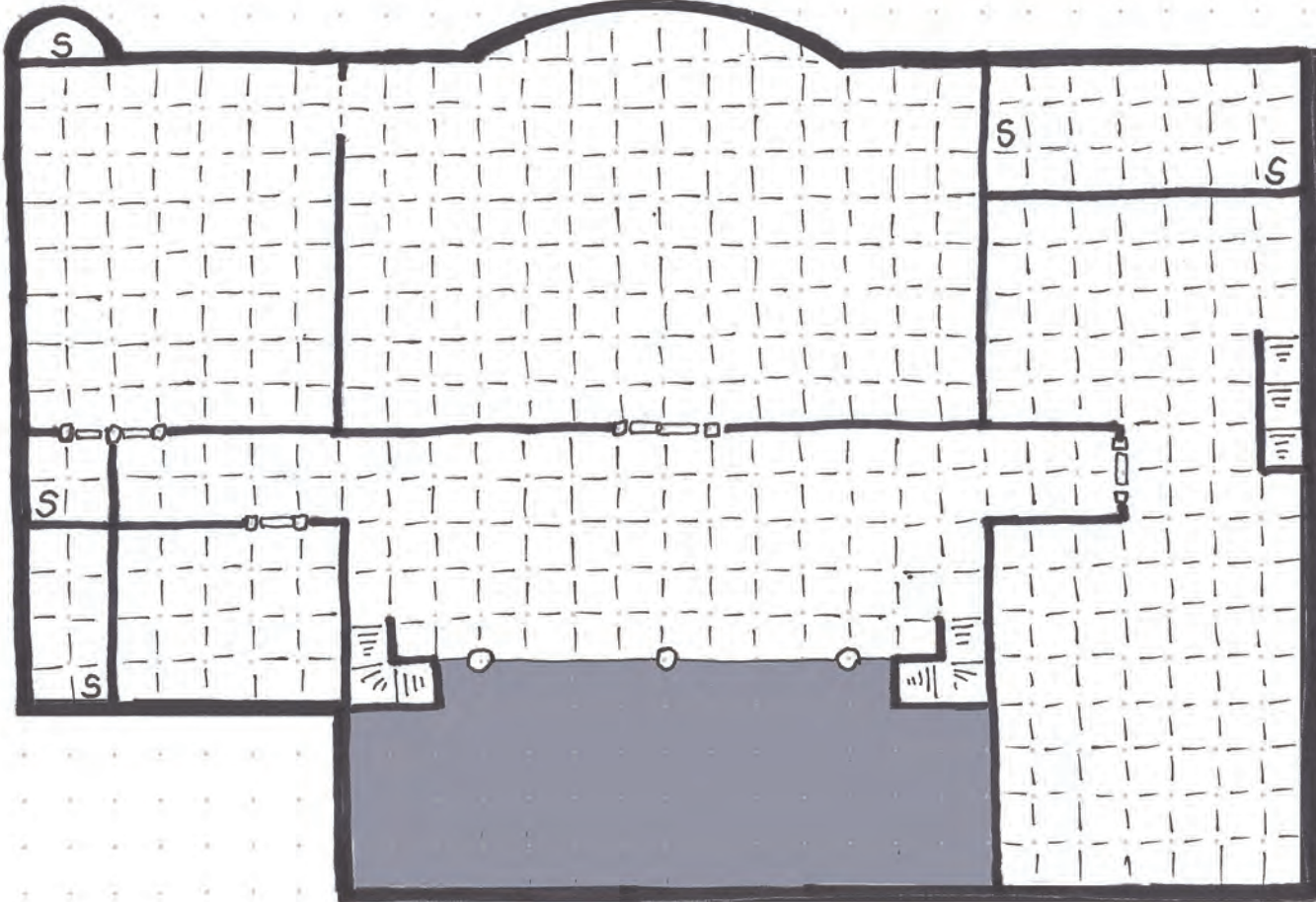
Bloodlust Aura. Other devils within 5 feet of the infernal armor animus have advantage on attack rolls.

Essence Transference. When the infernal armor animus dies, the soul within it is expelled and absorbed by a nearby devil. The closest devil within 15 feet of the infernal armor animus regains 9 (2d8) hit points.

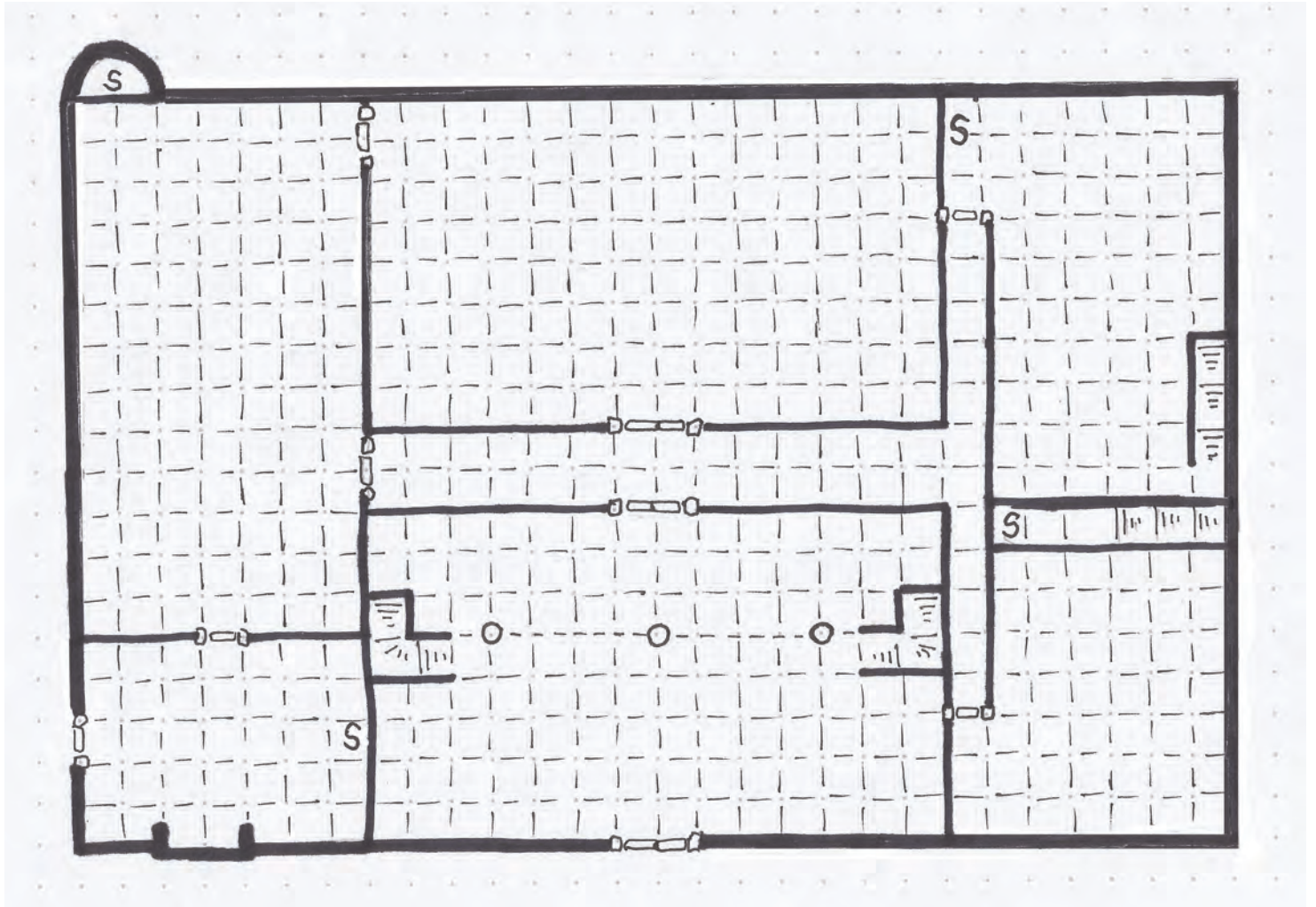
ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage. An infernal armor animus is a suit of armor imbued with a mortal soul from the Nine Hells. The tortured spirit within provides support to other infernal troops on the battlefield by emitting an aura of bloodlust. In addition, when an infernal armor animus is destroyed, the soul is bursts free, and can be consumed by the nearest devil.

UPPER FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR





MISFITS

TWO TEDDY TERRORS

Introduction: That quiet night after Midwinter—when everyone is fast asleep, worn from adventures and playing with toys the day before—the faerie dragons come out to play. They bring sleeping adventurers to Misfit Island where unwanted and old toys have been gifted sentience to live in peace and happiness even without their prior owners. The faerie dragons who work with Queen Theodora left the island to find adventurers who are fit to protect the citizens of Toy Town. Troubled toys have been terrorizing the island and need to be stopped before they cause irrevocable damage. This is a family-friendly adventure designed to be entertaining for fans of all ages. Content Warning: includes some violence, some injury, and expressions of emotional distress.

A 2- TO 4-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 1ST – 2ND LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY A. KELLY LANE



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.
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ADVENTURE PRIMER

This section provides the adventure's background, a list of prominent NPCs, an overview of the adventure in play, and hooks that you can use to introduce your players' characters to the action.

BACKGROUND

MISFIT ISLAND has existed for as long as any of its toy inhabitants can remember. It expands in size to accommodate new citizens whenever necessary. Rumors are common throughout the island as to who created this home for lost and forgotten toys, but the truth has long since melted away. **QUEEN THEODORA**, a stuffed polar bear with a regal bearing has a kind and generous nature. She is considered by all to be a thoughtful queen whose firm but fair hand maintains the peace on the island.

The only city on the island is **TOY TOWN** which houses the majority of the island's citizens as well as Queen Theodora's castle. Recently, the town has been terrorized by **CUDDLES AND SNUGGLES McSTUFFINS**, two large teddy bears who were abandoned by their former owners. Cuddles and Snuggles have been playing pranks on the citizens of Toy Town and throughout the island in order to distract them from dealing with their feelings. However, their pranks have become dangerous.

LOUIS, a toy soldier in Queen Theodora's military, broke his leg due to one of these pranks. This incident motivated the **FAERIE DRAGONS** that work with (but not for) Queen Theodora to search for adventurers to teleport to the island to help locate Cuddles and Snuggles and bring an end to the pranks that have left Toy Town on edge. The faerie dragons have a mind of their own and select adventurers they believe will help the island; although, they do not always choose correctly. They will keep bringing adventurers here until peace is restored.

EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over 4 **Episodes** that take approximately 2-4 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1: Misfit Island.** The characters find themselves upon a remote island that isn't on any map. This island is filled with creatures and buildings who look like toys and edible scenery. While exploring, the characters will hear the giggling of faerie dragons following them everywhere they go.
- **Episode 2: The Teddy Bear Queen.** The characters arrive in Toy Town and are ushered forth to meet Queen The-

odora and her faerie dragon assistants. The Queen of Misfit Island speaks of two teddy bears who have gone astray and offers to reward the party for finding a way to stop the teddy bears' mischief, which has resulted in injury of some of the local townspeople and continues to escalate.

- **Episode 3: Two Terrible Toys.** The characters adventure forth to the Black Licorice Forest where they are confronted by Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins. The players must choose how to stop Cuddles and Snuggles from wreaking havoc across misfit island and protect the town from their potentially deadly mischief.

- **Episode 4: Heading Home.** The characters return to Toy Town to receive their rewards from Queen Theodora and arrive back to joyous townspeople. They must explain to the queen and members of the town how they stopped the two terrible teddies. The queen hosts a celebration of the characters' success and offers them a place to rest and a way back home.

TROUBLE SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND

Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins have been playing pranks on the citizens of Misfit Island. Recently, one of these pranks ended with Cindy, one of the many princess dolls who are residents of Toy Town, having torn stitching. Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins are not directly violent, but they may start small fires, destroy homes, and aim to scare the sentient toys who live here. While the characters are travelling throughout this adventure, they will likely hear stories or see evidence of these pranks.

The faerie dragons may also play small pranks on the adventuring party whenever they get bored, which could be confused for pranks by Cuddles and Snuggles. However, the pranks the faerie dragons play never end in injury or permanent loss of property and are more akin to the kinds of pranks one might buy at a joke shop.

EPISODE 1: MISFIT ISLAND

Estimated Duration: 30 - 60 minutes

“Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to wonder what was going to happen next.”

—Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

The party has gone to bed and the faerie dragons transport them to Misfit Island. When the party awakes, they are shoeless (a prank from the faerie dragons). The party explores the island.

SCENE A. ARRIVAL

You wake up and know that you are not where you went to sleep. The first rays of dawn light shine down on you, and you can hear gentle waves upon the shore. As you stir, you immediately notice you are not wearing any shoes and the sand beneath you is coarsely ground.

The party may or may not know each other. If the latter, allow some time for getting to know each other. After a few minutes, those with a **passive Perception of 12** or above hear the giggling of the faerie dragons. Those with a **passive Perception of 14** recognize that there are two distinct giggles, but they cannot determine the source.

While exploring the beach the party notice the following:

- All of the characters see a light coming from further down the beach that appears to be blinking.
- A successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** or a **DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check** reveals that the sand is actually crumbled gingerbread.
- On a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check** the party notices footsteps in the sand. **On a 15**, they recognize that the prints appear to be made by their own shoes.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This beach is wide. Looking inland, it is challenging to see where the beach ends because the land is covered in snow.

Senses. The waves crash on the shoreline and the smell of saltwater stings the air. However, underneath the smell of salt is something sweet. No matter what the weather was like when the party fell asleep, the weather here is crisp, cold, and clear.

Lighting. There is light from the rising sun, but it is slowly getting brighter, indicating that it is dawn.

FAERIE DRAGONS

There are two green faerie dragons that follow the party as they traverse Misfit Island. The party will regularly hear the giggles of the dragons. These faerie dragons are friendly and play occasional tricks on the party. However, they do not put the party directly in danger. If attacked at any time throughout the adventure, the faerie dragons choose to flee, the party loses out on possible rewards (specifically the Faerie Dragon Scale), and the faerie dragons do not return.

SCENE B. THE LIGHTHOUSE

The blinking light is coming from a **small lighthouse** settled on a rocky outcropping further down the beach.

The lighthouse before you is only three feet tall. It lights up a small inlet where wooden and paper toy boats bob up and down in the water. The boats are of odd shapes, sizes, and colors.

The lighthouse is clearly a toy lighthouse, but it is rainbow in color and how it operates remains a mystery. There are no people around, but the party quickly notices a peppermint bark pathway leading inland and marked with a signpost. The signpost simply lists “Lighthouse” and “Toy Town,” which points down the pathway into the island.

ODD TOYS

The toys on Misfit Island are often odd. They may be strange colors or shapes. DMs are encouraged to play with interesting descriptions when describing the toys within this adventure. Unless otherwise specified, all toys use the **tridrone** stat block without axiomatic mind. The Fist and Javelin attacks should be flavored to be appropriate to the toy (i.e., a beak attack and a wing attack for a toy duck).

If the characters noticed the footsteps previously, they see that the lead straight to the sign, move a few steps down the peppermint path, and then disappear. As they begin walking down the path, the entire party hears giggling. It is louder this time and can be heard by any party member; however, a **passive perception of 14** is required to know that there are two voices. A successful **DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check** identifies the giggles as coming from faerie dragons.

SCENE C. THE BRIDGE

The path leads inland, and the gingerbread beach gives way to a snowy landscape of rolling hills and sparse trees.

DELICIOUS LANDSCAPE

Misfit Island is a mystical world full of toys that talk and edible landscape. Full immersion into this world may include descriptions such as the following.

Trees made of peppermint sticks

Spun sugar snow

Chocolate dirt

At any point during this adventure, should a character consume a significant amount of the landscape the DM may ask for them to make a **DC 14 Constitution** saving throw. On a fail, the party member has a stomach ache and has disadvantage on Charisma checks for one hour. On a success, the party member notices a rumble in their stomach, but is otherwise unaffected. Continued consumption of the landscape can result in an additional saving throw.

It continues to the edge of a river where there is a **small bridge**. It is 5ft wide and 60ft across, has thin chocolate railings and sturdy chocolate slats. However, the walkway of the bridge covered in small 3-dimensional triangles that function as **caltrops**. Upon inspection, the triangles appear to be wooden four sided die; the type that is occasionally used when playing games. Due to the party's lack of shoes, Dexterity saving throws need to be made even at half speed. Walking across the bridge requires three separate saving throws for the caltrops, one for every 20 ft.

Walking across the bridge causes it to begin to melt. After the first party member to cross, each subsequent party member must also make a successful **DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Wisdom (Survival)** check to successfully navigate the now melting chocolate. With each party member that attempts to cross the bridge, the DC increases by two. A failed check results in a section of the bridge sliding away and the party member falling into the gelatin river below (see below.)

There are a variety of ways the party may try to cross the river including crossing the bridge. Walking for 15 min in either direction shows that there is no other bridge or clear way across.

- A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** check reveals that the river below is made of gelatin and the rushing water is whipped cream.

- A successful **DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check allows a character to slide across the top of the gelatin. This becomes a **DC 14** if the character uses the whipped cream to increase the slipperiness of their clothing. On a fail, the character sinks 1d8 ft into the gelatin 5 ft off the shoreline and must be pulled free by another character, which can be done with a successful **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** check. Characters who try to eat their way free suffer a stomach ache, have disadvantage on Charisma checks for one hour after freeing themselves, find the gelatin to taste like blueberries, and do not free themselves unless the party has tried or does try to help them. It takes 30 minutes to eat themselves free.

- The trees along the river are sturdy. Ropes can be stretched between them to aid in the crossing. If the characters think to use the trees, they can find a narrower area of the river that is only 40 ft. across on a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival)** check.

The party's shoes are in a pile in the middle of the path on the other side of the river. In one shoe is a **healing potion**. When they reach the shoes, they again hear the giggles of the faerie dragons and can clearly recognize that there are two voices. They can again try to identify the faerie dragons, if they were not successful before. With this new experience, A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check** identifies the giggles as coming from faerie dragons.

Finally, the party hears the frantic cries and quacking of a duck. If the party investigates, they find **Lucinda**, a purple, wooden toy duck with wheels, who speaks to the characters in Common, asking them to help save her duckling Thomas. Lucinda gestures at a toy duckling who appears to be stuck in the whipped cream on one rock 5ft into the river. Any characters who did not realize that the river was gelatin and whipped cream now notice.

- The duckling can be reached on a successful **DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check. A fail results in the character sinking into the gelatin as described previously. A successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check is required to save the duckling unscathed. On a fail, the duckling is scared of the rescuer and tries to escape resulting in one point of piercing damage from the beak.

- If the party saves the duckling, Lucinda shows them a pair of **slippers of spider climbing** hidden in the woods.

Upon being rescued, the duckling Thomas is calm and apologizes for being afraid of the party. He explains that he became stuck when a crashing sound in the woods scared him. He ran away, but the cause of the sound seems to have vanished. If the party asks how they got here, Lucinda says she doesn't know and that they should speak to **Queen Theodora in Toy Town**. If asked, Lucinda tells the party about the faerie dragons who work alongside the queen, but does not know if they are the gigglers.

TREASURE & REWARDS

The party acquires their footwear and a healing potion. Other rewards are dependent on their actions.

Magic Items. *Slippers of Spider Climbing*

EPISODE 2: THE TEDDY BEAR QUEEN

Estimated Duration: 45 - 60 minutes

Things are not always what they seem; the first appearance deceives many; the intelligence of a few perceives what has been carefully hidden.

—Plato, *The Phaedrus*

The party arrives in Toy Town, meets the local townsfolk, and Queen Theodora asks for aid.

SCENE A. WELCOME TO TOY TOWN

Soon after crossing the bridge, the party spots a town nestled in the hills and the castle rising high above. The castle itself seems to be the only building large enough for an average human to fit inside and, in fact, is about the size of a standard home.

Toy Town is a small place but it is full of life. There are toys bustling all around your feet and the buildings drastically vary in size from a few inches tall to 4 or 5 ft in height. You can see the spires of the castle rising high above the far side of town.

Once the party enters **Toy Town**, the shortest character is approached by a toy soldier in a pink, polka dotted uniform who introduces herself as **Hildi** and shares the following information:



- Toy Town is a place where unwanted toys end up and are blessed with sentience by an unknown magic. Here they usually live happily, but strange things have been happening and the toys are afraid. A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight)** check reveals that many of the toys do seem nervous including Hildi.
- She requests that the party watch their step and avoid stepping on the citizens of Toy Town. She indicates that the toys have been undergoing enough stress lately.
- If the party asks directions to Queen Theodora, Hildi points to four large towers on the other side of town.

Party members with a **passive perception of 14** or above see the towers and can intuit that they are the queen's castle. On a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check the party navigates through town easily to the castle. On a fail, they wander through town for 30 minutes before they appear in front of the castle.

The path to the castle takes the party through town where they may interact with other townspeople: a stuffed unicorn toy, a wooden nutcracker, a ballerina doll, etc. The townsfolk appear mostly happy, but some are nervous. None of the toys seem surprised to see the party. On a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)** check any NPC they speak to shares that adventurers are often transported to the island in times of trouble, but that the townsfolk are not allowed to say anymore until the adventurers speak with the queen.

Some additional encounters may occur:

- If the party tries to purchase food or supplies, the supplies are toy sized and the only food available is milk and cookies.
- The party can find a 1ft tall stuffed dinosaur NPC named **Sue** who acts in a childlike manner. Sue asks the party for help retrieving her ball, which has become stuck on a 10 ft tall roof of a two story home. A successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check makes retrieving the ball simple. On a fail, the party will have to be creative—using ropes or climbing on each other—in order to reach the ball. Should the party aid Sue, she accompanies them to the castle and tells Queen Theodora of their help.
- The party also sees evidence of the tricks Cuddles and Snuggles have played on the townsfolk. One house has broken windows. One toy soldier, Louis, has a broken leg and is regaling some other townsfolk with the story of how it was broken. It is clear to the party that the toy had been caught in a pitfall trap, but he makes the story much more dramatic (see side box). Sitting next to the toy soldier is another doll, Roberto, who seems to roll his eyes at the story before adjusting the cushion under Louis's leg. If the party asks either Louis or his partner Roberto about what happened Louis tells the same story again. A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight)** check makes it clear that Louis is embellishing. With a successful **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation)** check, Louis tells the party the truth, but whispers it so that no one but the party and Roberto

can hear; while walking on the road that leads out of town he wasn't paying attention and fell into a pit trap and broke his leg. Roberto rescued him easily because the pit was not very deep. On a failed Persuasion check, after the party walks away, Roberto follows them and tells them the truth. He does not do this if the party tried to Intimidate Louis.

"It was dark and the wind was howling. I was out in the fields, finishing up my tasks for the day, working hard as I always do when suddenly I heard a growling sound! I ran to warn my partner back home who I was deeply concerned for (otherwise I would have stayed to fend off the fowl beast) when it lunged for me! I tucked and rolled dodging the attack easily, but when I stood my foot slipped. There was no solid ground beneath me! I fell into a dark pit which seemed to go on forever. The growling sounds retreated probably because the creature assumed I was dead. However, it will take a lot more than that to kill old Louis!"

TREASURE & REWARDS

If the party aids Sue, she accompanies them to see the queen and tells her about their help, they gain **advantage on Charisma (Persuasion)** and **Wisdom (Insight)** checks with Queen Theodora.

SCENE B. A QUEEN'S LAMENT

The castle stands before you, large and imposing. The walls appear sturdy and four large towers reach above. Licorice ropes hold up the chocolate gate and pretzel stick portcullis which is currently raised. Unlike the other buildings in town it has a gate large enough for you to walk through. Toy soldiers stand on either side of the entrance, but do not stand in your way.

On a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Investigation)** check it is apparent that the castle walls are made of marshmallow and oats bound together. It makes the walls somewhat sticky to the touch. Should the party begin trying to eat any part of the castle, the toy soldiers step forward and offer to escort them inside. If the party does consume part of the castle, the toy soldiers inform Queen Theodora, which results in disadvantage on any Charisma and Wisdom checks against her.

Queen Theodora is a stuffed polar bear (use the **noble** stat block if necessary, with a Charisma of 18). She sits upon a red velvet throne and is flanked by two owlbear stuffed animals armed with tiny swords and shields (use the **tridone** stat block for the owlbears if necessary). If Sue is with the party, then, before the party can begin speaking, Sue runs up to the queen and excitedly tells her about the party's

help. The queen seems pleased at this and instantly warms to the party.

She offers the party 30 gp to stop the terror of the two teddy bears Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins. Queen Theodora informs the party that the two brothers have been playing tricks on the citizens of Toy Town, which has left the townsfolk terrified. A recent trick resulted in the injury of one toy (Louis) and they seem to be escalating. Sightings suggest that the teddy bears are residing somewhere in the Licorice Wood.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The party can walk comfortably throughout the halls of the castle; however, the hallways are only 10 ft. wide. The throne room is 20 ft. x 20 ft.

Furniture and decor. The furniture would be comfortable for small races. The décor is dramatic, but not ostentatious. It is a combination of candy decorations made with gumdrops and spun sugar and thick fuzzy fabrics of clashing, but bright colors.

Lighting. The entirety of the castle is well-lit.

INFORMATION FROM THE QUEEN

Should the party choose to question Queen Theodora she provides the following information:

- The giggling they have been hearing has been from faerie dragons who work for the queen. The faerie dragons play tricks because that's what they do. Queen Theodora has tried to reign them in to no avail, but they have their uses and their tricks don't cause harm so she keeps them around.
- The faerie dragons teleport adventurers here in time of need. Who gets teleported is entirely the choice of the faerie dragons.
- On a successful **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion)** check Queen Theodora reveals that she could send them home at any time using a teleport in the castle but the faerie dragons would likely keep bringing them back every time they went to sleep until the problem is solved.
- Even the queen doesn't know what magic keeps this island alive, and she isn't going to risk disturbing it by asking too many questions.
- On a successful **DC 20 Insight (Wisdom)** check, the party can tell that Queen Theodora is hiding something. They do not know what. She is specifically hiding the sheer size of Cuddles and Snuggles who are equivalent in size to a bugbear. If asked what she is hiding, Queen Theodora admits that they are rather larger than a standard toy.

EPISODE 3: TWO TERRIBLE TOYS

Estimated Duration: 30 - 60 minutes

There is the great lesson of 'Beauty and the Beast,' that a thing must be loved before it is lovable.

—G. K. Chesterton

The party departs the castle, travels through the dark and foreboding Licorice Wood, and attempts to stop the two teddy terrors.

SCENE A. THE FOREST OF LIGHTS

The path from the castle to the Licorice Wood is clearly marked with wooden signs similar to those seen before. The winding path takes about an hour to follow and the travel passes uneventfully with more of the delicious scenery.

The Licorice Wood stands before you. The path you've been following disappears into a dark forest. Unlike the trees you have seen before on Misfit Island, this forest is filled with black licorice trees. Leafless and large, they bend and twist, covering the forest floor and the path before you in darkness.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The path is made of dirt, but the forest floor off the path is covered in fungus and shrubbery. The trees reach 30 ft. or more into the air. The path is ten feet across allowing two characters to walk side by side.

Senses. The smell of black licorice permeates through the air. It is almost sickeningly sweet.

Lighting. The lighting is dim. The canopy blocks a great deal of the sunlight.

The path seems clear ahead although some licorice sticks may have fallen onto the path, hardening when separated from the tree. However, stepping off the path triggers an encounter with **1d4 violet fungus** and **1d6 awakened shrub**. The fungus is a vibrant purple and the shrubs have gumdrop berries on them. Eating the mushrooms or gumdrops result in 1d4 + 2 poison damage. Also, the McStuffins have set up several traps along the pathway which are triggered by whoever is in front. Roll on the table below at least once as the adventurers travel.



Roll	Trap Description	Potential damage
1	Pitfall trap. 10 ft deep. Damage taken for hitting the earthen ground.	1d6 bludgeoning
2	Trip wire that triggers an arrow bolt. DC 15 Dexterity save to dodge.	1d8 piercing
3	Snapping trap similar to a bear trap. DC 12 Dexterity save to move fast enough to avoid the trap. A successful DC 10 strength check removes the trap from the characters' foot.	1d8 piercing
4	Rope trap that suspends the character from a tree. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals how to lower the character to the ground safely. On a fail, the only clear way to get them down is to cut the rope.	Potential 1d6 bludgeoning damage from falling to the ground.
5	A magical glyph. When triggered, hard candies rain down from the canopy above where they were previously suspended by a levitating basking. The candies pelt the party firmly. The candy is otherwise harmless.	All characters take one point of bludgeoning damage.
6	No trap	

INCREASING THE DIFFICULTY

If you would like to provide an additional encounter for the party, one or more of the below could be used. Alternatively, you can roll multiple times for traps as described above.

- Alter trap damage to include magical damage such as a fire arrow or a lightning glyph.
- Add 1d4 + 2 **vine blights** reskinned as licorice vine blights to any encounter

SCENE B. THE MCSTUFFINS

Walking through the forest, the party member with the highest passive perception will notice a faint light coming from one side of the path. On a successful **DC 10 Survival (Wisdom)** check, the party finds a small path cleared of shrubs and fungus that leads to the campsite. Walking on this path does not trigger the encounter with the violet fungus and awakened shrubs. However, on a failed check, the party does not find this path and instead is attacked by **1 violet fungus** and **2 awakened shrubs** (which appear as described above) when they try to head to the camp. The fight alerts Cuddles and Snuggles and any stealth checks to approach the clearing are made with disadvantage.

Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins' campsite is in a clearing fifty feet into the trees. In the center is a large campfire with two tents. Sitting around the fire are two large teddy bears, each roughly the size of a human. If any party member successfully sneaks up on the brothers, they hear them discussing pranks that they can play on Toy Town including covering the streets with syrup and eating the castle. One brother laments that he wishes they had more friends to plan these pranks with.

The party can fight the McStuffins (use the **bugbear** stat block, except the brothers are constructs and can only restore hit points by magic such as *mending*); however, the McStuffins do not attack unless provoked either physically or verbally. The two teddy bears both appear torn and dirty. Each of them has several tears and lose stitching clearly from neglect, which results in them having three missing hit points each. Conversing with the bears reveals their story.

They were originally created by a wealthy family who gifted the McStuffins to two male children. However, as the children grew older, the bears became more and more neglected. The McStuffin brothers did not mind this neglect at first because they knew that as children age they no longer need their toys. However, years went by and the family moved away. Rather than giving the toys to other

children who could love them and care for them, the two men, now adults, threw away the McStuffins, leaving them torn and affected by the elements. This left the McStuffins angry. When they arrived on Misfit Island, the other toys were so happy and seemed like they did not mind being without children to love them. The McStuffins decided to take out their anger on the other toys.

- If at any point a party member insults either brother, the other brother attacks. The same is true if any character suggests that the McStuffins deserved to be neglected.
- If any party member casts *mending* on either bear, showing that an adult does care about the bears convinces the McStuffins to return to the castle. The brothers are surprised. They tear up and thank the party for their kindness.
- The party can attempt to convince the brothers that the other toys of the town do not deserve their anger. A successful **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion)** check convinces the McStuffins to return with the party. The McStuffins do not know about the toy with the broken leg and bringing up this story provides them advantage on the Charisma (Persuasion) check because the McStuffins do not actually want to hurt anyone. To encourage roleplay, the party can roll this check every time they bring up a new argument.
- If the party chooses to attack before hearing the story, when either of the McStuffins falls unconscious or under 5 hp, both of them will surrender, share their story, and willingly return to Theodora hoping to find new friends.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The clearing itself is roughly 40 ft by 40 ft and is surrounded by licorice trees.

Senses. The smell of the campfire mingles with the sickly-sweet licorice smell of the woods.

Other Features. A 2 ft by 2 ft campfire sits in the middle. The clearing also contains two 8 ft by 8 ft tents which each contain a bedroll and some odds and ends used for setting simple traps such as a shovel and rope.

Lighting. The lighting here is normal within 15 ft. of the fire but is otherwise dim.

RAIDING THE CAMP

Should the party sneak through the camp, or otherwise find opportunity to go through the McStuffins belongings, they will find little. Each tent contains a bedroll and supplies for making non-magical traps such as a shovel and rope. There is flint and tinder by the fire, but no treasure of any notable value.

After the McStuffins agree to return to Toy Town with the party, they lead the way back, but do permit the party to rest at their campsite if they wish. The

way back is uneventful. Cuddles and Snuggles share that walking off the path triggers an encounter that has nothing to do with the bears. If the party was able to avoid a trap on the way to meet the McStuffins, the bears dismantle that trap on the return trip. If they party triggered a trap, the bears apologize profusely and dismantle the trap.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Each encounter with the *violet fungus* and *awakened shrub* only include one of each creature. Also, the McStuffins refuse to fight. If attacked, they immediately surrender.
- **Weak:** Each encounter with the *violet fungus* and *awakened shrub* only include one of each creature.
- **Strong:** Use the *bugbear chief* stat block for Cuddles and Snuggles, retaining their construct status.
- **Very Strong:** Use the *bugbear chief* stat block for Cuddles and Snuggles, retaining their construct status and adding resistance to non-magical damage.

EPISODE 4: HEADING HOME

Estimated Duration: 30 - 45 minutes

“Dorothy said nothing. Oz had not kept the promise he made her, but he had done his best. So, she forgave him. As he said, he was a good man, even if he was a bad Wizard.”

—L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

SCENE A. CONVINCING THE QUEEN

Queen Theodora sits on her throne. When you enter with the McStuffins, she seems pleased at first; however, once she notices that they are walking in of their own free will, she says, “I see that you’ve convinced them to come somehow, but I was expecting to see them in chains for the damage they have caused. What do you recommend I do with them now?”

Queen Theodora is curious as to what the adventurers think is an appropriate punishment. She is assessing them and wondering if they were a worthy choice from the faerie dragons. A successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Insight)** check reveals that the queen is testing the party with this question.

POSSIBLE PUNISHMENTS

If the party is unsure what to recommend as an appropriate punishment, a successful **DC 10 Intelligence (History)** check, which can be made by multiple party members, allows the character to reason through what kinds of punishments are used in this kind of society.

- Imprisonment for a short time
 - Time in the stockade
 - Fines
 - Community service
 - Correcting the wrong through apology, labor, or aid
- Any character who was successful on the previous **Wisdom (Insight)** check, can roll a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight)** check again to determine what type of punishment recommendation can pass Theodora’s test. A success reveals that Queen Theodora does not resort to violence or imprisonment and would rather the McStuffins perform a service for the community.

If the party recommends some type of community service or public apology, Queen Theodora seems pleased and the characters can hear the giggle of the faerie dragons who appear in front of the party. One of the faerie dragons extends a scale (faerie dragon scale) and Queen Theodora shares that the

adventurers are worthy of Misfit Island and can call upon the faerie dragons for aid.

Any other suggestion results in Queen Theodora instead requiring the McStuffins to pay a fine to the toy with the broken leg and to write a public apology to the citizens of Toy Town. The party does not receive the aid of the faerie dragons through the faerie dragon scale.

If the party asks about going home, Queen Theodora tells them that she will send them home tomorrow morning after the celebration.

TREASURE & REWARDS

- **Gold.** 30 gp from Queen Theodora.
- **Special Rewards.** Faerie Dragon Scale that can be used to call the Aid of the Faerie Dragons.

SCENE B. CELEBRATION

Queen Theodora throws a party for the citizens of Toy Town celebrating not only the end of the terror of the teddy bears but also the new citizens of toy town: Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins.

The main square of Toy Town is covered in ribbons with toys dancing to music and eating cookies. Everywhere you look there is another smile and hug.

The party continues well into the night. Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins apologize to the broken toy who seems to be healing well. The toy can be healed by using *mending*. If done, the toy provides a large hug and a thank you. Queen Theodora directs the adventurers to sleep in the castle when they choose to rest. The characters awake the next morning fully rested wherever they went to sleep. With each of them rests a small teddy bear, which look similar but not identical to Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins.

TREASURE & REWARDS

- **Special Rewards.** *Teddy bear of restoration and comfort* for each party member.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins	400 xp
Violet Fungus	50 xp each
Awakened Shrub	10 xp each

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Event	Experience
Saving the Duckling	100 xp
Returning the Ball to Sue	100 xp
Bringing Cuddles and Snuggles McStuffins to the queen	200 xp

TREASURE

Characters may receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item	Value
30 gp	
Slippers of Spider Climbing	Uncommon
Faerie Dragon Scale	Uncommon
Teddy Bear of Restoration and Comfort (for each party member)	Uncommon

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Faerie Dragon Scale. The Faerie Dragons are grateful for the aid provided and give a boon in return. The dragon scale can be used three times to call upon the Aid of the Faerie Dragons. When called upon, the faerie dragons will cast *thaumaturgy* or *major image* once as you direct.

Teddy Bear of Restoration and Comfort. Each bear has 2 charges. Each charge can be used to cast *lesser restoration* on a creature of the user's choosing.

Once both charges have been used, it is just a normal teddy bear, but it may provide emotional comfort to adventurer's in need.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I have always enjoyed classic holiday movies and stories about children and their toys are particularly poignant. With *Misfits* I wanted to create a family-friendly adventure that still created opportunity for real emotion, could be enjoyed by all ages, and served as a good way to introduce new people to the world's greatest tabletop roleplaying game. I originally ran a one-shot adventure similar to this one with an online group, which led me to meet a wonderful human who has become an important part of my life. Therefore, this had to be the first adventure I formally published.

AUTHOR BIO

Dr. A. Kelly Lane has a Ph.D. in genetics and a passion for tabletop games. Her introduction into the world of published gaming was working as an editor for the *Uncaged Anthology*. She also edited *Friends, Foes, and Other Fine Folks*. She often appears on tabletop streaming channels as a player or a GM.



THE BURGOMEISTER'S GIFT

THREE ALES TOO MANY

Introduction: After a night of overly festive revelry, you are presented with a job you can't refuse. The Burgomeister of Vexbrunn has been robbed, and it's up to you to find a stolen gift and save a young girl's Winterfest.

A 4-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 1ST - 4TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY ADAM SCARAMELLA



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

*“Then he got an idea. An awful idea. The Grinch got a wonderful, *awful* idea!”*

– Dr. Seuss

This section provides the adventure’s background, a list of prominent NPCs, an overview of the adventure in play, and hooks that you can use to introduce your players’ characters to the action.

BACKGROUND

This adventure takes place in a small village called **VEXBRUNN**, which can be placed in the northern region of any setting. Vexbrunn is a simple town, to which the characters have been drawn by rumors of the remarkable Winterfest celebration that occurs every year. Unfortunately, this year, the celebrations got a little out of control, and many people, including the characters, were tossed in jail.

But an opportunity has presented itself allowing the party to possibly extract themselves from incarceration. When the celebrations spiraled out of control, a group stole some items from the Burgomaster’s estate. One of these was intended as a present for the Burgomaster’s daughter, and the Burgomaster is now looking for agents to recover the item.

For years, the wizard **AUGUST HÜGBREIGHT** sought to show his culinary prowess by winning the annual Winterfest Fruitcake Competition. But his fruitcake was simply not exceptional and his attempts each year to improve it only made things worse. The things he added to his recipe only served to make him the comic relief of the competition.

This ridicule has turned Augustus into a bitter man, one who resents the town and everyone in it. The dark fey of the nearby wood, who sought to punish the town for a gnome’s transgressions, whispered rumors in the wizard’s ear of an orb which would could power an invention which would help Augustus improve his fruitcake and win the contest. Thwarted at first from purchasing the orb, Augustus hired a group of ruffians to steal it from the Burgomaster. Now, the Burgomaster wants the party to reclaim it.

LOCATION AND NPC SUMMARY

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure:

Burgomeister Otto Ulfermann: Hereditary mayor of the village of Vexbrunn (human male).

Wilhelmina: Majordomo of the Ulfermann household (human female).

Keltan Flickerspan: Owner and proprietor of Flickerspan’s Emporium of Gear, Gadgets and Glorious Novelties (gnome male)

Motts: Works in the Emporium as general help. (human male)

Augustus Hügbrecht: A local wizard who has become unhinged by his repeated failures to win the annual fruitcake competition.

EPISODES

The adventure’s story is spread over **5 Episodes** that take approximately 4 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1:** “Well, THAT could have gone better..” The characters have spent the night in jail after a Winterfest celebration went out of control. They are then escorted from their cells to the Burgomaster’s estate. There they are offered a way to extract themselves from their imprisonment and from the sizable fines associated with the previous night’s activities.
- **Episode 2:** Tracking the Orb. The characters begin an investigation leading them to the gnome who created the orb. The party is presented with a choice: hunt down the thieves (Episode 3), or obtain the materials needed for a replacement (Episode 4).
- **Episode 3:** Rogues in the Wood. The characters travel to the thieves’ home in the wood. There they decide how to deal with them.
- **Episode 4:** Mushrooms, Bark and Moss. Finding the materials proves more difficult than expected. One of the key ingredients is protected by dark fey who have little interest in helping a young girl have a happy Winterfest.
- **Episode 5:** The Fruitcake. The mad inventor unleashes his creation on the town as revenge for years of ridicule. The party must stop a fruitcake golem before it destroys the village.

EPISODE 1: “WELL, THAT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER...”

Estimated Duration: 40 minutes

“A friend is someone who will bail you out of jail. A best friend is the one sitting next to you saying, “Boy was that fun.”

- *The Muggles*

WEATHER IN VEXBRUNN

The village of Vexbrunn is in the north, and the village and surrounding area has seen about a foot of snow in the past two months. It has been cleared from the village streets, but the surrounding area is still covered. Within the village, the roads have become muddy, and the walls of buildings (and some pedestrians) are frequently spattered with mud from passing carts.

The weather is cold here, dipping below freezing for most of the day.

INTRODUCTIONS

Explain that the characters each came to the small village of Vexbrunn hearing rumors of the remarkable Winterfest that occurs each year. And for two days, they have not been disappointed. The brews, meals and entertainment which they have enjoyed have been exceptional, and the people here have been exceptionally friendly.

Unfortunately, last night, the celebration got a little out of control, and the town guard arrested everyone in the area. The characters were all present during the chaos and whether directly or indirectly, they were involved in the ruckus and were brought to the jail.

The party starts the adventure in a holding cell. All weapons and any obviously useful items have been taken from them. Allow each player to introduce their character and quickly explain how they ended up here. No rolls are necessary: whatever they say happened, happened (within reason). Award Inspiration for interesting or entertaining stories. There should be no more than 2-3 party members in each cell, although there may be some random villagers in each cell.

“YEAH, BUT I WOULD HAVE...”

Some players may offer challenging responses to this approach. Work with their story to help them weave it into the adventure. For example, a player might insist that their character would never have been involved in such a fiasco. Perhaps they are completely innocent... they were simply minding their own business when the fight broke out around them and they were hauled in with the rest of the crowd.

“I AM SO BREAKING OUT OF HERE”

Players might suggest that they would try certain things to escape. Don't simply say no. If an adventurer wants to bribe a guard, let them determine which one would take a bribe...and they're just waiting to get them alone. If a character has thieves tools hidden and wants to open the jail cell, let them know they just need to wait until none of the guards are looking.

“ALRIGHT! YOU...YOU...YOU TWO...YOU AND YOU... COME WITH US!”

About an hour after dawn (or at a point where an escape plan has begun), a dozen heavily armed guards enter the cell block accompanied by a pair of individuals in robes. They all bear an insignia which the party may soon learn represents the house of Burgomaster Otto Ulfermann (OOL-fir-man). The lead guard looks at the individuals in the cell and calls for each of the party members to come with them. The party will be brought out of the cell two at a time and manacled before they are escorted out of the building and into carriages.

Players who had described their characters as being hung over should be reminded that the sun shines bright in the sky. If any of the adventurers ask where their gear is, they will be told that it has been sent ahead.

“NOW'S OUR CHANCE!”

Should one or more of the party attempt to break free, the **guards** will attempt to subdue the character (unless that character kills a guard). In addition, the two robed individuals are **magics** and will cast hold person on any larger party member. Still, it is possible for one or more of the party members to escape. Should this happen, they will be on their own until they can rejoin the party in Episode 2. Furthermore, they will be unable to reclaim their gear until after the adventure is over.

THE BURGOMASTER'S ESTATE

The carriages will bring the party to a well-furnished manor on a hill which overlooks the village. A pair of servants will greet the characters, offering to take their cloaks. Once the entire party arrives, they will be escorted into the manor's dining room where Burgomaster Otto Ulfermann is having his breakfast. He sits at the opposite end of a long table, with several guards between him and the party. Nothing will be offered to the party, and the guards will attempt to prevent anyone from helping themselves. Should someone manage to push their way through, the Burgomaster will seem displeased and all Charisma checks made by anyone in the party will be made with disadvantage against him.

The Burgomaster will (between bites) explain the situation and his offer.

Last night, during the chaos that the party was involved with, a group of ruffians broke into the manor and stole a bauble which Burgomaster Ulfermann had intended as a gift for his little girl, among other items. "Very simply" (as he puts it), he is offering the party their freedom from both incarceration and from the sizable (1,000+ gp) amount of damages if they retrieve the crystal and as much of the other valuables as they can, and to identify the culprits.

"I DON'T WORK WITHOUT PAY..."

If the party attempts to seek payment, allow them to make a case and a **Charisma (Persuasion)** check. Attempts to intimidate the Burgomaster in his own home will automatically fail and result in all further Charisma checks against him by anyone in the party to be made with disadvantage. For every point the check succeeds beyond a DC of 10, the Burgomaster will offer 10 gp as a bounty on the thief. For example, a check of 17 will result in an offer of 70 gp. However, the bounty will not be paid unless the item is returned. (Simply catching the thief gets them nothing...).

The Burgomaster will also advise them that some of their number have been marked, and should they decide to just leave town, he will have them hunted down and killed. If asked why only some of them were marked, he will simply chuckle and mention that even if you figure that out, he doesn't expect that the people who are marked will allow the ones who aren't to simply leave.

Is he telling the truth? Whether through magic (to which the Burgomaster will react poorly) or through a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Insight)** check, the party will realize that the Burgomaster is not lying

about anything. He does believe there is a mark on at least one of the characters and that the party will turn on each other if one of them tries to leave. The Burgomaster is simply wrong. There is no mark on any of them ...but the Burgomaster has been told that there is.

ROLEPLAYING OTTO ULFERMANN

Otto is the fifth in a line of Burgomasters that have governed this village. While he has not oppressed the people of the village, he has given nothing back to them, and is not generally liked. He sees most people, including the adventurers, as peasants and will not treat them with any real respect. While he may be temporarily interested in adventurers who identify themselves as nobles, this will quickly pass as he realizes they have little to offer him.

- **Personality Traits:** The Burgomaster is vain and self-centered. He has never wanted for anything in his life and knows it.
- **Ideals:** "My family define me."
- **Bond:** "This is my village. No one will take it from me."
- **Flaws:** "People are nothing except tools."

Once the party has agreed to this, the Burgomaster will dismiss them into the care of Wilhelmina, his head of staff. She will bring them into the hallway and provide them with these two pieces of information

- The gift was purchased from a rock gnome named Keltan Flickerspan. Flickerspan operates a large shop in a warehouse near the western part of the city. It's a bazaar of everything you think you could want, and a lot you wouldn't. Many merchants use it to unload a lot of junk, but the gnome takes everything that is in working order (or that he thinks he can fix).
- The party's names and descriptions have been provided to the local militia. Should the party neglect to fulfill their end of the bargain, they will not only be considered out-laws, but she will personally make it a priority to ensure that other potential employers will know that their word is not worth much.

Beyond this, there is not a lot of information that she can provide.

EPISODE 2: TRACKING THE ORB

Estimated Duration: 50 minutes

At this point, Wilhelmina will oversee the return of the party's weapons. She will only return other items if the party can explain why they will need them for the investigation. She will not under any circumstances return any travelling equipment or mounts. These will be returned when the party completes their task.

INVESTIGATING THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

If asked, Wilhelmina will bring them to the scene of the crime. Two guards stand outside the door, but step aside as the woman approaches. She leads them inside, and allows them to look around, watching them like a hawk.

Successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** and/or **Wisdom (Survival)** checks allow the party to discern what happened. The window to the room was broken from the outside and entered by three individuals of human size. Wilhelmina will tell the party that the three stole several items from the room, including a brass telescope, a dragon chess set (less one wyvern piece which is still on the floor) and several silver pitchers and cups. This appears to be all that they had time to get before the guards began breaking through the door.

ROLEPLAYING WILHELMINA

Wilhelmina has been the majordomo for the Burgomaster for fifteen years. In that time, she has efficiently managed the affairs of the Ulfermann family. A human woman in her late 40s, she dresses professionally and impeccably. Her stern gaze and efficient manner of speaking often commands the room more than her lean 5'2 stature might suggest.

- **Personality Traits:** Wilhelmina is honest to a fault, but is not foolish with what she shares. Information is her strength, and she doesn't give it up if possible.
- **Ideals:** "Honesty is strength. When one lies, they show how weak they are."
- **Bond:** "I am loyal to the Ulfermann family."
- **Flaws:** "I'm not humorless, I just have a very narrow sense of humor."

The party is free to enter the town to begin their investigation.

"I GOT AWAY, WHAT ABOUT ME?"

Any party members who escaped from the jail earlier may rejoin the party at this point. However, the guards will be watching for those characters, and they may have to take additional steps to stay hidden. Additionally, their equipment will not be returned to them. They must turn themselves in, be escorted to the manor and accept the deal.

FLICKERSPAN'S EMPORIUM OF GEAR, GADGETS AND GLORIOUS NOVELTIES

The gnome's shop is a large building decked out with rows and rows of shelves. Off to the left as you walk in is a benched in area. Within this area are several tables covered in gears, small crystals and other paraphernalia. The owner, an older rock gnome named Keltan Flickerspan greets the party as they enter. A brutish man (Motts) with probably more than a little ogre blood in his veins sits on a stool between the front door and the counter. A cloth is wrapped around the top of his head, clearly a bandage of some sort. Motts is the store security, but unless the party acts aggressively, he will do little but nod. Both Keltan and Motts use the **commoner** stat block.

ROLEPLAYING KELTAN FLICKERSPAN

Diminutive even for a gnome, Keltan is a quiet individual. Still, he always has time for a smile and pleasant conversation with a customer. He often wears a pair of spectacles which allow multiple layers of lenses to be rotated into and out of view.

Personality Traits: Keltan is a bit of a perfectionist. He likes to pull something apart so that he may put it back together to "fix it".

- **Ideals:** "Innovation. Creation is the best form of art."
- **Bond:** "My workshop is my haven, somewhere I can tinker with anything I like."
- **Flaws:** "I'm more comfortable tinkering with various trinkets and gadgets than dealing with people."

ROLEPLAYING MOTTS

Motts stood over seven feet tall by the time he was 15. This caused several people to ridicule him and suggest that his parentage was less than human. After a few fights, he was approached by Keltan, who knew what it was like to be picked on for his size. Keltan offered him a job and the two became friends.

• **Personality Traits:** Motts moves and speaks slowly. He is aware that this sometimes makes him look less than

intelligent, but he has come to accept this.

- **Ideals:** “Fairness. No one likes a bully.”
- **Bond:** “Keltan is my best friend, although I don’t understand half of what the gnome says.”
- **Flaws:** “I am probably more bark than bite.”

WHAT’S AVAILABLE IN THE SHOP

Characters can find and purchase anything from the Adventuring Gear list in the Player’s Handbook. In addition, they can find all sorts of trinkets scattered in and among the shelves. However, investigating those items may lead to some problems (see below).

WHAT KELTAN KNOWS

If the party explains why they are there, Keltan exclaims that had he known that bauble would be so popular, he would have charged Wilhelmina twice what she paid. He’ll eagerly tell the party that shortly after the majordomo left, that crazy old coot Hügbreight (HYOOG-bright) showed up.

“Have you run into this guy yet? Hoo boy, you probably will! The annual bake-off is coming up, and he always brings some crazy concocted fruitcake-turned-deathtrap to the fair, expecting it to wow everyone. The stuff isn’t fit for a doorstep. Last year, he was actually disqualified because the judge that drew the short straw nearly died because the fruitcake detonated in his mouth! I kid you not, this guy is some sort of second-rate wizard who could never cut it.”

Keltan will then comment that he’s not surprised that the Burgomaster was robbed. He will tell the party that yesterday the “Botrell Boys” came in for a visit. He tells them that they’re a bunch of hooligans that come into town every few weeks to cause some trouble. They roughed him up two days ago to find out who bought the orb. Usually, Motts there is enough to keep them in line, but they got the drop on him this time (He will mutter that they didn’t steal anything this time around, which is a blessed change).

Keltan will happily tell the party where they can find the rogues. He knows the ruffians well; it isn’t the first time they’ve come to make some trouble. They have a camp out in the wood.

Following this path will bring the party to Episode 3: Rogues in the Wood.

REPLACING THE ITEM

The party may ask whether he has any other such items. He does not...but suggests that he may be able to make another if the party can gather him some of the materials and pay him 5 gp for time and effort. He will direct the party to gather three items for him: several green and gold mushrooms that grow near the bank of a river, several moonstones, each as smooth as glass and the color of the moon. These need to have nice green moss growing on them. “Nice and even! That part is important!” And finally, some white bark from a tree he discovered in a small glade.

Following this path will bring the party to Episode 4: Mushrooms, Bark and Moss.

In either case, he will suggest that any characters who do not already possess cold weather gear may wish to do so before the adventure begins. Such clothing costs twice as much as the normal version. For example, traveler’s clothes would cost 4 gp, and fine clothes would cost 30 gp.

POSSIBLE / OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER

A character who decides to shop will be accosted by multiple disgruntled patrons who all want whatever it is that the character picked up. It’s the last one, and as they argue the character will not be able to get a word in edgewise. Before the character has a chance to put it down or give it to one of them...they will attack him with fists. More customers will appear and join the brawl looking for the same item.

ENCOUNTER

The number and type of individuals who join the brawl is determined by the number of characters who are in the shop and their level. There should be a minimum of three patrons involved, which could be troublesome if the adventurers have split the party. In all cases, replace weapon attacks with unarmed attacks or improvised weapon attacks: they retain their attack bonus, but the damage is 1 + Strength modifier (minimum of 1 point of damage).

- For each 1st level character, a patron joins the brawl with the stats of a bandit (CR 1/8).
- For each 2nd level character, a patron joins the brawl with the stats of a goblin (C 1/4), with the modifications that they are a medium size, and are a humanoid (human).
- For each 3rd level character, a patron joins the brawl with the stats of a scout (CR 1/2).
- For each 4th level character, a patron joins the brawl with the stats of a goblin boss (CR 1), with the modifications that they are a medium size, and are a humanoid (human).

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PARTY DECIDES TO GO TO HÜGBREIGHT'S HOUSE?

The party may decide to go straight to Hügbreight's home after talking to Keltan. You have two choices here:

- Skip to Episode 5. This will significantly shorten the adventure.
- Esther Hügbreight (Augustus's wife) will not be home. Should the party break in, they will not find the orb.

EPISODE 3: ROGUES IN THE WOOD

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

The party must navigate the woods to find the Botrell homestead.

Following Keltan's directions will bring the party north of the village. There is no trail leading to the Botrells' home, but it will not be hard to find a trail. A successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival)** check will allow the party to locate a path in the snow leading north. It appears to have been made by a horse-drawn wagon.

If the party fails the Survival checks, they will still be able to make their way to the Botrell's cabin, but will be at disadvantage to detect the traps in the wood.

The Botrells don't have a great relationship with most of the people in the village, and don't appreciate company. Around the area which they believe belongs to them have been nailed signs simply saying "Privat Propertee Kepe Out!" Once the party has passed this point, they will encounter three traps.

TRAPS ON THE PATH

BEAR TRAPS

Along the path are three bear traps buried in the snow. These traps are not only designed to incapacitate intruders, but when triggered, it will make a loud noise that will reverberate through the wood. This will alert the Botrells that someone is coming.

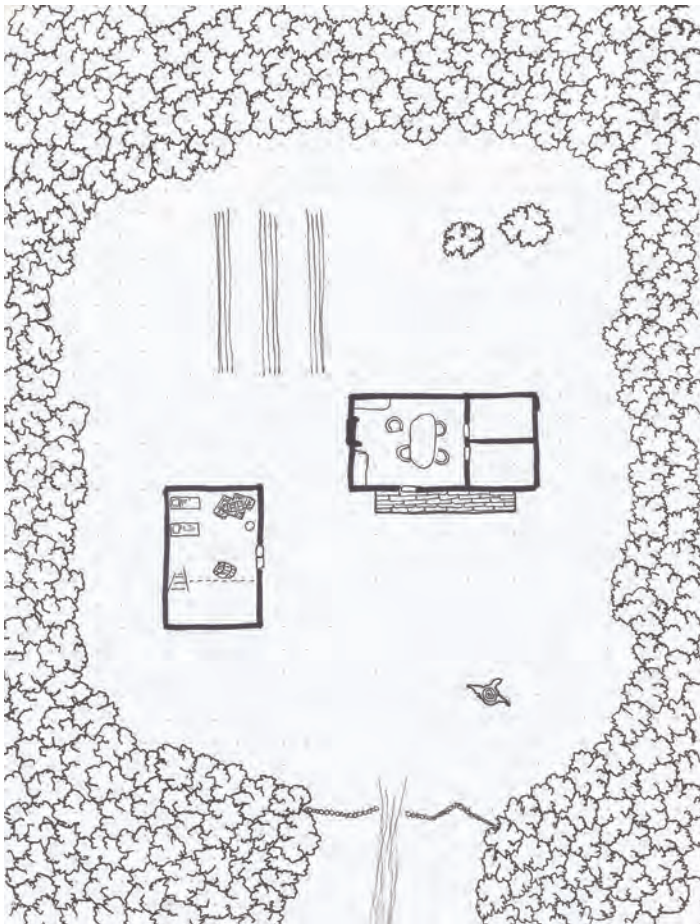
BEAR TRAPS

Simple trap (level 1–4, dangerous threat)

These traps consist of iron jaws which snap shut on a creature's leg when stepped on. The trap is spiked in the ground, leaving the victim immobilized.

Trigger. A creature that steps on the bear trap triggers it.

Effect. The trap makes an attack against the triggering creature. The attack has a +8 attack bonus and deals 5 (1d10) piercing damage on a hit. This attack can't gain advantage or disadvantage. A creature hit by the trap has its speed reduced to 0. It can't move until it breaks free of the trap, which requires a successful **DC 15 Strength** check by the creature or another creature adjacent to the trap.



Countermeasures. Because the snow covers the traps, a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** check is needed to see the trap. A successful **DC 10 Dexterity** check using thieves' tools disables it, or it can simply be avoided once detected.

SNARES

Tripwires have been set in the brush. Again, these are intended both to catch animals as well as injure any would-be trespassers.

SNARES

Simple trap (level 1–4, dangerous threat)

These traps consist of tripwires which wrap a noose around a creature's leg. When triggered, the creature is yanked high into the air by a tree which had previously been bent.

Trigger. A creature that steps on the trigger will set it off.

Effect. The creature must make a **DC 12 Dexterity** saving throw or be ripped violently off the ground. A creature ensnared by this attack suffers 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage and is restrained as they hang upside down from one leg 10ft off the ground. The creature will be restrained unless someone cuts them down. They may also attempt a **DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check as an action to free themselves.

Countermeasures. A successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception)** check reveals the trap. A successful **DC 10 Dexterity** check using thieves' tools disables it, or it can simply be avoided once detected.

THE BITTER COLD

In addition to the traps the Botrells have laid, the party must take precautions against the cold. By the time the party reaches the Botrell farm, each character must make a **DC 10 Constitution** save or suffer one level of exhaustion. Cold weather gear provides advantage on the check.

They must also make this check on the return trip.

MEETING THE BOTRELLS

Within a small clearing sits the Botrell farm. The path from the south passes through a run-down fence, while the rest of the clearing is surrounded by dense wood. Travelling through the woods will be treated as difficult terrain, and a character who tries to sneak

around the farm may trip over a bear trap (each character has a 25% chance).

A small house sits in the middle of the clearing, smoke drifting up from its chimney. To the left of the house is a barn, and behind that, characters can see some sort of small crop field buried in snow as well as a wagon with one wheel removed.

If the party triggered any of the traps, the Botrell's will be alerted to their arrival. Two of the Botrells will be hidden in trees and two will be hidden in the barn. For Very Weak Parties, only one will be hidden in each location. Angus Botrell, the patriarch of the family will be sitting on the porch of his home with his remaining children.

He calls out, "That's far enough," when the party reaches the gate and remind them that they are trespassing. Depending on how the party approaches the scenario, this could lead to combat, or it could involve negotiations.

- The Botrells will not admit to any wrong doing unless it is beaten out of them.
- They "may have heard something from 'some guy' in a bar."

Negotiations will require something in exchange...a simple "tell us because I rolled well" isn't going to cut it. Ideas include:

- Straight up cash isn't a bad idea. Allow a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)** check, reducing the DC by one for each gold piece offered.
- Angus Botrell, the patron of the family was injured a while back while cleaning one of the traps. The wound has mostly healed, but it bugs him a bit. A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine)** check will reveal that the wound is infected, and he could lose the leg. The infection can be successfully treated with a **DC 12 Wisdom** check using an Herbalism Kit, a **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine)** check, or with a lesser restoration or similar spell.

Assuming the party can extract information from the Botrells, they will learn that a crazy old coot named Augustus Hügbrecht hired them to steal the orb from the Burgomaster's estate. They weren't sure how they were going to pull that off until the celebration got out of control.

They delivered the orb to Hügbrecht's home but retained a few items which they also swiped while they were there. These items, along with other pilfered goods can be found inside the house.

ROLEPLAYING THE BOTRELLS

Angus Botrell is an arrogant man, who believes that he is entitled to a level of respect that few people believe he has earned. His children have inherited this arrogance and often venture into the village to cause

trouble. Angus only keeps them in check when it seems as if they may cross a line with the Burgomaster.

ENCOUNTER

Angus uses the spy stat block in instances below where a spy is present, otherwise he is one of the scouts.

- **Very Weak:** 3 scouts
- **Weak:** 5 scouts
- **Average:** 1 spy, 6 scouts
- **Strong:** 3 spies, 4 scouts
- **Very Strong:** 7 spies

ENCOUNTER MODIFICATION

Replace the spies ranged weapons with short bows (no effective statistical change).

DEVELOPMENT

If the party has learned of Augustus Hügbreight, then it will be easy enough to find out where he lives. Proceed to Episode 5: The Fruitcake

The Botrells have hidden the other stolen goods in the cupboards. A **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation)** check will uncover these items.

TREASURE

If the party returns the other items stolen from the Burgomeister's estate, Wilhelmina will reward them with 20 gp. The other items can be returned for a reward of 50 gp. Someone with the Criminal background can sell the Burgomeister's items to a fence for 40 gp and the rest for 75 gp (provided their party is agreeable).

FAIL FORWARD

If the party is unable to get the information from the Botrells (for example, they kill the entire family without questioning them), they may decide to return to Keltan. Depending on the time you have available to play, one of two options may be appropriate:

- Keltan suggests that the party gather the items he will need to create a new orb. Proceed to Episode 4: Mushrooms, Bark and Moss
- Keltan suggests they talk to Augustus Hügbreight. The old man did pitch a fit when he couldn't buy it, he's always screaming and yelling about something. In fact, he did mention something about it being important for him to win the competition this year. But he's always got a crazy idea. The gnome will direct the party to Hügbreight's home.

EPISODE 4: MUSHROOMS, BARK AND MOSS

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

Keltan gives the party directions to a section of the forest where they should be able to find the materials he needs. This section of the wood is darker than the rest, the light choked out by twisting trees and limbs competing for the sun. Some sunlight does make it through the foliage, but it is muted, and illuminates the landscape in an eerie hue. The wind whistles through the trees in an almost haunting melody, as if it is calling for something. Small animals watch the party from the safety of trees as their footfalls crunch in the snow.

None of these animals are any threat to the party, but they know the characters do not belong here. Examples might include squirrels watching from the trees as the party investigates the river, or a stag watching the party from afar as they search the pool. If any of these animals are approached, they will dart off into the woods.

The party knows they need to obtain three ingredients: Several green and gold mushrooms, several moonstones, and the white bark from an old tree in a secluded grove. The party may claim them in any order.

The first ingredient is several green and gold mushrooms which grow near the bank of a river. Finding the river will require a **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival)** check. Finding appropriate mushrooms will require a **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** or **Intelligence (Nature)** check. Failure on either of these checks means the party needs to spend additional time finding the river. The additional exposure to the bitter cold will impact the exhaustion check they will soon need to make.

The second ingredient are several stones, each the color of the moon and as smooth as glass. Keltan has also instructed them to find stones which have moss growing on them that has the color of embers. These can be found by following the river up river to a small pool being fed by a waterfall. The water has washed the stones smooth before depositing them on the shore; no check is needed to find these. The stag is here as well, watching the party from the top of the waterfall thirty feet above them; it will bolt should the party approach.

THE BITTER COLD

After the party has recovered the second item, each character must make a **DC 10 Constitution** save or suffer one level of exhaustion. If the party failed any of the checks, they are disadvantage to this saving throw. Cold weather gear provides advantage on the check.

They must also make this check after they collect the third item and return to Vexbrunn.

THE DRYAD'S TREE

The third ingredient is white bark from a tree which retains its leaves even in the depth of winter. This will be more challenging. It did not occur to Keltan to explain what happened the last time he was here. He encountered two dryads, Borri and Dorri, who are bound to the white tree. His demeanor disarmed them, as he seemed interested in the forest. They were happy to give him stories as they shared his drink and food. But the drink was stronger than they were used to, and they soon fell asleep.

Keltan left them a pair of blankets, thinking they would be cold on the ground. But then, he carved bark from the tree before he left. When the dryads woke, they were furious that they had been duped, and have vowed to revenge themselves. They made deals with the darklings of the wood, who whispered in the ears of an old wizard named Augustus. The fey told the man of the orb the gnome had made, that it would power his creation and restore his reputation. They hoped the gnome's greed would bring him back to the glade, so the dryads would have their revenge.

When the party arrives, they will see the tree. In many ways, it resembles a birch tree. White bark in long paper-like strips cover the trunk. As the party approaches, the dryads will speak to them, wishing to know why they are here and who sent them. They will not show themselves unless the party touches the tree...or suggests that Keltan sent them. If one of these things happen, the fey will attack.

Negotiating with the dryads will be difficult, as the dryads only speak Elvish and Sylvan. Additionally, there is probably very little that the party can offer in trade (unless they want to let a dryad peel the skin off one of them). They despise the people in the village, especially that little gnome. An offer to bring the gnome to them for justice will appeal to them, but they will demand that the party brings the gnome before they get the bark. They also have no intention of honoring such a deal.



ENCOUNTER

- **Very Weak:** 1 dryad, 1 darkling (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*)
- **Weak:** 1 dryad, 4 darklings (for parties of predominantly Level 1 characters, consider also removing 2 darklings)
- **Average:** 2 dryads, 4 darklings
- **Strong:** 2 dryads, 3 darklings, 2 brown bears
- **Very Strong:** 3 dryads, 2 darklings, 1 darkling elder (*Volo's Guide to Monsters*), 2 brown bears

When the party returns to Keltan, he will appraise the items and then scrape the moss off into a small pan, which he sets aside. That is for his breakfast...it goes *really* well with eggs and bacon. He will tell the party that he will need about 2-3 hours to complete the work (and payment up front).

He will also mention that the other guy (Augustus Hügbreight) who wanted to buy the orb came back again. If the party has not heard about this guy, Keltan will gladly recount the tale of when Augustus came into the shop looking for the orb. He pitched a fit when he couldn't buy it, but he's always screaming and yelling about something since he lost the fruitcake competition last season...for the tenth time in a row. ("I mean, really, who puts mint in a fruitcake...the lima beans were bad enough...").

But he came back while the party was away on their errand on some mad bender (at any rate, Keltan assumed the man was drunk) hollering about how Keltan could not stop him ...how they would all rue the day they laughed at him. (“I mean, really... who actually says, “Rue the day?”)”)

While the party is waiting for the orb to be completed, the events of Episode 5: The Fruitcake commence.

EPISODE 5: THE FRUITCAKE

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

If the party has been provided with the location of Augustus Hügbreight’s home, and wish to go there, they will find that Augustus’s wife threw him out several months ago. Esther will happily tell the party that she threw the “good-fer-nuthin’ layabout” out on his ear, and he can stay out until he gives up on all this tinkering business and gets a real job.

She will also happily tell the party that they can probably find his “smelly, lazy rump” down at his old “workshop” (she will make air-quotes herself for that word), which is a barn near the middle of town.

VENGEANCE AT LAST!

As the party approaches Augustus’s workshop, or as they are meandering around town killing time while Keltan works, they hear a commotion. At first, the melody sounds like the same songs they’ve been hearing throughout the town for the past few days. But those with a musical ear soon notice that the sound is cacophonous, like too many voices all trying to carry the melody.

The sound comes from a barn, which the party may already know belongs to Augustus. As they approach (or watch), the doors of the barn will explode open and a monstrous creature emerges. It is nearly 15 feet tall, and possibly as wide. While it is humanoid, its arms and legs are smooth, trunk-like appendages. Its skin is a yellowish-brown color, and appears to be mottled with gummy like rocks. Or is that candied fruit? Dear gods...is that a fruitcake golem?

Villagers had begun wandering towards the barn expecting some sort of show, but now turn and run. Atop the golem is a strange little man, screaming at the crowd that they laughed at his genius, that not one of them knows anything about fruitcake. He screams that he told them, he told them that they would rue the day that they belittled the genius of Augustus Hügbreight.

Augustus rides the golem within a crown of heavy, crystalized sugar. While it is intact, Augustus has three quarters cover and can only be targeted with weapons or spells which have reach or range. This protection can be targeted and destroyed (AC 13, 20 hp, resistance to piercing, slashing and fire damage). If the crown is destroyed, or the golem is killed, Augustus falls prone in a square adjacent to the golem.

ENCOUNTER ADJUSTMENTS

- **Very Weak.** Fruitcake Golem (**half-ogre**). Augustus Hügbreight (**apprentice wizard**; *Volo's Guide to Monsters*).
- **Weak.** Fruitcake Golem (**ogre**). Augustus Hügbreight (**evil mage**, *Lost Mines of Phandelver*)
- **Average.** Fruitcake Golem (**ogre**; increase hp to 70). Augustus Hügbreight (**evil mage**).
- **Strong.** Fruitcake Golem (**ogre**; increase hp to 81). Augustus Hügbreight (**evil mage**). 2 Gingerbread Men (**half-ogres**)
- **Very Strong.** Fruitcake Golem (**ogre**; increase hp to 91). Augustus Hügbreight (**evil mage**). 4 Gingerbread Men (**half-ogres**)

ENCOUNTER MODIFICATIONS

Change the stat blocks as follows:

Augustus Hügbreight (as mage):

- Change shocking grasp to ray of frost, or another ranged cantrip of your choice.

Ogre (all types):

Change the size and type to Huge Construct.

Replace all attacks with the following:

- Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.
- Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. (These are sharpened candy canes which shoot from the construct's forearms)

Half-Ogre:

Change the size and type to

- Gingerbread men: Large Construct
- Fruitcake golem: Huge Construct

Replace all attacks with the following:

- Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.
- Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. (These are sharpened candy canes which shoot from the construct's forearms)

AFTERMATH

The music was being generated from the orb stolen from the Burgomaster's estate. When the golem is defeated, the music will continue until the orb is removed from the golem's skull. Characters trained with the Arcana skill and who make a successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana)** check will be able to determine that the orb was somehow working to help power the golem.

If the party provided Keltan with the materials (and payment) for the second orb, then one of the party members may take the item. (The item is described in the Adventure Rewards)

The Burgomaster will not receive the party when they return to the manor. Instead, Wilhelmina will attend to returning any party equipment still in the Burgomaster's possession and any payment due the party. If the party gives Wilhelmina a replacement orb, she will immediately notice. She will comment on it, wait for a response, and then complement the party for their ingenuity. It will be the first time the party sees her smile. She lets the party know that neither the Burgomaster nor his daughter will notice the difference.

Likewise, she will not ask after any other items they may have retrieved from the thieves.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Augustus Hügbreight (apprentice wizard)	50
Augustus Hügbreight (Evil Wizard)	200
Botrell (Scout)	100
Botrell (Spy)	200
Brown Bear	200
Commoner	0
Darkling	100
Darkling Elder	450
Dryad	200
Fruitcake Golem (half-ogre)	200
Fruitcake Golem (ogre)	450
Gingerbread Man (half-ogre)	200
Town Mage (Evil Wizard)	200
Store Patron (Bandit)	25
Store Patron (Goblin)	50
Store Patron (Scout)	100
Store Patron (Goblin Boss)	200
Town Guard (Guard)	25

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Successfully interrogating the Botrells	75
Providing the ingredients to Keltan	75

TREASURE

Characters receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item	Value
Burgomeister's Stolen Goods	20 gp or 40 gp
Other Stolen Goods	50gp or 75 gp

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

KELTAN'S SNOWGLOBE

Wondrous Item, uncommon

This small sphere of glass weighs 1 pound and contains a replica of a small manor on a hill. Snow lazily drifts down within the glass. When exposed to light, the globe emits flickering lights of green, silver and gold as it softly plays a holiday melody. When not exposed to light, it generates a small amount of heat, which is not enough to ignite anything, but can certainly be used to warm a character's hands in cold weather.

Otherwise, it acts as a driftglobe with one additional property. Once per day, when it is held and the command word is spoken, as an action, you can cause each creature in a 10-foot cube originating from you to make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. Creatures that fail fall unconscious for one minute. Sleepers will awaken if they take damage or someone takes an action to wake them.

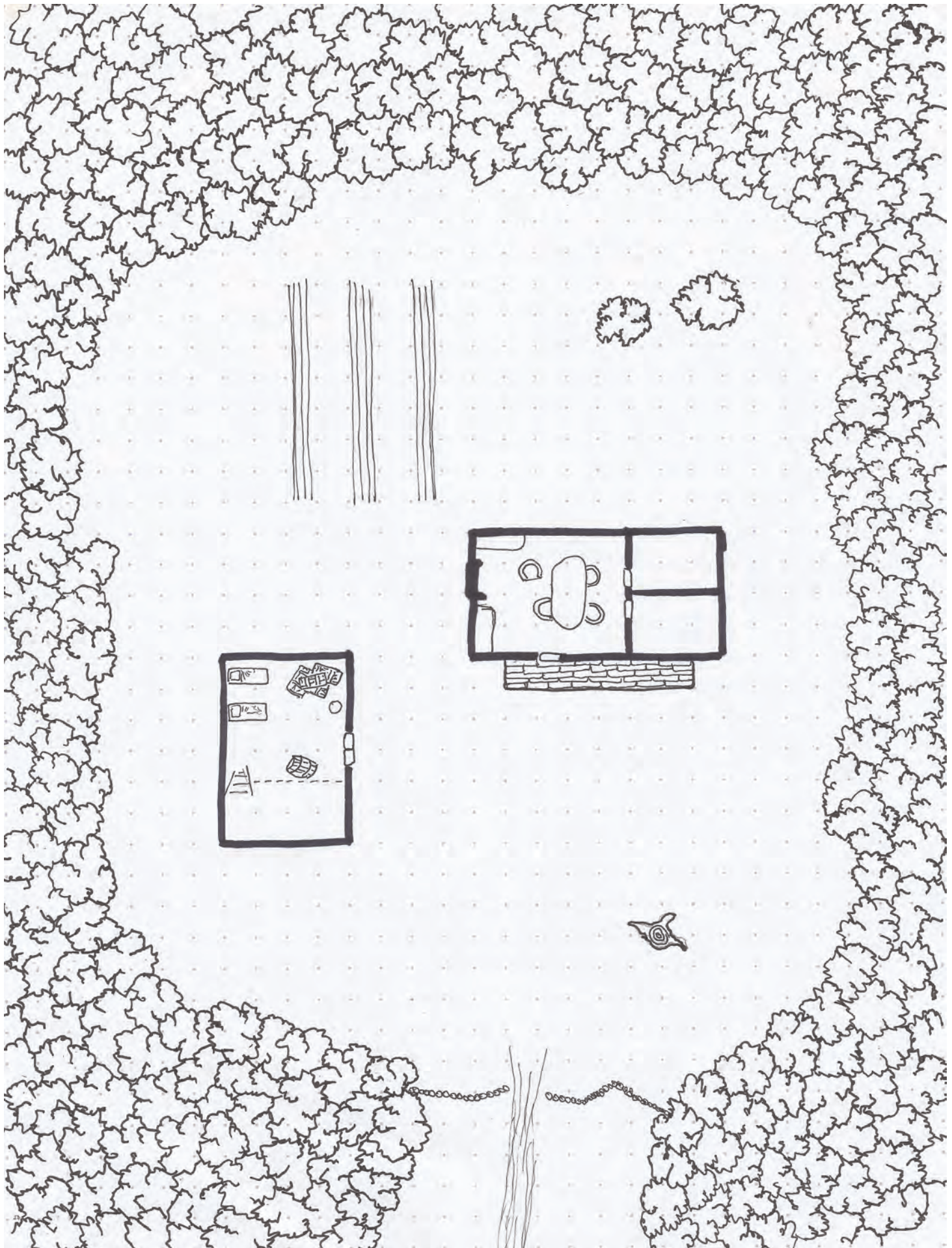
AUTHOR'S NOTE

The village of Vexbrunn is heavily inspired by memories of the Claymation specials, especially Santa Claus is Coming to Town.

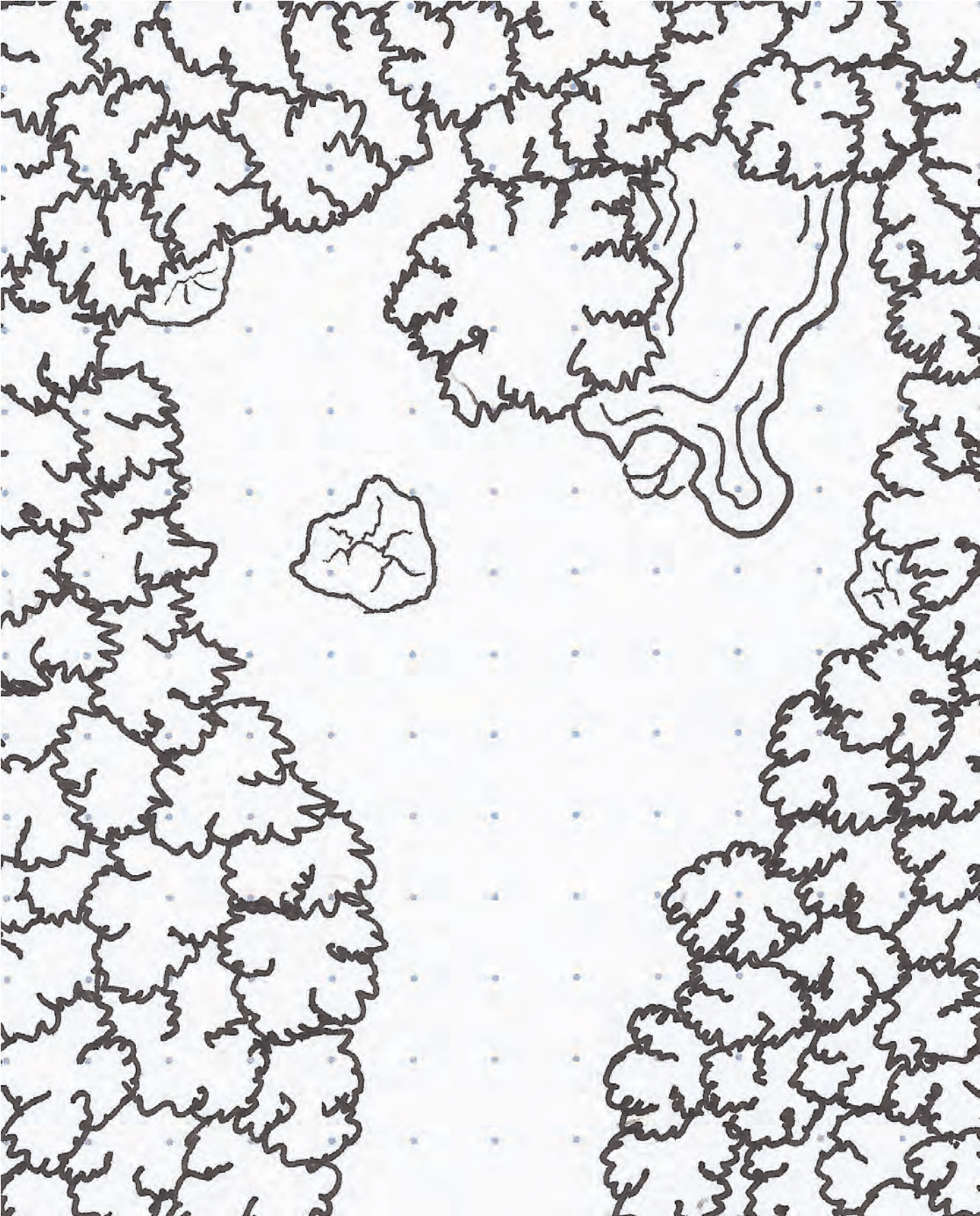
AUTHOR BIO

Adam Scaramella is one of the lead writers for The Role Initiative (<http://theroleinitiative.org/>), having written several adventures for conventions including PAX Unplugged. A long time DM, Adam enjoys introducing his two boys to the wonders of roleplaying games while trying to pretend this is all normal (This is all normal, right?)

CAMP MAP



GLADE MAP





EVERGREEN COURT

FOUR FLIPPANT FEY

Introduction: Every Midwinter, the town of Spruce holds their festival in the snow-covered valley they call home. Honoured guests are given the role of the Evergreen Court, who preside over the festivities. According to legend, the real Evergreen Court is a noble precession of “otherworldly” beings said to walk the earth every winter and bless the land while it slumbers so that it might be reborn in the coming spring. It’s a fairytale that every child knows and remembers when they decorate their homes for the winter...but this winter someone has taken notice of the pageantry. Someone who wishes to remind them that the Court is more than a tale.

A 4-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 1ST - 4TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY SCRIV THE BARD



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

Estimated Duration: 3 - 4 hours

This module can be presented as a standalone adventure or an addition to an existing campaign. To add this adventure to an existing campaign, simply replace the town name with the last one your players have visited.

BACKGROUND

As the new heroes of the town, the party receives a special honor in this season's Midwinter Festival: the role of the **Evergreen Court!** They are given special robes and crowns adorned with evergreen branches and holly, and get to oversee the progression of the festival, which includes the honored role of judging the Mulled Wine competition.

Episodes

The adventure's story is spread over 3 **Episodes** that take approximately 3 total hours to play.

Episode 1: Fun and Games. The characters are presented their Evergreen Court attire and are free to take part in the festivities. Games will include archery, performance, juggling, crafting, and games of chance. After a period of exploration, they will be called upon to judge the Mulled Wine competition. As they sample the entries, a strange feeling begins to come over them. Before long, they find themselves fighting off a strange transformation that has already begun to take hold of the other townsfolk! Anyone who tasted the wine is starting to polymorph into winter sprites! One of the wine vendors drops their glamour to reveal their true form (four real sprites) before fleeing into the woods, laughing at the havoc they sparked. This is the **Call to Action**.

Episode 2: Don't Get Lost. The characters pursue the sprites into the woods and find themselves in a strange, shifting environment where the material realm and the Feywild overlaps. They must make wisdom saving throws to keep their wits about them as they navigate the labyrinthian forest. They will encounter pockets of magical anomalies in the form of a peppermint grove, a herd of reindeer, floating silver bells, and finally a tower formed from an immense evergreen tree.

Episode 3: Climbing the Tower. Once they reach the tower, the party must climb to the top, where they will find the four sprites from the festival and an Archfey, one of the members of the true Evergreen court, who sent the sprites to cause mischief in revenge for the town's pale impersonations of their family year after year. The party must prove themselves worthy of the title in a test against the Archfey. They can succeed either through combat or negotiation. Once they pass the challenge, the enchantment will be lifted from the town and everyone will return to their normal selves. The party will have to make one final Wisdom Saving Throw as the material plane and the Feywild separate once more to see if they remember the adventure.

The Evergreen Court

...is an ancient family of powerful fey beings connected to the midwinter season. They are jovial and benevolent, but prone to vanity. The main antagonist of this story is a member of the court who doesn't wish to do any lasting harm but decides to unleash chaos upon the town as a prank.

EPISODE 1: FUN AND GAMES

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

Come, weary traveller, and find solace in winter's symphony. Rest beneath the evergreen as Holly, Wren, and Frost all interweave their voices to lift your spirits and herald the coming of the court...

SCENE A. GUESTS OF HONOUR

A blanket of thick snow stretches out in shimmering waves before you as you look upon the constellation of small fires and fairy lights that adorn the valley below. Lilted music cuts through the crisp air to reach your ears, beckoning you to seek warmth and companionship amongst the congregation of festival-goers, as colorful in their hats and scarves as the trinkets and baubles displayed in the wooden market stalls. Before you can descend into the fairgrounds, you hear the crunching of boots across the snow and a hooded figure calls approaches from behind you, seemingly following from the path that led you here. "My, you're fast! These old bones can barely keep up." The hood falls back to reveal the wrinkled grin and mousey hair of Tomba Fairbairn, your guide from the nearby town of Spruce.

The party has been championed as heroes after dealing with the latest menace that had been harassing the good people of Spruce. As a show of gratitude, they have been invited to preside over the much-anticipated Midwinter Festival as this year's Evergreen Court...a noble procession of otherworldly beings said to walk the earth every winter and bless the land while it slumbers so that it might be reborn in the coming spring. Every child in the valley knows the tale, though nowadays it's mostly a bit of fun pageantry for the festivities. Nonetheless, the heroes have graciously (or begrudgingly, in some cases,) accepted the honour.

Their duties as Evergreen Court include walking through the festival in stately procession, partaking in the festival games, and choosing a winner for the spiced wine competition.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The valley that houses the Midwinter Festival is nestled within the rugged Verdillian hills. The town of Spruce is situated above the valley atop one of the steeper hills and seems to almost tumble down the sides as its inhabitants tend to homestead wherever their fancy takes them. As

long as there's earth to be tilled or grasses to graze, they'll put hammer to nails and call it home.

Senses. Jovial music from flutes and bells ring out across the fairgrounds. The smell of spiced wine, chestnuts, and roasting meat fills the air from the various cookfires. The air is crisp and clean, and the crystalline snow crunches satisfyingly beneath the party's boots.

Lighting. The valley is dark, with a glowing halo effect arcing over the fairgrounds, illuminated by the small cookfires and arcane fairy lights floating through the stalls.

NPCs INFORMATION

Tomba Fairbairn. Elderly Halfling from Spruce. The party helped his family with some creatures that were harassing their farm and now he's "Adopted" them into the Fairbairn clan. He's their self-appointed guide and caretaker while they're in Spruce.

Theodora Fairbarin. Wife of Tomba. She's motherly and has a nose for detecting lies. She also has a new spiced wine recipe that she wants to showcase this year but promises not to hold it against the party if they don't vote in her favour. Of course, there's an extra serving for them if they do!

Swanhilde Fairbairn. One of Tomba's many children. She's the seventh and youngest child and is excited for the festival. She and the other village children made the Evergreen Court robes that were gifted to the party. Her siblings, in birth order, are Florin, Bernard, Gloriana, Ludo & Lottie (twins), and Primula.

Sonja Gaardsen. The Human major of Spruce and presiding official for the festival. Mayor Gaardsen was an adventurer in her younger days, and eventually settled in the farming community that later became Spruce. She is in her mid-fifties and walks with a cane...though players get the feeling it isn't out of medical necessity, as she walks as though she could still spring into action at any moment.

Emil Andras. Elven winemaker, whose wine lost to the Fairbairns for the last two years but is certain he'll win this time. He is oddly competitive and questions whether or not the party has refined enough palates to appreciate his recipe.

Theodora Fairbarin. Human winemaker who is entering the contest for the first time. In fact, this is his first time making wine! He's a brewer of ales from the next town over but decided to foray into winemaking just for the season. He likes to poke fun at Emil and other "wine snobs," and wants to beat

him at his own game. He doesn't think that he can beat Theodora, though.

FESTIVAL ATTRACTIONS

The party can enjoy the following attractions and activities at the Midwinter Festival:

- **Archery Range:** There are five rings tacked to nearby trees at varying heights. The fifth ring is suspended by a bit of rope, swaying in the breeze. *The party must make ranged attack rolls at increasing difficulty: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25.* The prize is a golden circlet worth 50gp.
- **Juggling Challenge:** Player characters begin with one ball and must make Sleight of Hand Checks each time another ball is added. *The DC begins at 5 and increases by 3 with each step.* If they beat the record (5 balls) they win a Snowglobe (depicting fairies dancing around an evergreen tree)
- **Dice Games:** Player characters may try their deception skills at a game of "Fey Dice" (or "Liar's Dice). All participants roll 5d6 and hide their "hand" from view. The player with the highest number of matching dice wins, with ties going to the higher value (two 5s beats two 4s). There are two rounds of bidding as each person claims a number and value for their hand, attempting to encourage the others to drop out of the round in a manner similar to poker.
- **Trinkets and Gifts** (woven items, trinkets, baked goods and candies, ornaments and lanterns)
- **Crafts** (holly and evergreen decorations, crowns, etc.)

SCENE B. WINE TASTING

As they enjoy the festival, the party will be expected to sample and judge the spiced wine from the Fairbairn, Andras, and Toross stalls.

Fairbairn. A deep, red wine mulled with cinnamon sticks, clove, orange peel, and cardamom. It's warm but with bright citrus notes that remind you of sunshine on freshly frosted trees. This is the crowd favourite.

Andras. Another red, but sweetened with honey alongside the traditional spices. It's very rich, and almost too sweet.

Toross. Warm amber in tone, this wine is also sweetened with honey, but also infused with dates and cinnamon. It's surprisingly light, but full-flavored at the same time and a strangely minty aftertaste.

The party will realize that while the largest crowd is vying for samples of Theodora's wine, a surprising number of people are gathering around Cosimo's stall, walking away with excitement and sometimes two or three small cups in hand.

In time, the people who have sampled Cosimo's wine will start to become more animated and, in some cases, disruptive. If any party member tastes it, they will need to make a **DC 10 Wisdom Saving Throw**.

On a successful save, they will simply sneeze, the smell of mint lingering in their sinuses.

On a failed save, they will suddenly be overcome with a fit of giggles...joining the increasingly giddy crowd around them. In mere minutes, they will experience an insatiable craving for sugar and make their way to the nearest sweetshop stall.

Soon, anyone who drank the wine will begin to become more manic and the crowd is lost to laughter, singing, knocking over stalls, dancing on rooftops, and playing pranks on unsuspecting victims.

With a **DC 15 Perception Check**, the party may notice Cosimo quietly beginning to laugh to himself, watching the chaos grow.

About ten minutes later, they begin to change. The party watches on in astonishment as the nearest person to them lets out a loud hiccup...then several more in sequence as they finish drinking their glass of wine. With each hiccup, they shrink in size until they're roughly the same size as a Halfling. Their giggling voice becomes increasingly higher pitched until it's little more than a squeak. Their hair changes to a pale, shining green. Each of the others have undergone similar transformations and are causing havoc through the festival. A **DC 10 Arcana or Nature Check** will allow a player to correctly identify them as Fey beings of some sort...almost like pixies, but much too large in their current state. If any players failed their Wisdom Saving Throw, then they too will have changed to this pixie-esque form.

At this point, Cosimo's laughter gets louder, now unrestrained in face of the chaos. Before the party can question him, his form begins to change as well. A silver glow builds around his form, and when it subsides four pixies remain, hovering in place with their jewel-bright wings. One with hair the colour of holly berries zips forward, inches away from one of the party's noses, giggling wickedly.

"You might want to ditch the costume, friend...before the real Court returns!"

With that, the four fly high up into the air, still laughing, and make a beeline for the small forest to the north. Taunting the party as they go, daring them to try to follow.

TRANSFORMATION

Any party member who has begun their Sprite transformation will keep their equipment and class abilities, but their walking speed is reduced as they become ever smaller. First to 25, then 20, then finally down to 15 as they shrink until they're roughly 2ft. in height. Their Strength score also decreases by 2 each time they shrink.

To resist the enchantment, they must make a **DC 15 Wisdom** Saving Throw each 5 minutes to stop shrinking. If they succeed, they don't go back to their original size, but will remain at their current height.

EPISODE 2: SYLVAN MAZE

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

You follow the sprites into the forest, the lights and sounds of the topsy-turvy fairgrounds becoming faint as you run, leaving it far behind. The moon is now high in the sky, casting the winter landscape around you in a silvery glow. A couple of you rummage through your packs for some sort of light source, the moonlight faintly illuminating your breath as it begins to crystallize in the air around you. As the light flickers into life, you hear the giggling again, with a strange tinkling sound-- like silver bells-- from within the woods.

SCENE A. KEEP TO THE TRAIL

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The forest, though seemingly small from the outside, seems to grow in proportion once the party enters. The snow-frosted trees become taller, fuller, and more oppressive. There is a narrow trail weaving between the trees and undergrowth. As they get closer, small firefly-like points of light begin to glow and hover softly along the trail, beckoning the party to follow.

Senses. The fresh, sharp smell of evergreen fills the air, strangely penetrating in spite of the snow and frost. As you go deeper into the forest, the sound of bells becomes louder.

Lighting. The snow reflects the moonlight from above, and the strange floating lights keep the area illuminated softly. With a **DC 10 Arcana** Check, the party can detect that these lights are currently benign but have the aura of an undead presence.

GHOST LIGHTS

The floating lights are Will O'Wisps (Monster Manual p. 301), spirits of wanderers who got lost in the woods. They only appear during Midwinter, when the barrier between worlds is thin. They will not attack unless provoked first, simply floating along the path and giving light to travellers. They seem to be drawn to the warmth of the living. Sidebar Bulleted

- For lower level parties (1-2), drop the number of hit points from 22 to 11, and the 2d8 lightning damage to a 1d8.

As they continue down the path, the party soon becomes disoriented. They are unable to navigate by skill checks or even arcane means, left solely to the

visual cues around them and the earthen trail ahead of them. If the party follows the trail, they will come across the following areas, each of which includes a puzzle or challenge that they must overcome to pass on and continue through the forest. If they try to leave the trail, they will have to make a **DC 15 Wisdom** Saving Throw to see if they can find their way back. On a failed save, the player characters will stumble into one of the locations below at random and be stuck alone until the rest of the party finds them. If the entire party fails, they will end up divided amongst the areas.

SCENE B-E. POCKET DIMENSIONS

Scene B: Peppermint Forest. The dark brown bark of the trees gradually changes to red and white, spiraling up the tree in a twisting pattern with an iridescent sheen. The needles and leaves take on a lighter green hue, and the sweet, tingling scent of peppermint fills the air. The party comes upon a grove of these peppermint trees, clustered together, one of the four sprites (Mentha) laughing at them from within the branches and crunching away at a bit of peppermint bark while it watches them.

As soon as the party draws near one of the trees, they are transported within the grove, and the path is nowhere to be found. They have to find their way back by finding and capturing the sprite hiding within the grove. The party will have to climb up the slick trees to capture Mentha, making a series of **Athletics** or **Acrobatics** checks of increasing difficulty (**DC 10, 15, 17**) as they climb, swing, and jump from limb to limb, with a final **DC 15 Sleight of Hand** Check to catch the Sprite. The skills used will be at the DM's discretion, depending on the methods the party wishes to use.

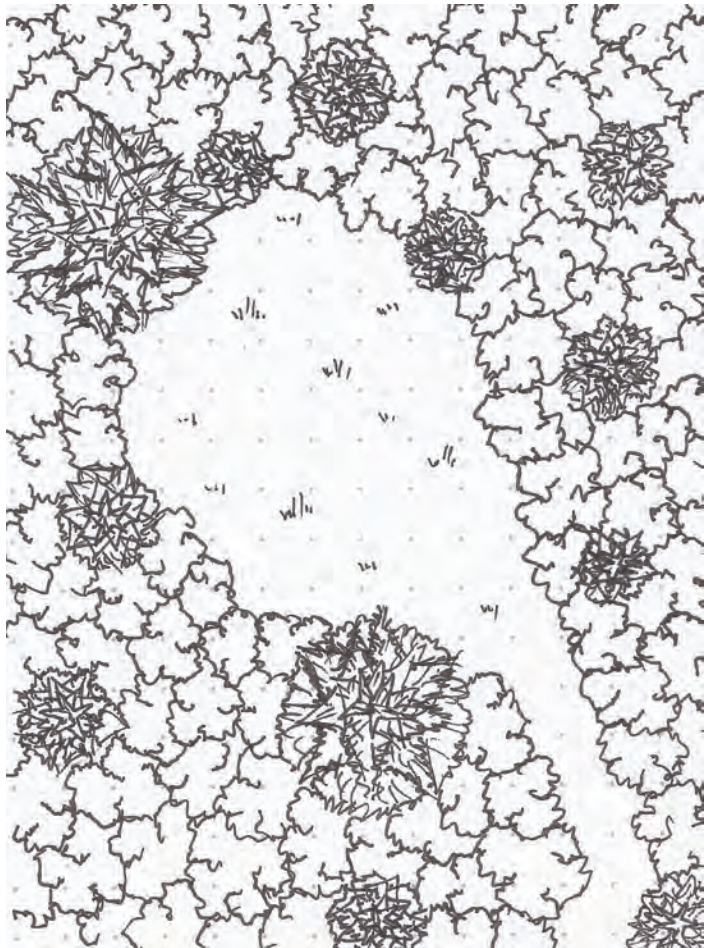
Alternatively, the party can try to convince Mentha to lead them through the forest with a **DC 18 Persuasion, Intimidation, or Performance Check**.

Reward: Peppermint Bark

The party can break off pieces of the peppermint bark, twigs, and leaves. If eaten, it will have the effect of the Levitate spell for 1 minute.

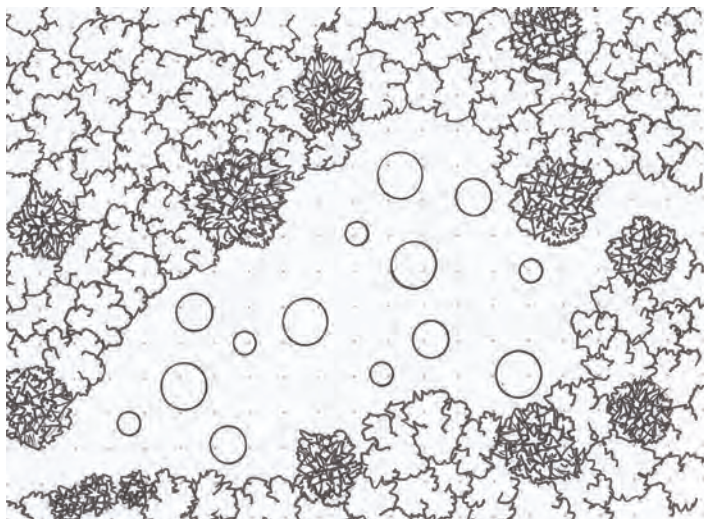
SCENE C: REINDEER HERD

The next pocket contains a herd of shaggy reindeer calmly grazing on frosted grass. The trees above show a full moon much larger than the party typically sees in the sky. Ranga takes to the air, taunting the party as they climb higher and higher. In this challenge, the party must take flight to capture the



sprite in the air. They can do this by feeding the reindeer some Peppermint Bark to encourage them to take flight or by eating the bark themselves. If using the reindeer, the party will then need to make **DC 15 Animal Handling** Checks (with Advantage if they used the Peppermint Bark) to encourage the Reindeer to cooperate and **DC 15 Sleight of Hand** Checks to catch Ranga.

Again, the party can try to convince the Sprite to lead them through the forest with a **DC 18 Persuasion, Intimidation, or Performance** Check.



If they successfully persuaded Mentha to join them, then the DC drops to 14.

Disorientingly, the trees of the forest seem to loom and grow around them as they fly higher, effectively preventing them from escaping and creating a seemingly eternal wall around them.

Reward: Reindeer Kiss

The player character who is able to build the best bond (highest Animal Handling Check) with the Reindeer gets a big, slobbery, Reindeer kiss. This allows them to understand the speech of animals for 24 hours (but they can't communicate in kind.)

SCENE D: SILVER BELLS

More Will O'Wisps fill this clearing, interspersed with floating silver bells of various sizes (small, medium, and large). The bells are chiming gently in a sweet, rhythmic song that becomes discordant if the party touches one of them. The third sprite (Argi) is here and will set the bells off if the party doesn't touch them first.

When the music changes, the Will O'Wisps become aggressive and the party must set the bells back to the calming music to stop the Wisps from attacking. If they attack the Wisps, the Sprite will chastise them for harming the poor lost souls.

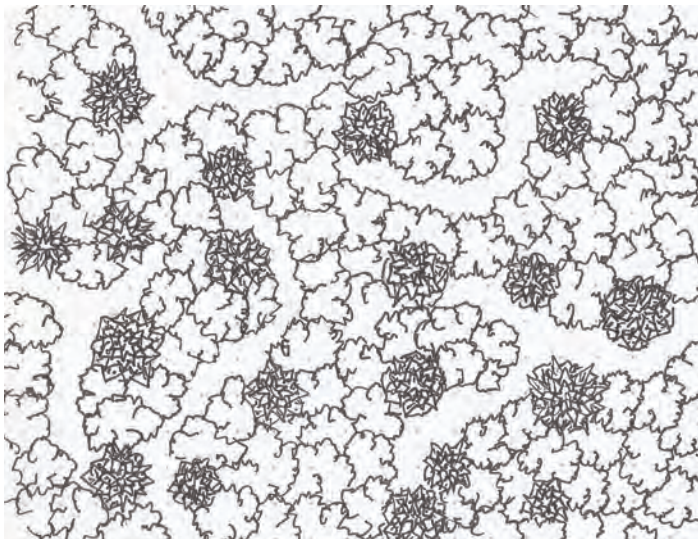
When the music becomes discordant, the party must make **DC 10 Wisdom Saving Throws** to avoid falling into a confused state (speed reduced to 0 for one round) and **DC 15 Performance, Arcana, or straight Intelligence Checks** to reset the bells. Two player characters are required to simultaneously reset each set of bells (large, medium, and small), using a **Bonus Action** to do so. This will result in three combined skill checks.

They must reset the large bells first, then the medium, then the small to get the song right. If they go out of order, the music will remain discordant. When they find the right order, the new tones will seem to echo and resonate a bit more with each correct selection. If they have trouble solving the puzzle, the sprite may begin whistling an ascending tune to give them a hint.

When they complete the challenge, Argi will join the party willingly and help guide them to the final area.

Reward: Silver Bell

If a player takes a silver bell with them, they will be able to use it once a day to cast the Sleep spell on one target. Target must make a **DC 13 Wisdom Saving Throw**, or the player's set spell save DC.



SCENE E: PEPPERMINT FOREST

The final clearing contains nothing but a tall tower, at first glance carved from the trunk of a titanesque pine tree, stretching high above the forest canopy. There are more bells chiming prettily in the branches while the four reunited sprites sit among them. They congratulate the party for finding their way there and invite them in...if they still want to reverse the enchantment in Spruce, that is (“though if you ask us, those fuddy duddies are having WAY more fun now!”). The party now can ascend the spiral steps leading up the trunk of the tree, to the very top where a shining crystal globe sits, almost like a second moon. Its surface is made of a swirling, shining light that makes it hard to see within, but there is a gilded door on the side.

When they reach the top, the final sprite, Pino, will be there. He is wearing the formal liverie of the Evergreen Court, a beautiful robe of greens, browns, and golds. They will critique the party’s shabby appearance as shameful, particularly in the presence of royalty.

“Didn’t you prepare? How disrespectful, especially after we warned you that the Court was arriving today!”

EPISODE 3: CLIMBING THE TOWER

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

As the Sprites open the gilded door, the party steps into a crystalline ballroom, decorated with living holly, more silver bells, and sparkling icicle chandeliers. Small red birds flit about, chittering brightly.

If a player was granted the gift of Reindeer Kiss, they will hear the birds commenting on how brave the party has been, but can they face the Regalis Borisii? They’re quite vain after all...”

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The ballroom is vast, and the party has no visual of the outside world, as the surface of the globe swirls with arcane light. There seems to be a microclimate within the room that causes snow to gather and fall, but it disappears before touching the ground. The trees and vines are not cut and arranged, but alive and growing naturally. The floor of the ballroom appears to be made of smooth ice.

Senses. Start The air is cool, but not uncomfortable, and the sound of the birds and bells creates a pleasing ambiance.

The Sprites. Once Borisii begins speaking, the Sprites remove themselves and watch from the chandeliers above.

Lighting. The globe shines with an organic light, as if it were a second moon.

FINAL SCENE: REGALIS BORISII, NOBLE OF THE EVERGREEN COURT

A shining figure awaits at a throne made from frosted evergreen, resplendent in green and gold robes, a crown of holly at their brow. Dark skin framed by pearlescent green hair tumbling in waves nearly to the floor. Eyes glowing with the luminescence of the moon. They stand smoothly in one motion, holding a spear adorned with frosted vines by their side. Their face is ageless and unreadable...youthful and eternal at once, as if locked in time. Beautiful and joyful in one moment, powerful and fearsome with the shifting of the light.

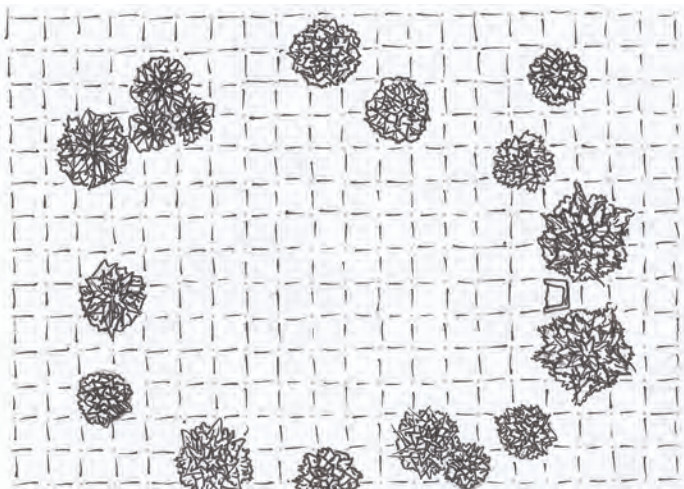
Their voice echoes out, reverberating within the crystal globe: “Welcome to my court...my attendants have shared the most interesting tale about you. I’m told you have a request?”



The party can now attempt to negotiate with Borisii, who is infuriated that the people of Spruce make a mockery of their family and the Evergreen Court year after year.

"It started as something quite endearing, like a child wearing a parent's clothes, but with each year it became more and more offensive. I refuse to let my family be shamed any longer...and besides, a little amusement now and then does the eternal soul some good..."

They will admit to orchestrating the prank with the wine, saying that if the town wants to join the



Evergreen Court so badly, they can become fey themselves! Borisii will laugh at this, particularly if any of the party have been transformed as well.

They offer to make a deal with the party:

An Exchange: They will break the enchantment if the party can offer something of value in exchange (can be "a story, a song, an offer of servitude... something special" Borisii says with a grin). If they can provide something of value that flatters Borisii's vanity, the party may be successful. Skill Checks are up to the DM's discretion. Possible options include, but are not limited to: Acrobatics, Athletics, Arcana, Deception, Performance or Persuasion.

A Challenge: If an exchange is not to their liking, ("You hero-types always rush to prove your strength") they are welcome to challenge Borisii. The laughter and grace will turn sinister as the Archfey reveals a dazzlingly twisted smile. It had been a long time since they had a good challenge.

COMBAT

Core. If the party engages in combat, Borisii will smile excitedly and clap their hands, triggering the bells to chime dramatically in unison, setting a steady rhythm for the battle. With a wave of a hand, any party members who had been transformed will return to their normal selves...

"We can't have you limited, now can we? Now, show me what you can do!"

If the party defeats Regalis Borisii, they will kneel and a wall of evergreen will grow in front of them like a shield. Once the party stands down, Borisii will laugh joyfully and reappear, the shield dropping. The rhythmic bells will cease and return to their normal melody.

"Yes...yes! Very well done! Oh, I haven't had that much excitement in eons! You win, my friends, you win."

With another clap of the hands, the four Sprites come flying out, carrying a small silver chest between them. Inside the chest are finely woven green scarves and a silver ring beset with emeralds for each party member.

*"Please, take this as a gift. Something to remember me by! I shall end the enchantment, but with one last request...
...we must do this again next year..."*

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Regalis Borisii	1,800 xp
Will O'Wisp	450 xp

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Festival Games	20 xp
Peppermint Forest	50 xp
Reindeer Herd	50 xp
Silver Bells	50 xp

TREASURE

Characters receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item	Value
Jewels	300 gp
Fine Scarves	100 gp

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Rings of the Evergreen Court (rare). Regalis Borisii gives each player a silver ring with brilliant green gems set all around the band. These rings offer resistance against Cold damage and, once per day, they can summon a small shelter made of evergreen boughs, which will provide protection from cold, magical effects, and scrying. Each shelter can hold two medium-sized humanoids or one large-sized humanoid. The shelter takes 15 minutes to summon and will last for 10 hours, or until dispelled.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Evergreen and holly are important symbols of winter, and old traditions use these treasures to brighten the home during the darkness of winter and safeguard the promise of new life in the spring to come.

I hope this adventure brightens your day just as much! Huge thanks to all of the writers, editors, and artists who made this story come to life!

AUTHOR BIO

When not daydreaming and drinking copious amounts of tea, Scriv likes to write, stream, and GM family-friendly RPGs! You can find her articles and original Heroes of Iyastera adventures at scrivthebard.com, or head to twitch.tv/scrivthebard for RPG creation and gaming!

APPENDIX A: CREATURE STATISTICS

REGALIS BORISII

Medium Fey, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

Skills Deception +7, Nature +6, Perception +7, Persuasion +7

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing Damage from Nonmagical Weapons that Aren't Iron

Damage Immunities Cold

Condition Immunities Charmed, Frightened

Senses Truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

TRAITS

Innate Spellcasting. Regalis Borisii's spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spellsave DC 17, +7 to hit with ranged spell attacks). They can cast the following spells:

At Will: Faerie Fire

3/Day: Hold Person, Moonbeam

1/Day: Conjure Animals

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Borisii can make two melee weapon attacks with their Frostkiss Spear.

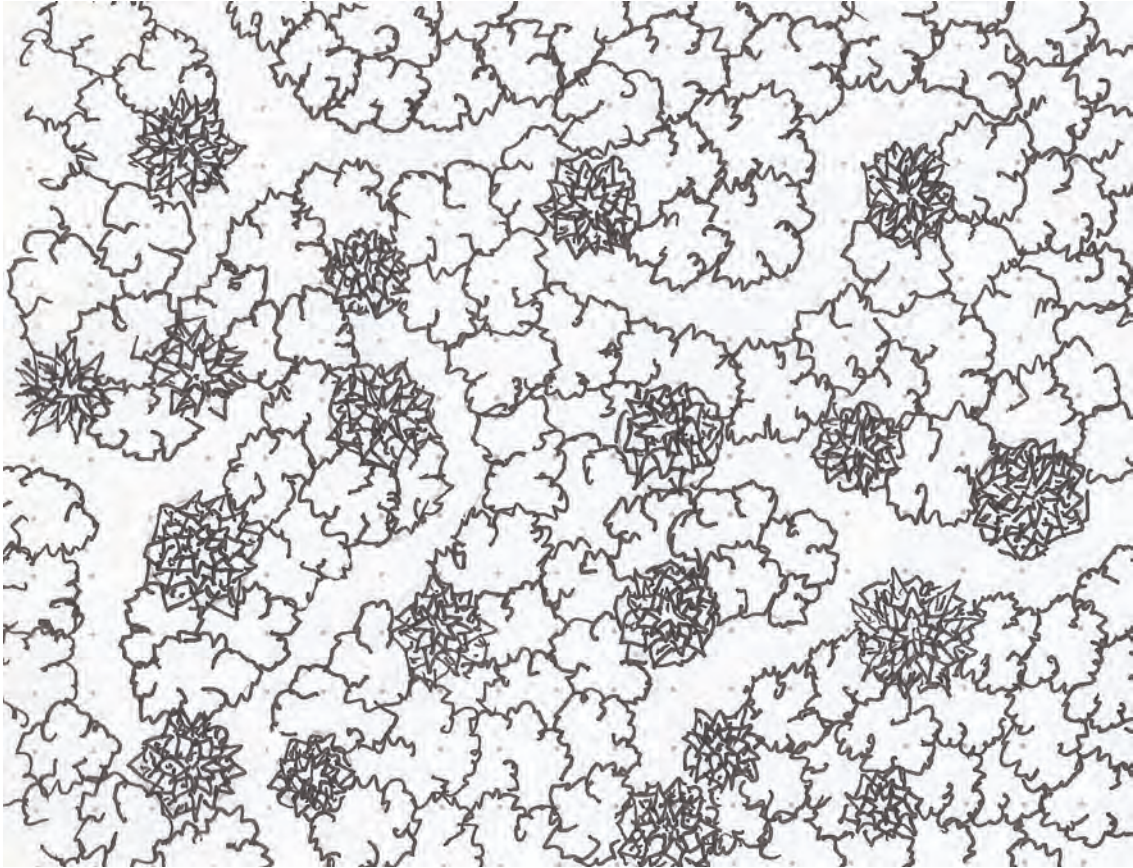
Frostkiss Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage.

LAIR ACTIONS

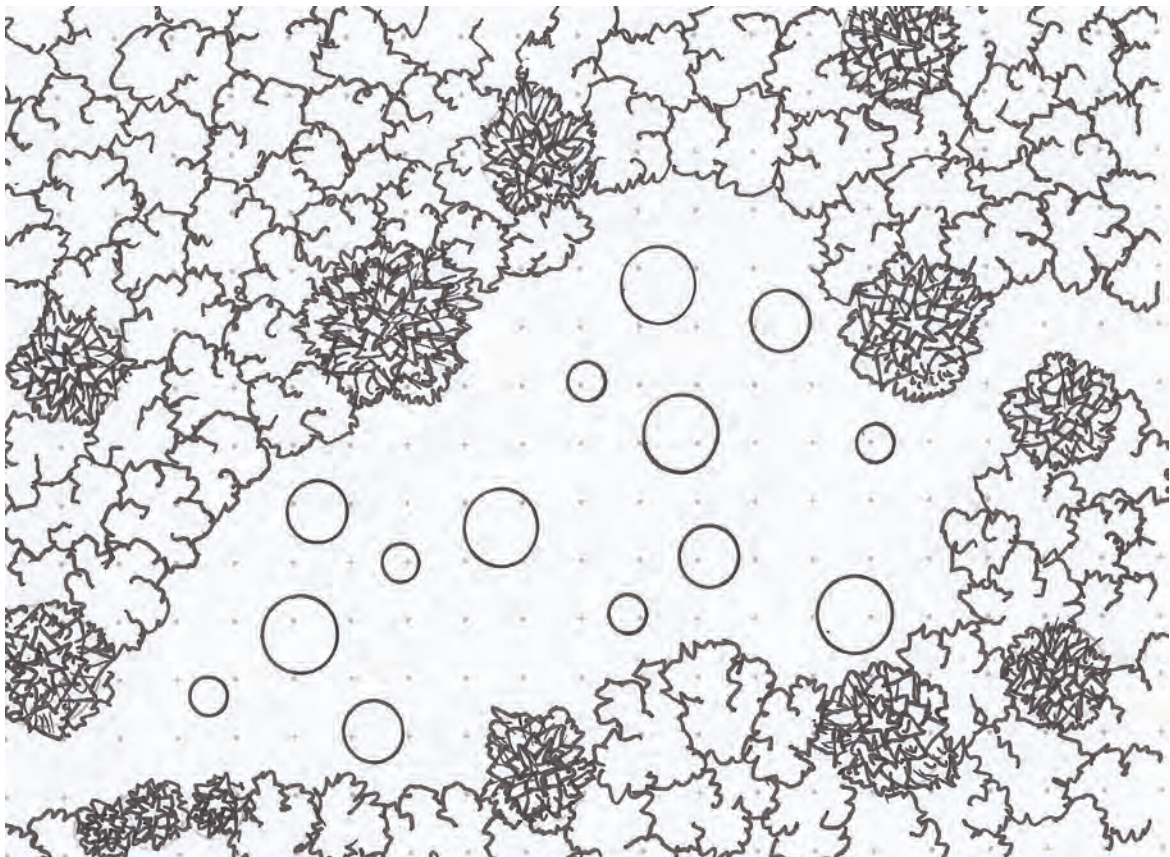
If the party engages in combat, Borisii can activate a lair action from the following list up to three times during the battle:

- **Snowstorm:** The snow falling from the top of the globe will thicken and swirl violently. The party must make a **DC 10 Constitution Check** to avoid being blinded for their next turn.
- **Overgrowth:** The plant life at the edges of the ballroom and the center throne will grow rapidly, ensnaring any player within 20ft. They must succeed a **DC 15 Strength Saving Throw** to break free. That area also becomes difficult terrain for two turns, after which the overgrowth will return to its normal state.
- **Ring the Bells:** All of the bells within the globe will begin to ring louder and more discordant. Players must make a **DC 15 Wisdom Saving Throw** to avoid being confused and immobile for one round. They repeat the Wisdom Saving Throw if they take damage before the round ends.

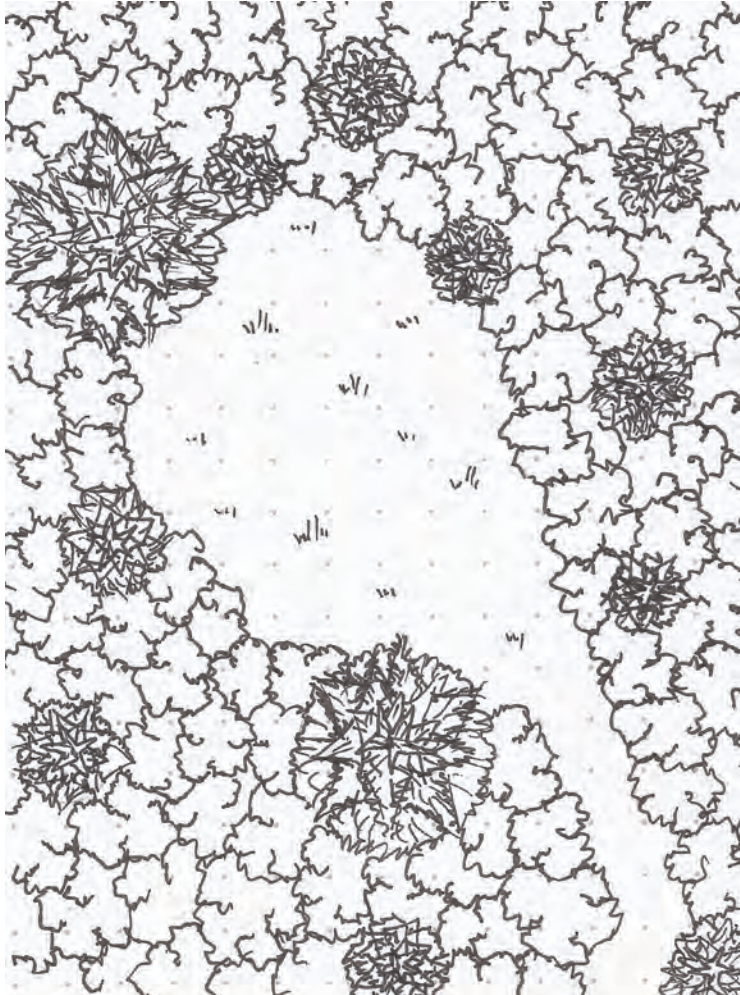
PEPPERMINT FOREST



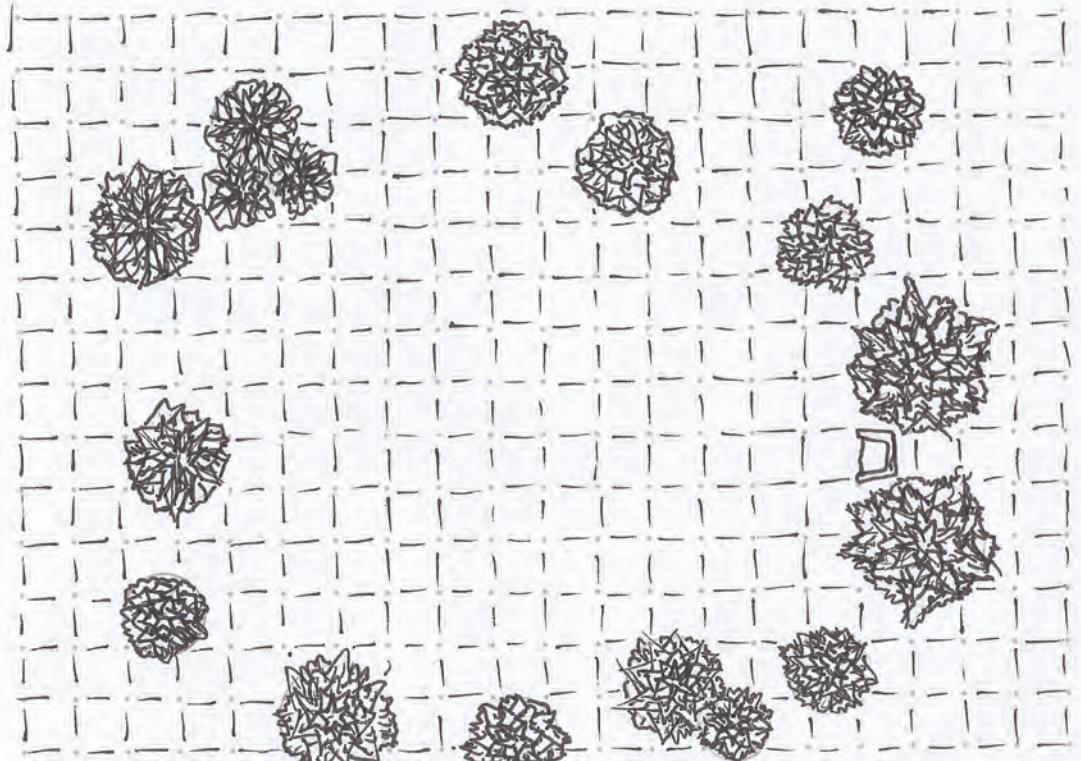
SILVER BELLS



REINDEER CLEARING



THRONE ROOM





HEART OF GOLD

FIVE GOLDEN RINGS

Introduction: Pinecrest is famous for its vibrant Feast of the Moon celebration. One and all are welcome to celebrate in the feast halls of Lord Tuttle, but this year the festivities are interrupted by a wizard with a dire message. Someone must ascend to the floating fortress and face the challenge of the five golden rings, or the village of Pinecrest is doomed.

A 4-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 5TH - 10TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY CELESTE CONOWITCH



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

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ADVENTURE PRIMER

Estimated Duration: 3 - 4 hours

BACKGROUND

Decades ago, an ancient golden dragon named **DUMAZIEL** (DOOM-ah-zee-el) found herself gravely wounded after a battle with a rival dragon. Desperate, she assumed the form of a human man, and stumbled into the remote mountain village of **PINECREST**. The people of the town were kind, and took her in doing all they could for the 'man' they had found bleeding in the snow.

Dumaziel grew to enjoy her time as the man **CORBIN TUTTLE**, and within a few weeks decided to remain with the villagers for a few more months. She shared her ancient knowledge of engineering, irrigation, and medicine piece by piece with the town, improving the remote settlement far beyond others of its like in Faerûn.

In short order Corbin Tuttle had been elected mayor of Pinecrest, and soon after was awarded the status of a noble to his region. In the blink of an ancient dragon eye Dumaziel had found herself loving and caring for a population of humanoids in Faerûn. But the world turns and turns, and she has found herself needing to return to the business of her draconic kind.

Not wanting to leave her beloved Pinecrest unprotected, Dumaziel has devised a trial to ensure her people are left in the hands of capable champions.

EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over 3 **Episodes** that take approximately 3-4 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1: Feast of the Doomed.** The Feast of the Moon celebration is disrupted by the appearance of a wizard with a bizarre challenge. The party is employed by Lord Tuttle to travel to the wizard's fortress and save the town of Pinecrest.
- **Episode 2: The First Four.** The characters ascend to the fortress. They face four challenges, and with each success climb one ring higher.
- **Episode 3: The Last Ring.** The characters arrive at the final ring and Dumaziel greets the characters, revealing the true nature of her challenge and offering them a place as the champions of Pinecrest.

GOLDEN DRAGONS

Golden dragons are generally regarded the most powerful of all dragons.

As such, adult and ancient golden dragons have access to a huge amount of resources, both in terms of power and material resources.

When portraying a golden dragon, keep in mind that the humanoid races are but grains of sand to their magnificence.

Portraying a mortal is an amusing exercise, certainly not any kind of challenge. Unlike most gold dragons, which tend towards aloofness, Dumaziel has cultivated a keen interest in observing mortal behaviors. She has come to the realization of just how fragile her subjects truly are. This awareness has inspired her to devise the challenge of the five rings, and find champions to watch over Pinecrest in her absence.

EPISODE 1: FEAST OF THE DOOMED

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

The festivities at Pinecrest are truly a sight to see, rich, poor, tall, short, elven, dwarven or orc.... all are welcome at Lord Tuttle's table.

—Gimlet, A Travelling Bard

SCENE A. FEAST OF THE DOOMED

As the adventure begins, our heroes have made their way to Pinecrest, a humble town situated in the snowy mountains. Pinecrest is home to a few hundred citizens who make their income logging the expanses of pine trees the town is named for. There are very few buildings of note except for the expansive feast halls built by Lord Tuttle. Every year to celebrate the holiday, Tuttle opens these halls to both the citizens of the town, and any travelers who visit Pinecrest.

When the party arrives, early evening has fallen, and the Feast of the Moon celebration is in full swing. The open halls are packed with music, laughter, and travelers from all over Faerun.

Allow the characters to join in the merriment. The room booms with noise until Lord Tuttle, the gracious host of these festivities holds up his hands for silence.

The music comes to a stop. At the far end of the feast hall you see an elderly man waving for attention, he is dressed in a jolly green tunic with a golden circlet upon his head.

"I am Lord Tuttle, welcome to my home!"

A rousing cheer goes up from the crowd around you, but before the Lord can continue, a sudden rumble of thunder halts the merriment.

A hunched wizard wrapped in a golden robe has appeared in the center of the hall, atop one of the long feast tables. He holds a gnarled staff in one hand, and a golden hoop in the other. He begins to speak, his voice is crystal clear from all corners of the room, "I challenge the bravest among you to face the trial of the Five Golden Rings. If none of you accept, I shall raze your village to the ground. Those who consider themselves worthy, grab hold of this ring and be brought to my fortress in the clouds. You have until the sun rises to face me"

Another rumble shakes the chamber, and the wizard disappears. The room is quiet with shock, save for the clattering of the golden ring upon the stone floor.

The silence of the crowd doesn't last long. The feast hall erupts in panic.

Waves of attendees' rush outside, toppling chairs and tables to flee the scene. Lord Tuttle waves his hands, trying to restore order. If the characters attempt to assist his efforts a **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion)** check will convince the people in the party's immediate area to calm down.

Screams are heard from outside, and if the characters step out to look they see miles above the ground, a floating fortress hovers directly over the town.

Lord Tuttle calls for any adventurers to come forward, he can offer a great deal of gold to anyone willing to confront the wizard's strange challenge. Dumaziel has access to unlimited material wealth and is willing to pay whatever price the adventurers insist upon.

If the party doesn't have much wealth or possessions, consider giving them an upfront sum of gold here, so they have money to spend for the 'Charity' puzzle they face in the second ring.

Arcane Assessment. It is quite possible that a character may wish to make an Arcana check or use *detect magic* when the wizard appears. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana)** check allows the character to notice an illusory quality to the scene, revealing the wizard to be the product of a *project illusion* spell. Casting *detect magic* reveals the wizard to be a product of illusion magic. If checked, the golden ring left by the wizard emanates conjuration magic.

Describing the Rings. This is the first of several rings the party will collect during this adventure. Once the rings are touched, they resize to fit whoever possesses them. Each ring is a simple golden band with a single word engraved upon its surface, this word represents one quality of leadership that Dumaziel admires. This first ring has the word 'bravery' on its surface

ROLEPLAYING LORD CORBIN TUTTLE

Lord Tuttle is the persona that the dragon Dumaziel has lived as for many decades. With her ancient wisdom and practiced years, the characters should have absolutely no idea that the noble man hosting this event is a female ancient gold dragon in disguise. Dumaziel has maintained the illusion that Tuttle is real, slowly aging his appearance over the years. Consequently, Tuttle now appears as an elderly man with not much longer to live, which is one of several motivations for Dumaziel's departure.

Here is a brief guide to accurately portraying the person Dumaziel has created:

Lord Tuttle is the spirit of charity. He holds a deep love for the town of Pinecrest and all its citizens.

He has never married, and has no children, but the townsfolk serve as surrogate family. He makes it a point to walk the streets of his province every day and is quick to open his home to anyone in need of food, shelter or cheer.

Well loved by the people, they have noticed that as of late, their Lord seems prone to bouts of unexplained melancholy. But when asked about his troubles, he is quick to deflect with a wide smile and a joke.

After the wizard makes his doom ridden announcement, Lord Tuttle attempts to calm his people with soothing rationality. He is clearly disturbed, but he is also determined to find capable adventurers in the group and implore them for aid. No cost is too high to save Pinecrest.

DEVELOPMENT

If any of the characters touch the ring left by the wizard, the whole party is teleported to the floating fortress. Proceed to the next section.

EPISODE 2: THE FIRST FOUR

Estimated Duration: 2 - 3 hours

My lords and ladies, it is the providence of the virtuous to show, not to tell.

—Sachiavelli, *Philosopher*

THE GOLDEN GATES

All who touch the ring left by the strange sorcerer are immediately teleported to the floating fortress that now shadows the town of Pinecrest. The adventurers appear directly in front of the gates, there is no obvious way to return to the ground.

Five golden towers loom ahead, stretching far into the sky. Directly in front of you is a set of dark wooden double doors, flanked by two identical statues of a human knight. The statues are gilded with gold.

As the characters approach the statues, two voices issue from them speaking the following in perfect unison:

“ With each challenge you must contend

As with the heart of a king

Only then, brave souls, will you ascend

To the final golden ring”

With this stanza read, the wooden doors swing open, revealing the first chamber.

If the characters decide to explore the rest of the island, they can walk the full distance around the tower in about fifteen minutes. There is only lush green grass upon the ground.

COMPASSION, THE FIRST RING

As the characters pass through the first set of doors, they enter onto the highest point a large empty stadium open before them. Tiers of empty stone benches ring a flat circular area at the room's center surrounded by a high wall with five golden gates. At the very center of the circle is a wooden crate, even from this height the characters can hear a terrified weeping issuing from inside the crate.

As you take in the scene before you, a horn sound with no obvious source, echoes across the chamber. The gates suddenly raise, and monsters crawl out of the recesses, heading for the crate and its sobbing occupant.

The sobbing sounds issuing from the crate are an illusory effect meant to drive the characters to action.

The monsters emerging from the golden gates are a **wyvern** (*Monster Manual (MM)*) and **guard drakes** (*Volo's Guide to Monsters (VGtM)*), and they will immediately move to start attacking the crate in the center of the ring. If the party joins the fray in the arena circle, the drake's attention will be diverted to attacking the heroes.

If the characters do not intervene, the drakes will spend three consecutive rounds battering the crate. The sounds of wailing will intensify each round until the box is destroyed.

If the box is destroyed in such a manner, the monsters and all traces of the crate will disappear, and the arena will fall completely silent. In one hour's time, everything will reset, and the trial will begin again.

If the characters defeat the drakes or manage to open the crate before the monsters do, inside they will find a single golden ring with the word 'compassion' engraved upon it.

This ring works similar to the first, and upon being touched, will transport the party to the next part of the fortress.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The arena ring at the room's lowest point is a perfect circle with a width of 100 feet.

Senses. Sounds echo loudly around this huge stone chamber.

Lighting. Large braziers of flame illuminate the entirety of this room.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Use only one wyvern.
- **Weak:** Use a wyvern and one guard drake.
- **Strong:** Use a wyvern and two guard drakes.
- **Very Strong:** Use a wyvern and four guard drakes.

CHARITY, THE SECOND RING

Upon touching the first ring the party is transported to the second chamber. This room is also circular, but it is filled by a massive golden scale. A swirling cloud of gold hangs 30 ft. up in the air.

As you appear in this room you see a giant golden scale directly in front of you. One of the large flat disks is lifted high in the air, and just above it is a swirling cloud of gold dust. The other disk of the scale rests on the ground at your feet, a single gold coin sits at its center.

This chamber is a puzzle meant to test the characters spirit of charity. The scale in this room must be balanced correctly to make the next ring appear.

The gold coin upon the scale is a clue, if a character leaves an item of value on one side of the scale, the other disk will be able to support that character's weight (regardless of how much weight is placed on the other side). For example, if there are five party members, five items of value must be placed on one side of the scale to successfully raise the weight of the party on the other side.

If the characters pocket the gold coin, or remove it, the scales will function as normal weight-based scales, dropping when too many characters climb to the other disk, making it impossible to reach the swirling gold cloud high in the air.

The item left by a character must be worth at least 50 gold pieces, or it must be an item of personal meaning to the character placing it (use your best judgement).

The total length of the bar between the two disks is 60 ft. climbing successfully across the beam from one disk to another requires a successful DC 14 Athletics or Acrobatics check. If a character fails this check, they fall off the scale and 1d6 bludgeoning damage for each 10 feet they fall.

Once a number of qualifying objects have been left equal to the number of party members, the suspended golden cloud will materialize into a golden ring that drops onto the lifted disk of the scale, this ring is engraved with the word 'charity.'

Touching this ring will transport the characters to the next part of the fortress.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The stone room has no exits or entrances. The giant golden scale is a total of 80 ft. long, from the tip of one disk to the other. Each of the disks on either side are 10 ft. by 10 ft. circles (the entire party can easily fit on one side). The bar connecting the two disks is 60 ft. in length. The floating golden cloud is 30 ft. up in the air, clearly hovering above the disk not weighed down with the golden coin.

Senses. The metallic clanging of the shifting scale rings through this chamber.

What About My Treasure? After the characters move on from this chamber, the items they left will be brought to Dumaziel's horde on the fifth ring. They will be returned to the characters once their conversation with the gold dragon has ended.

Lighting. Lit sconces along the walls completely light up this room.

Helpful Hints

If the group is struggling to understand or solve this puzzle, you may wish to give some additional hints.

Here are a few clue suggestions if the group is stuck:

- **The Coin.** When examined, it is revealed that the gold coin has the phrase 'Charity lifts the spirit' stamped upon its surface.
- **Balancing Act.** Give hints about the scales reacting to even the slightest weight change. For example, if a character adds 10 more gold coins to the pile, it doesn't shift the weight completely, but make it clear that there is definitely some give in the scales position.
- **No Way Out.** Remind the party that there are no other exits or doors in this room. They must find the ring to get out.

WISDOM, THE THIRD RING

Upon touching the second ring the party is transported to the third chamber. This room is a circular chamber with three pedestals arranged in a triangular pattern. Far above the heads of the characters is a swirling vortex of glittering gold.

The room that appears around you is another circular chamber with three pedestals in its center. A glint of gold catches your eye and as you look upwards you see a swirling cloud of glittering motes high above your reach.

This chamber is another puzzle for the party to solve before they can continue. They must answer three riddles about the tenants of leadership before the golden ring will appear.

Each pedestal has two objects laying upon it, a piece of parchment with a riddle written in flowing script, and a golden quill pen.

The riddles read as follows:

"O virtue of virtues
Through trial and strife
Tempering both judgement and might
I wait and weigh everything in my sight"

To which, the correct answer is: Patience.

"A soldier's burden I commonly am
A commandment even to kings

Beyond pleasure and joy I sit
A call to action or an indentured writ"

To which, the correct answer is: Duty

"When the fittest do contend
And one reigns strong to seek an end
Look upon thy fallen foe
And to thee my face will show"

To which, the correct answer is: Mercy

If an incorrect answer is written upon the page, the ink simply disappears.

When the correct answer is written upon the sheet of parchment the pedestal begins to glow and magically expands to a larger pillar.

When all three pillars are in place, the swirling gold vortex coalesces into a ring that lies upon the last pillar. This ring is engraved with the word 'wisdom.' The pillars all have handholds and can be easily climbed.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This is a cylindrical chamber 30 feet wide and 150 feet tall.

Golden Cloud. The shimmering cloud in this room is composed of individual particles of gold, these particles will only form into the ring once the pillars appear.

Lighting. This room is lit by blazing scones on the walls.

Running Riddles

When running a riddle puzzle, it is important to be aware of the moods of your players. If your group is struggling to find the answers allow the characters to make Intelligence checks to gain additional insight in the form of clues.

For example, for the first riddle you could say "You recall that there is a common phrase some people say...it goes something like '.... is a virtue' If your group just cannot solve the riddles, perhaps an Investigation check will reveal the answers scrawled into the walls of the room.

Once the pillars have appeared, and the ring has formed, the party can touch it to be teleported to the next room.



HONOR, THE FOURTH RING

Upon touching the third ring, the party is transported to the fourth chamber. This room is a large flat circle in the center is a golden throne, sitting on the throne is the wizard who delivered the challenge in Lord Tuttle's hall.

Your eyes are drawn to the only object in this room, a large golden throne carved with stunning motifs of dragons. Slumped in the chair is the wizard who started all of this. He pushes back his golden hood revealing the graceful features of an elf. He grabs the staff at his side and calls. "So, you are good enough to have made it this far. Before you continue on, you must face me in honorable combat."

This elven man is Rystal Yeldithas (RYE-stall Yell-dee-THOSS), Dumaziel's steward and companion. He uses the stats of a **diviner** (VGtM).

He has been instructed by the dragon to challenge the characters to combat, and to test if they will show him mercy upon defeat. When combat begins, Rystal already has the mage armor spell cast upon himself. Rystal's pet guard drakes also move to attack, when the party enters, they are invisible, and lurking behind the throne.

Rystal currently has the death ward spell cast upon him. When he drops to 0 hit points and death ward activates, he will call out to the characters that he surrenders.

If the characters do not harm him further, he will give them the fourth golden ring, which he wears on a chain about his neck. This ring is engraved with the word 'honor.' He will also explain that he is not the true master of this place, he is merely a servant. If asked who the master is, Rystal answers that the characters will soon find out.

If the party slays Rystal, despite his surrender. Read or paraphrase the following:

As you strike the death blow upon the wizard, a harsh discordant peal of bells fills the room. Over the horrific sound, a booming voice with no source calls: "You have shown yourselves to be without honor. Ascend to the final ring and face me."

Touching the ring will transport the characters to the final ring of the fortress.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This room is a 60 foot by 60-foot circle with the golden throne directly in the center.

Lighting. Lit sconces fill this room with bright light.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Use just the diviner.
- **Weak:** Use the diviner and one guard drake.
- **Strong:** Use the diviner and two guard drakes.
- **Very Strong:** Use the diviner and three guard drakes.

EPISODE 3: THE LAST RING

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

“The only time I’ve ever felt small, was standing next to a dragon.”

—Harold, A Halfling

MEETING THE MASTER

Upon touching the fourth ring, the party is transported to this vast chamber, which serves as Dumaziel’s personal quarters.

The room around you absolutely sparkles. Gems, gold, treasure of all variety is piled high in this gigantic stone chamber. Plush carpets cover the floor and thick tapestries cover the walls. At the end of the room, two doors stand open, revealing a balcony that looks out into the starry night sky. A man dressed in jolly green stands upon it, and you realize that it is Lord Corbin Tuttle. He turns to the party and removes the golden circlet from his head, “I apologize for this deception, but I needed to know if you were worthy of this, the final golden ring.”

Dumaziel, in the form of Lord Tuttle will explain her true nature and will answer any questions the characters may have.

She explains to them that all of this was an effort to find stewards who would protect Pinecrest in times of trouble, since she must be moving on. She needed to know that her successors would be both strong in body and heart.

There are several different outcomes depending on the party’s decision:

Acceptance. If the characters choose to accept the role of guardians to Pinecrest, Dumaziel will be relieved. She will let the characters know that they may have Lord Tuttle’s manor home, and all the treasure that is contained within its vaults. She feels confident that Pinecrest will flourish under the party’s watchful eyes. She gives the party the final golden ring, which was Lord Tuttle’s circlet, and a ring of protection.

Denial. If the characters do not accept the role of guardianship, Dumaziel will fall into reflective silence, before declaring that she understands, and she supposes it is time that the citizens of Pinecrest learn to fend for themselves. For their troubles she will offer each character 2,000 gp from her horde.

No Offer. If the character’s chose to slay Rystal in the fourth ring, Dumaziel will not offer them the role of guardians to Pinecrest. She bitterly thanks the party for reminding her of a lesson she forgot: mortals are crawling things, unworthy of a dragon’s time. She admits she grew distracted by Pinecrest, but it shall not happen again. For humoring her, she gives the party 2,000 gp.

Regardless of their choice, she will give the characters the four golden rings used to traverse her fortress. Dumaziel will also return any items left behind by the characters in the second chamber.

As you accept these golden rings you find yourselves standing back on the streets of Pinecrest. You see the floating fortress outlined by the moon begin to disappear in a cloud of fog, but before it is completely gone you swear you see the glint of massive golden wings.

STEWARDS OF PINECREST

Accepting stewardship of Pinecrest does not mean that the party must now permanently live in the town. It does mean that they now own a noble estate there that they can return to whenever they wish. The manor house has 20,000 gold pieces contained in its vaults, upkeep of the manner and the town will be pulled from these funds.

It also means that whenever the citizens in Pinecrest are in trouble, or need the assistance of the party, they will reach out via message.

For more information on the costs and resources that come with running a Noble Estate, refer to the ‘Recurring Expenses’ table on page 127 of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*.

TREASURE & REWARDS

Here is a list of items potentially granted at the end of this adventure.

- **Magic Items.** A ring of protection
- **Special Rewards.** If the party accepts stewardship of Pinecrest, they are given the deed to Lord Tuttle’s manor house. They are also allowed to keep the four golden rings which are worth 50 gp each. They also receive the fifth golden ring, which is actually a *ring of protection*. Dumaziel also gifts the party 2,000 gp for their efforts.

If the party does not accept stewardship of Pinecrest, Dumaziel still allows them to keep the four gold rings and gives the party 2,000 gp.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Guard Drake	450
Wyvern	2,300
Diviner	3,900

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Completing Each Ring	2,000

TREASURE

Characters receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item	Value
Ring of Protection	Rare

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Ring of Protection. You gain a +1 bonus to AC and saving throws while wearing this ring.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Who doesn't love a dragon in their D&D adventures? I've always been fascinated by the role of dragons in fantasy, examining their relationship with the mortal races of the world. Typically, dragons are remote beings, occupying deep dungeons, remote mountain peaks, and strange forests, but I wanted to examine what might happen when a dragon grows fond of a particular group of people.

AUTHOR BIO

Celeste Conowitch is a Seattle based RPG content creator. When not writing games, she can be found running them all over the internet! She is the Dungeon Master & Producer for the D&D actual play podcast 'Venture Maidens,' the Dungeon Master for the 'Mistress of Modules' live stream show, and the co-host for the 'DM-Nastics' a segment on the Dungeon Master's Block Podcast, and she is also a co-host for 'DnDCommuniTEA' a monthly talk show on the Wizards of the Coast Twitch channel. You can find out more about her work by checking out her website celesteconowitch.com or by following her on Twitter @cconowitch.



DEADWINTER RUN

SIX KISSES FROM AURIL

Introduction: In Luskan, the Pirate city to the North, the locals pay homage to Auril by participating in her Wet Parade. After lining the pockets of their vestments with handfuls of snow and ice, participants travel out of The Winter Palace to find, climb, and kiss the frosty iron plate atop each one of Auril's six icy pillars aptly named the "Kisses of Auril." Most who attempt the challenge fail. Succumbing to the chill, they are quickly brought inside to warm up and recover.

On Deadwinter Day however, this practice takes an especially dangerous turn when greed, pride, and the Frostmaiden herself each make an appearance.

A 5-6-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 5TH-9TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY ANDREW S. MORLEY



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

This section provides the adventure's background, a list of prominent NPCs, an overview of the adventure in play, and hooks that you can use to introduce your players' characters to the action.

BACKGROUND

As inhabitants of a northern city, the townsfolk of **LUSKAN** are the toughest rabble there is. During the winter, the temperature dips low enough to partially freeze the **RIVER MIRAR**. That's a mild day. When a strong polar wind blows through, the streets are extinguished of all life. The city hibernates.

Huddled in their homes, they pay homage to **AURIL**, the Maiden of Frost; Goddess of Winter. They plead for her mercy, a sign that she may temper the coming winter. When the weather permits, they hold Wet Parades, challenges where her devoted wear vestments stuffed with ice and climb the white marble pillars distributed throughout the city to kiss the iron plate at the top.

On **DEADWINTER DAY**, these challenges take on a whole new persona. It's a cutthroat event in the middle of the night. The risk of entry is steep, but the reward is a windfall of local adoration, hospitality, and riches. Only one person has completed the challenge since its inception; **DALATH**, but he hasn't been seen since the end of last year's event.

EPISODES

The adventure is spread over 3 **Episodes** that take approximately 5-6 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1: At Her Mercy.** The party arrives via ship after an extremely choppy approach. Deadwinter Day has finally come to Luskan and Auril is awaiting her tribute. The storm will not relent until morning after the end of the Deadwinter Run. A character or two from the party is ideally recruited into the event.
- **Episode 2: The Pillars.** The event is on! The party moves throughout the city collecting kisses of Auril from each of the challenges. However, there are multiple horses in this race, and a bevy of cutthroat gamblers all bidding for their share. One is more dangerous than the rest, leaving a frozen body at each turn.
- **Episode 3: Dealing with Dalath.** With the danger exposed, the party must choose how to deal with Dalath. Either, face off against him and make him pay in blood for his crimes, or feed him to the townsfolk and pirate captains of Luskan.

AURIL – THE FROSTMAIDEN

Auril is the neutral-evil goddess of winter. In most cases, she is cold, distant and merciless, acknowledging only those who continue to venerate her throughout their frigid suffering. Even in those cases, often, there is no relent.

The harsh storms that she conjures in the northern regions cause many to worship her mainly out of fear. She knows this and uses this knowledge to further her power over her subjects. Those that foolishly curse her, or her devout followers find themselves lost in the blowing snow, driven mad by fleeting glimpses of shelter before freezing to death. They serve as warnings to all going forward. The Frostmaiden commands respect.

(You can find more information about Auril on **page 25** of *Sword Coast Adventurers Guide*.)

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

The Deadwinter Run is a brutally cold and unforgiving, objective oriented event.

Operating as checkpoints in the challenge, each pillar features a fragment of Auril's mercy. Collecting each fragment involves a challenge that the participants must overcome. On any normal day, these pillars pose relatively little threat, but on Deadwinter Day, they are augmented by Auril and command more respect. Each pillar is themed to an ability score (Strength, Constitution, Dexterity etc.), and the challenges presented follow that theme. For example, the pillar of Strength has the challengers escaping an ice laden pit, while participants may become lost searching for the pillar of Wisdom.

As the challengers move from pillar to pillar, navigating their way through streets teeming with spectators and darkened alleyways festering with dangers, they become involved in randomly determined events that can either propel them towards their next goal or hold them up. As pillars continue to be completed, story focused pacing events present the adventurers with choices that may cause them to reexamine their values. Will they consider themselves heroes? Or monsters with hearts as cold as the Frostmaiden herself?

It just wouldn't be Deadwinter Day in Luskan if everyone survived...

DM TOOLS

Use the following tools to help run this adventure.

DANGER LURKS AROUND EVERY CORNER

During the event, the party is forbidden from helping the challenger complete the challenges. They can however assist the challenger by ferrying them from pillar to pillar.

The streets of Luskan can be dangerous enough without the threat of hypothermia and cheating pirates thrown in. During the Deadwinter Run, nearly half the challengers perish in the streets and alleys between the towers. Each intersection in their path offers the party a chance to wager their luck. Do they take the longer, generally safer way through the street? Or chance the shortcuts in the alleyways that snake throughout the town?

Use the following tables to imbue the available passageways with danger each time the party navigates through an intersection within the town. If an encounter is rolled more than once, treat it as a no encounter.

STREET

1d20	Event
1 - 2	Spectators restrict movement through the next intersection.
3 - 4	Pirate group charges at the party. Stops dead before colliding and backs off.
5 - 6	Pirate group casually releases a pack of feral mastiffs to harass the challengers.
7 - 8	Adoring spectators swarm and entrap the challenger.
9 - 10	Auril acts! A 15-foot wide wall of snow rapidly approaches. A creature caught in the pathway of the wall must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or take 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.
11 - 12	Auril acts! A wall of ice suddenly splits the party.
13 - 14	Teleportation trap. A creature who steps on this glyph must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be teleported to the Winter Palace.
15 - 16	Illusion. The intersection ahead appears as a dead end. A creature can see through the illusion by succeeding on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check or by interacting with the illusion.
17 - 20	No encounter.

ALLEYWAY

1d20	Event
1 - 2	Crates restrict movement through the next intersection.
3 - 4	A door in the alley suddenly opens. The leading party member must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage.
5 - 6	1d8 pirates ambush the party.
7 - 8	1d6 cult fanatics (fans of Dalath) attack the party.
9 - 10	A tripwire strung across the alleyway knocks prone all creatures who fail a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.
11 - 12	A building collapses within the alleyway and deals 13 (3d8) bludgeoning damage to creatures within 20 feet who fail a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw.
13 - 14	1d4 pirates armed with a cannon hidden in a crate fire upon the party. The cannonball strikes each creature within a 5-foot by 60-foot line dealing 22 (5d8) bludgeoning damage and knocking prone those who fail a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. A successful saving throw causes a character to take half as much damage, and they are not knocked prone.
15 - 16	Snowdrifts fall off the roof of the nearest building. The second creature in the line must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone by falling snow.
17 - 18	Large icicles fall off the roof of the nearest building. Each creature within 10 feet of that building must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (1d10) piercing damage.
19 - 20	No encounter.

I'D LIKE MY DANGER TO-GO PLEASE

If you find your time on game night constrained, consider shifting how the random encounters are triggered. You can save a lot of time by simply rolling once every time they move from one tower to the next. Luck Rolls between each tower can save you even more time as they may not even trigger an encounter. Consider how this may lower the difficulty of the adventure and adjust accordingly.

EPISODE 1: AT HER MERCY

Estimated Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

“I’m not sure what brought ya’ to this part of the world, but I’m sure you won’t be leavin’ anytime soon.”

—Brynn McFife

This adventure begins moments after the party finally makes land on the Open Shore of Luskan. Having battled turbulent ice-filled waters for the last two days of their journey to the northern region, they are well overdue a plate of hearty food and a spot next to the fireplace.

THE OPEN SHORE

As you draw closer to the faded beacon resting upon the rocks protecting Luskan, snow lightly begins to fall on your shoulder. This journey, which you are not keen to repeat, has been long and full of cold, sleepless nights. You’ve held your breath now countless times as blocks of floating ice smashed against the ship’s hull. Now that you’re within sight of land, and a city no less, the snow falls upon you as no surprise; no friend.

After a few moments, you find yourself disembarking to a frozen dock bearing a small amount of cargo and surrounded by 40 feet of icy cliffside. Food, and more importantly, warmth, await you at the peak of these walls.

LUSKAN FEATURES (WINTER)

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Luskan is a city perched atop two 40-foot cliffs that form the mouth of River Mirar. A few bridges span the river and join the two cliffs, as well as several islands that serve as the river’s teeth.

Senses. The chill wind blowing through the city fills the characters lungs with a slight pain with each breath. A palette of yellow accents every light-lit building, while a mass of white burdens each structure.

Lighting. Lampposts at night speckle the sometimes-narrow streets with a flickering bright light. Alleyways are cast in dim light or near darkness, reflecting the time of day and cloud cover.

Rumors. Many of the townsfolk speak freely about the coming event tonight. Adventurers who press for more information can discover the following:

- Townsfolk often pick favorites to complete the challenge and attempt to discreetly assist them.

- There is an unofficial gambling ring setup around this event. The pot is rumored to be rather large this year.
- There was a competitor two years ago that used magic to fly to the top of the pillar and bypass the challenge. They haven’t been seen since.

ERRANDS IN LUSKAN

When the adventurers dock upon the Open Shore, they may be more inclined to restock on supplies and complete other errands around the city rather than heading straight for the nearest tavern. It’s a good idea to keep a list of staple services and shop names handy for just this case.

If they decide to skip the tavern altogether, the next scene can be adapted to their final stop of the day.

LAST MINUTE SUBSTITUTION

Brynn McFife, one of the townsfolk assisting Auril’s priests in organizing this event, barges onto the scene. He’s intent on filling out the roster. As the nature of the challenge involves survival, he first focuses on the heartiest adventurers before settling on characters with the highest movement speed if he is initially rejected.

To convince the players, Brynn is prepared with:

- A list of prizes that will go to the first person (if any) to complete the challenge.
- A (fake) story about his ship and crew mates sinking into the icy depths west of Luskan.
- A tip or two that could give the challenger an edge over the others.

If pressed, he may also divulge the current betting odds of newcomers to the event (10:1) should the party wish to place a bet. If they wish to place a bet on another challenger, assume their payout is 4:1.

NO TAKERS?

If no one from the party is interested in taking on the challenge and instead wishes to simply participate as spectators, consider focusing on Dalath and his actions throughout the night. There is enough going on in the city that the party should have no problems finding someone who desperately needs their help.

If they put gold on a challenger, focus on them and their struggles instead. The party may be inclined to “protect” their investment.

THE WINTER PALACE

At the peak of the night, just when the air reaches a crisp temperature, a gathered crowd stands outside a large white marble building. An otherwise normal structure, this building is adorned with vestments bearing the unmistakable iconography of Auril. This is The Winter Palace. Inside is a great hall without ceiling, where pillars stand at attention filed against the walls as if Auril herself might shatter them the instant any of them were to step out of line.

Brynn and the other challengers can be found here gathered within the starlit hall. When the characters appear on the scene, Brynn rushes over to them and ushers the challengers from the party (if there are any) towards the others so they can be blessed and given the boilerplate instructions by the clergy.

The following points are delivered by the most senior looking member of the clergy standing at the head of the group.

- The purpose, significance, and dangers of the Deadwinter Run.
- How the Deadwinter Run will address each one of the challenger's skills.
- Bless and bid the challengers farewell.

At the conclusion of their speech, the crowd lights up with excitement and each challenger stands with their back to one of the pillars along the wall. The whole city holds their breath in a frosted silence as dark grey clouds coalesce above the palace.

When the first flake falls, challengers trample past each other vying for the early lead, each one foolishly believing wholeheartedly that they will see these walls again.

THE RETURN JOURNEY

Of all the challengers, only the adventurers have a shot at returning to the Winter Palace. That is unless they placed a wager on another challenger.

Challengers are told to return to the Winter Palace by sunrise where a closing ceremony and celebration will be held for the challenger who returns with the most fragments of Auril's Mercy. It's here that they will be presented with the prizes listed in the Treasure & Rewards section of this adventure. A plaque bearing the challengers name is also fixed to one of the pillars within the palace and remains as a permanent fixture.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE ICICLE

Though it's impossible to acquire a fragment of Auril's Mercy from a tower without completing the challenge, it's not unheard of for challengers to "come across" stray fragments during the event.

Some places they may be found are:

- Pockets of deceased challengers
- Buried in the snow
- Pirate treasure hordes

DALATH'S RETURN

After spending much of an unsuccessful year abroad, Dalath has come home to Luskan so he can retain his title. During the event, Dalath has his sights set on sabotaging the event and preventing any challengers from completing all the challenges. He will do this in two ways; by showing up during scheduled events throughout the adventure, and by striking randomly in between the towers.

The following passages outline the important story beats involving Dalath that each party is likely to experience. Because the challengers are free to choose the order in which they complete the pillars, these events are tied to the number of completed pillars rather than the specific pillar. For the random events during the travel between pillars, consult the DM Tools section.

SOMETHING'S AMISS (AFTER 1ST PILLAR)

The party finds the frozen corpse of a challenger laying face down in the snow. If they flip the body onto it's back, they stare into the tired eyes of a challenger they vividly remember boasting about his heartiness at the ceremony only half an hour or so ago. Even careful investigations reveal very little about what happened to this man.

- If he is revived, or targeted with the *Speak with Dead* spell, he will reveal the nature of his death through hazy visions: "Over quick; several strikes of a frozen blade. A familiar face. Slippery name." He may also return to help in the final battle with Dalath, should the events lead there.
- If left for dead, his body will remain frozen in the snow with no one the wiser about his demise.

AN UNKNOWN APPRENTICE (BEFORE 3RD PILLAR)

When the party approaches the third pillar of their challenge, they find someone attempting to destroy the tower through magic. Intensely focused and concentrating on shattering the tower piece by piece, the **mage** takes no notice of the approaching danger. Dalath's apprentice will destroy the tower or die trying.

- The party may attempt to kill the apprentice on the spot. Treat the apprentice as if they are concentrating on a spell. Each turn that they continue to concentrate, the mage deals 18 (4d8 +2) bludgeoning damage to the pillar. It has 22 AC and 100 hit points. If their concentration ends or is disrupted, they must use their action to reestablish the spell.
- The party may attempt to instead capture and interrogate the apprentice. A successful **DC 18 Charisma** (appropriate skill) check will reveal any or all the information from the What the Apprentice Knows sidebar.

WHAT THE APPRENTICE KNOWS

- Dalath is the only challenger to complete the entire run in the history of the event and is intensely focused on protecting his title.
- He favors guerilla tactics and will ambush his opponents while they are otherwise occupied. He already has his eye on the party.
- He lacks any magical ability, but does have *Auril's First Kris*, a divine weapon made from a magical blade of ice. He uses it to exhaust his enemies rather than killing them outright.

DALATH ATTACKS! (DURING 4TH PILLAR)

True to his nature, **Dalath** (see his stats at the end of this adventure) attempts a flat-out attack on the challengers while they are preoccupied with the pillar. In combat, his objective is to land as many attacks on the challengers as he can to kill them via exhaustion. Consider having him attempt to flee into the city if he completes his objective, or if the rest of the party becomes a serious threat to him.

- If Dalath manages to escape the encounter, he is free to repeat the attack during any of the remaining encounters until he is brought to justice. This includes the random encounters in the streets of the town. Consider utilizing him to bring the party back together during the final moments of this adventure.
- If Dalath is killed by the party during this event, the townsfolk quickly spread the news and blame the party for each bad outcome from the event so far. If they revived the challenger from the first event, they will assist in disputing these claims.
- If Dalath is subdued and left for the townsfolk and pirate guard to deal with, Dalath will be stripped of his single accolade and hung under the span that bears his name-sake. Auril blesses this move by enchanting the plaque that anchors him to the bridge. See "Setting an Example" in the Treasure & Rewards section of the adventure for details.



EPISODE 2: THE PILLARS

Estimated Duration: 120 - 240 minutes

The following passages outline the pillar encounters that the challengers are racing to complete. They have been arranged according to the list of attributes on the character sheet, but they can be completed in any order the party wishes. Each one features a set of special encounters that can be utilized to further engage the supporting party as well as advice for adjusting the encounter for difficulty.

THE FROZEN OBELISK (STRENGTH)

Estimated Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

“There’s two secrets to survival when Auril turns her gaze upon you: a cast-iron will, and a strong pair of legs.”

—Luskan Commoner

During the summer months, this stone plaza is a favourite gathering spot for families looking for sun and fresh air, but when the warm air leaves so too does the townsfolk. In the middle of the winter, this icicle laden plaza becomes a desolate space devoid of all life.

When the challengers approach the Pillar of Strength centered upon a stone dais, the ground they walk on falls out from under them, revealing a large pit with icicle walls. Laying at the bottom of a 60-foot pit with several pairs of eyes staring down at them, they must work their way out with other challengers and criminals that the guard have thrown into the mix for good measure.

The trouble is, not everyone is looking to escape.

Nearing the northern edge of the River Mirar, this relatively empty plaza feels as though it had to physically push each building out of the way to get there. Snow drifts circle throughout the area, brushing up against the bitter stonework whose inner warmth fell away a long time ago. The gathered crowd is as silent as a ghost and each eye follows you as they step to the side revealing the pitiful looking tower in the middle of the plaza.

COMPLETING THIS CHALLENGE

The peak of the once short tower now stands 60 feet above the base of the pit. Even if the challenger were to sense something was amiss and avoid the 120-foot-wide pit trap, they would still need to cross 60 feet to the pillar in order to reach their objective.

Use the following passages as examples to run this encounter.

Bring the Muscle. The pillar in the middle of the pit can be shifted 20 feet towards the wall of the pit by succeeding on a **DC 25 Strength** (Athletics) check. More than one prisoner can attempt this check at the same time. If everyone is pushing in the same direction, use the combined total of each character involved. If the tower is wedged against a wall of the pit, a prisoner can scale it by succeeding on a **DC 10 Strength** (Athletics) check for every 20 feet of the tower.

Positioning 101. When the challengers approach the pillar in the middle of the dais, the pillar suddenly spins as the dais is dropped into a 60-foot pit. Any creature within 10 of the pillar when this event begins must make a **DC 16 Dexterity** saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) bludgeoning damage on a failure or half as much on a success. Alternatively, the creature may make a **DC 16 Strength** saving throw. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, that character catches the pole and manages to stop the pillar from spinning and by extension the dais from lowering the full distance. If the challenger can successfully rally enough people to their cause, they may collectively attempt a **DC 30 Strength (Athletics)** check to spin the pillar and raise the floor of the pit 20 feet.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak:** Part of the challenge has already been completed by the time the challenger shows up.
- **Strong:** There is a 20% chance of the tower crumbling to pieces each time a Strength (Athletics) check is rolled involving it.
- **Very Strong:** Challengers who attempt more than 2 checks back to back without a break must succeed on a **DC 14 Constitution** saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The events that follow can happen at any time while the challenger is engaged with the Pillar of Strength.

A Knife in the Ice. Not everyone in the pit is playing by the same rules. While attempting to complete the challenge, the challenger is attacked from behind by one or more of the prisoners (**bandits**).

Stolen Kisses. While the challenger is busy attempting to complete the encounter, a different challenger swoops in and attempts to capitalize on

the work that has been done. The supporting party has a short window of opportunity to delay them before they continue.

THE MONUMENT BELOW (CONSTITUTION)

Estimated Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

“Against her full might, your mortal body is helpless. Don’t allow her to break your spirit too.”

—Challenger

Capsized underneath the churning ice water of the River Mirar drifts the Pillar of Constitution. Attached to a floating slab of ice and thrust 60 feet into the depths of the river, this tower can be found anywhere along the river, even out near The Open Shore. Consider shifting the tower further down the river if you feel the party is progressing too quickly.

You come to the edge of the cliff and cast your vision upon several ice blocks, each one vying for the lead before smashing against the teeth-like islands downstream. One slab, cracked and split in several places, is losing the race. It lags far behind the others as if it was a loaded barge full of cargo.

The chill brushes against your bones as you realize what that slab is hauling. Your challenge lies below.

COMPLETING THIS CHALLENGE

This encounter focuses on the Constitution of the challenger. As such, this challenge is most entertaining when paired up with another attribute. The following examples offer guidance on how to run this encounter.

Ice Water Challenge. For every round that the challenger spends in the water they must succeed on a **DC 12 Constitution** saving throw or roll on the “Chill Effects” table.

Dive! Dive! Dive! Challengers who brave the current of the River Mirar must succeed on a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics)** check in order to move their desired direction. On a failure, the current of the river overwhelms them, and they drift 15 feet downstream as well.

Drop the Anchor. Anchors designed for salvage operations have been attached to the spans that bridge the two halves the city together. These can be used to hold the tower in place should a challenger succeed on a **DC 17 Intelligence (Water Vehicles)** check to time the drop of the anchor correctly. Additionally, challengers can use the chain on the anchor to guide themselves beneath the surface.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak:** The tower seems to have caught on something below the surface. It's held in place... for now.
- **Strong:** Ice slabs floating down the river threaten the challengers as they make their way to the tower. Challengers can avoid these crushing slabs by succeeding on a **DC 17 Strength** saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage on a failure.
- **Very Strong:** A chill wind tunnels through the valley partially freezing the river. Challengers may be able to walk out to the tower. If the challenger succeeds on a **DC 20 Dexterity** (stealth) check they can move up to their speed on the ice without risk. On a failure, or if the challenger proceeds without caution, roll a d100 for every 10 feet moved. On a roll of 40 or lower, the ice breaks.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The events that follow can happen at any time while the challenger is engaged with the Pillar of Constitution.

It's a Sure Thing. Magic is causing the water around the tower to violently churn making any attempt to reach the top of the submerged tower nigh impossible. Find the **mage** and break their concentration!

Planning for the Future. Harpoons set and hidden into the stone of the islands downstream suddenly lash out and imbed themselves into the base of the floating tower. Soon, the tethers tighten, and the tower floats dangerously close to the islands. They're going to smash it!

CHILL EFFECTS

1d10	Event
1 - 2	An extremity is frostbitten and will fall off in 1d6 days.
3 - 4	Numbness spreads throughout your body. Your hit point maximum is reduced by 5 until you complete a long rest.
5 - 6	Chattering teeth make uttering commands and verbal components of spells impossible for 10 minutes.
7 - 8	A painful headache suddenly builds. Choose one condition that persists for 10 minutes: stunned, blinded, or deafened.
9 - 10	The chill drains your vitality as well as your concentration. Choose one ability score. It's reduced by 1 until you finish a long rest.

A TOWER TETHERED (DEXTERITY)

Estimated Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

"Hurry up! The quicker you complete the challenge, the sooner we all go home to our warm homes and cider."

—Luskan Spectator

Constructed in a small square that binds several buildings together, the segmented Pillar of Dexterity revolves like a top. Fortunately, its peak is held in place by chain-net anchored to each of the squares four largest buildings. Within this space, the tower silently dances around on the ice with each segment rotating in a different direction.

Pushing your way through the gathered crowd, you come to face a marvel of ice. Tethered at the peak by a net made of ice coated chain, this tower slides freely along the surface of the square as if there was no resistance. Rotating walls that shift in opposing directions revolve around a central core of ice. Each corner of the net is attached to a building doing its best to hold the tower in place, as if failure to do so would unleash an uncontrollable beast.

COMPLETING THIS CHALLENGE

As Dexterity is one of the more valuable attributes, you can feel confident that many of the challengers are going to be better prepared for this tower. Still, each of the four buildings that anchor the tower offer an opportunity to specialize the encounter based on the challenger's skills. The following examples offer guidance on how to run this encounter.

The Binds of Winter. The chains stretch out 60 feet towards the tower like a spiderweb spread between four buildings. Challengers can slowly navigate this difficult terrain, avoiding the holes in between, by making a **DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check to walk lightly. The added weight of the challenger puts stress on the chains, giving them limited time to make it across before they finally snap in 3 rounds. If the check succeeds, delay breaking the chain for 1 round to a maximum of 3. If the chain snaps, run the latter half of "A Shower of Shards" special event.

Timing is Important. The 6 platforms that rotate around the tower threaten the challengers by shifting in opposing directions. This leaves them with very little time to prepare for the next platform. To land on the next platform, the challenger must succeed on a **DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check. This DC is decreased by 2 for each additional round they stay on the platform, however if they chose to spend

a round doing so, they must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity** saving throw to avoid being knocked off. Each platform represents 10 feet of the tower. If the challenger is knocked off, they suffer falling damage for each platform past the first.

To the Windows... To the Walls! The buildings that each hold one corner of the net aloft offer the challengers a unique encounter. Consider the Dexterity governed skills the challengers are proficient in (if any) and shape the encounter around that skill. A challenger with an interest in picking locks, may find several doors in a tower that ascends to the chain net for example. Keep the chain net in mind when designing this part of the encounter as the challenger still faces it at the top.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak:** The chain is unbreakable.
- **Strong:** Adjust the DC's of the platforms; decrease the number of rounds the chain will hold together.
- **Very Strong:** Another challenger has broken the chain. The twisting tower has been unleashed! Increase platforming DC's by 4.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The events that follow can happen at any time while the challenger is engaged with the Pillar of Dexterity.

Roughed Up. Hidden within the buildings are a small strike team of **pirates**. They attempt to rough up the challengers as they move through. They won't kill, only bloody the challenger.

A Shower of Shards. Saboteurs sever the chain net from the buildings as a challenger is platforming up the tower. The chain is caught in the twisting tower and hails frozen metal links on everyone within 100 feet of the tower. Each creature within range must make a **DC 13 Dexterity** saving throw, taking 7 (3d4) piercing damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one.

THE SNOW SWEEP SKIEN (INTELLIGENCE)

Estimated Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

"I find the effect that desperation has on one's ability to solve even the simplest of problems... fascinating. Some simplify; some complicate, but they're all creative."

—*Unknown*

The Pillar of Intelligence seems to stand in a shivering solitude. As challengers approach the tower, 50-foot ice walls erupt from beneath the snow and present the challenge: a maze. With the tower now lifted high in the air, challengers must find their way through a partially translucent labyrinth. Though several have perished clinging to these great blue walls, those that manage to keep their wits about them always seem to find a way out.

Standing alone in the middle of a snow-covered clearing, the pillar shines bright. Curiously, there are no spectators here. The roar of the crowd can be heard from the challenges taking place across the river, but the immediate area is devoid of all sound save for the rustling of your partially frozen uniform.

Stepping cautiously towards the pillar, a rumbling slowly builds ... Suddenly, your breath vanishes as great ice walls erupt from the snow around you. Only one way out now.

COMPLETING THIS CHALLENGE

This encounter focuses on the Intelligence of the challenger. As such, consider that the player may come up with solutions on their own, but don't hinge the success of the encounter on that. The following passages serve as examples of how you might challenge the characters.

I know a Story About That. At each intersection within the labyrinth, two symbols have been chipped away into the walls. Each symbol gestures towards a different pathway and relates to an obscure story told by Auril's followers. If the challenger succeeds on a **DC 14 Intelligence (Religion or History)** check, they recognize the correct path. If the player is comfortable doing so, consider granting them advantage if they recite an improvised passage.

The Alexandrian Solution. As impressive as the ice labyrinth is, its walls can only oppress those without the determination to stray off the path. Destructible weak spots in the ice can be found

throughout the maze at opportunistic intervals. A **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals one of these spots. A weak spot in the wall has 14 AC and 25 hit points. Alternatively, it can be smashed with a successful **DC 20 Strength (Athletics)** check.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak:** Another challenger can be seen through the walls.
- **Strong:** Certain walls of the labyrinth may be shifted to open entirely new passages... and shut others.
- **Very Strong:** An invisible threat stalks each challenger throughout the labyrinth giving a scary new meaning to the phrase “dead-end”. Consider using a **winter wolf** or an **invisible stalker**, depending on the danger you wish to impose.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The events that follow can happen at any time while the challenger is engaged with the Pillar of Intelligence.

The Frozen Hunt. A **winter wolf** materializes within the walls of the labyrinth and hunts down challengers still trapped within. Mercy is running short, but an alliance may be possible for those who don't mind a little blood on their hands.

Blown to Pieces. A loud crack sounds off from somewhere unknown. Ear-splitting screams follow closely as a large section of the labyrinth wall shatters and propels frozen shrapnel throughout the vicinity. Each creature within 20 feet must succeed on a **DC 14 Dexterity** saving throw or take 10 (3d6) piercing damage. A trio of **pirates** can be seen scurrying towards an alley. This event can be run as many times as necessary.

HIDDEN AMONGST DOUBT (WISDOM)

Estimated Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

“Forget speed. Concentrate on survival. There's nothing saying you can't learn from the other challengers' mistakes!”

—*Dalath*

To the south of the old Ruins of Illusk lies a clearing upon a short hill. During the summer months, this is a favourite spot for locals to relax, but on Deadwinter Night, it is veiled in mystery. Hidden somewhere on the foothill is the Pillar of Wisdom. Fierce winds and localized snowfall blanket the hill and obscure the true location of the tower. To find it, challengers must rely on their instincts.

Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. Your steps fall through the crusted snow as you weave through the drifts that oppose you. The loose snow upon the surface snakes and coils past you, animated by the same wind that burns against your skin.

Gathered townsfolk encased in thick animal hide clothing await their loved ones at the edge of the storm. Your challenge lies hidden inside the swirling snow.

COMPLETING THIS CHALLENGE

This encounter focuses on the Wisdom of the challenger. Locating the tower amongst the heavily obscuring snow is likely paramount for them. With this in mind, consider building the encounter around that core. Use the following passages to lay the groundwork for this challenge.

Pillar in a Blizzard. In order to locate the tower, the challenger must succeed on a **DC 22 Wisdom** check using the skill of their choice. Each time the check fails, the challenger encounters one of the other challenges that follow. Each time one of the secondary encounters are completed, the DC for locating the tower decreases by 3. If the DC of this challenge falls below the passive perception of the challengers, they automatically succeed.

Left for Dead. The challenger stumbles across another challenger half buried in the snow. A **DC 14 Wisdom (Medicine)** check reveals that they are in an advanced stage of hypothermia. If something isn't done soon, they will perish. If left to die, decrease the DC of the next check to locate the tower by 5 instead of 3. If saved, grant the challenger advantage as the person they saved conveys what they know.

Snow Fox. 2 giant white foxes (**saber-toothed tiger**) bound into view and simply watch the

challenger. If the challenger succeeds on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check, decrease the DC of the next check to locate the pillar by 5 instead of 3 as the foxes lead the challenger closer to it. If the check fails, the eldest fox attacks the challenger with a breath weapon of frozen fog that deals 10 (3d6) cold damage before disappearing into the snow.

Bitter Winds. The winds within the storm are all blowing from the center of the hill. A successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Survival)** check reveals this information. Grant the challenger advantage on the next check to locate the pillar.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak:** Unique flag markers can be seen throughout the blowing snow and give points of reference to challengers.
- **Strong:** The pillar is impossible to find until the challenger completes at least 2 sub-challenges.
- **Very Strong:** If any of the checks to locate the pillar fail by 10 or more, the pillar shifts away from the challenger. Increase the DC of the next check by 2.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The events that follow can happen at any time while the challenger is engaged with the Pillar of Wisdom.

Snow Sliders. Large faint silhouettes of sails can be seen racing through the clearing, and they're rapidly getting bigger. The challenger must make a **DC 15 Dexterity** saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) damage on a failure, or half as much on a successful one as a wind propelled raft dashes past them without abandon. Each of these sliders has 13 AC and 20 hit points.

For an additional challenge, each of the Snow Sliders may contain a crew of two **bandits**, who engage the characters in ranged combat.

Tidal Anomaly. For one minute, the storm suddenly halts. Everything becomes clear, allowing the challengers to easily focus on and maneuver to the pillar. At the end of that minute, all the snow that would've fallen, suddenly falls as a tidal wave of snow. Each creature still within the storm must succeed on a **DC 18 Strength** saving throw or be thrown 60 feet from the pillar and knocked prone.

A STANDARD INQUISITION (CHARISMA)

Estimated Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

"It's not always about what you can do and what you know but rather who's going to help you up when you're lying face down. You best remember that, scum."

—Luskan "Guard"

The Pillar of Charisma is hidden amongst a frozen graveyard on the outskirts of town. Hardly a fraction of the size of the others, it has been crafted into one of the headstones. At the entrance, an avatar of Auril stands waiting for her challengers. When approached, she informs each challenger that the key to finding the tower lies in interrogating the souls that rest there, many of which can now be seen drifting about.

The mulling fog drifting through the half-buried stonework is dimly illuminated by spectral beings that float from one place to the next. They seem lost within this plane. A short stone wall surrounds the space, the entrance of which is guarded by a ghostly woman with flowing white hair and a cyan blue gaze that sends shivers through your core.

"Come. Your next challenge lies buried within one of the gravesites past me," the woman says calmly. "Find the correct site and survive. Fail and you may join them." Her hand, draped in ethereal fabric lifts, gesturing towards the spirits that drift about.

COMPLETING THIS CHALLENGE

Since this challenge focuses on Charisma, the implication is that the challengers will try to convince, intimidate, or deceive the spirits into giving them the information they need. In order to complete the challenge, the challenger first needs to determine the proper headstone before destroying it to reveal the pillar. Each headstone has 13 AC and 20 hit points. Destroying a headstone tied to one of the many **ghosts** floating about makes that ghost hostile towards the attacker.

The following passages offer insight into how the challenger may wish to go about discovering the proper information. With the nature of the challenge being based on interactions between characters not covered within the module, the DC's of the challenge have not been set. Consider using characters from past adventures, campaigns, or games as the ghosts. Doing so may help you get into their heads and determine how each one may react to the challengers incessant questioning.

Process of Elimination. Each real gravesite in the yard is tied to one of the spirits floating about. If the challenger were to acquire the name of each spirit, they could eliminate gravesites until they were left with a lonely headstone. Alternatively, they could smash headstones and fight the ghosts that appear hoping to get lucky.

The Good and the Bad. This graveyard has been laid out in an organized fashion featuring rows and columns. Challengers can source out information about the location by interrogating the spirits. Alternatively, killing a ghost imparts a small memory upon a challenger which helps lead to the proper gravesite. If all the ghosts have been destroyed, the source of information becomes the other challengers who must be “persuaded” into giving up a part of the information.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak:** The spirits are quick to trust the challengers. Decrease the DC of Charisma checks to solicit information by 3.
- **Strong:** When the challengers arrive to the graveyard, there is only one ghost with information left.
- **Very Strong:** One or more ghosts have allied with other challengers and actively attempt to possess the player characters in order to gather information.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The events that follow can happen at any time while the challenger is engaged with the Pillar of Charisma.

Ethereal Anomaly. The barrier between the ethereal plane and the material has become unstable. It becomes difficult to discern spirit from challenger as both flicker between this space and the next.

Who’s the Stiff? Spirits suddenly flit around the graveyard, all attempting to find their own grave. Within a cold minute, they are all replaced by **skeletons** and **zombies** that claw their way through the frozen earth.

EPISODE 3: DEALING WITH DALATH

Estimated Duration: 10 - 20 minutes

“What a pity! Only mortal fools attempt to control history.”

—Unknown

With Dalath either captured or dead, the remaining challengers are free to finish the event without pause. Most of the townsfolk have expired to their beds to prepare for the cleanup that’s sure to follow in the morning. If the challengers in the party have expired by this point, run this chapter immediately after the party captures or kills Dalath.

DALATH’S SPAN

Long into the night, a collective of dedicated townsfolk, guards, and clergy gather closely to discuss what is to become of the traitor Dalath. It’s clear that a message must be sent to everyone about disgracing the Deadwinter Run in such a spectacular fashion.

From this height, the crisp winds scour the stonework of the span, filling each crevice, every hidden nook and cranny with sandpaper-like snow. A small group huddles together around an unconscious Dalath laying upon the frozen stonework next to a plaque that bears his single accolade. Amongst them, they discuss the fate of Dalath amid the howling winds of Auril.

Suddenly, Brynn, the dwarven organizer from Mirabar glances towards the party that captured Dalath. “Wha’d da you got to say in dis matter?”

Many of the gathered townsfolk are urging for a public display of his execution, one that the others will wake up to. They wish to hang him from the plaque and have his frozen corpse dangle in the winds under the bridge.

The party may wish to dispose of him in a more discreet fashion and there is merit for doing so, but merit isn’t worth much in the frozen North. Doing so will forfeit the ongoing bonus outlined in the Treasure & Rewards section of this adventure.

THE SETTLING STORM

Regardless of how the party chooses to deal with Dalath, the winter storm that blankets Luskan and prevents their departure subsides when either all the challenges have been completed, or all the challengers have succumbed to their trial.

The next morning is filled with the bustle of townsfolk each working together to clean up their city. Carts travel throughout the streets, each carrying a small pile of the expired toward their final resting place. Dock workers load the now free shipping vessels and prepare them for departure.

Next time let's travel somewhere warmer.

TREASURE & REWARDS

Adventurers who complete all the challenges that the Deadwinter Run has to offer are presented with each prize listed here. All money wagered before the opening ceremony is paid out promptly via a shifty looking courier who visits the party upon first light.

- **Deadwinter Run Prizes.** *boots of falling snow*, *Frost Maiden's Embrace* (see the following Treasure section), 3000 gp worth of gems, 5000 gp.
- **Special Reward: Auril's First Kris.** If the party manages to subdue Dalath either by killing him or capturing him, they acquire this legendary frozen blade (described in the following section).
- **Ongoing Bonus: Setting an Example.** If Dalath is left to hang underneath the bridge, Auril blesses the plaque that anchors him. Visitors who spend at least 1 minute observing the plaque gain resistance to cold damage for 1d6 days. This enchantment remains on the plaque until Dalath's frozen corpse is cut loose.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Pirates (Bandits)	450
Cult Fanatic	450
Winter Wolf	700
Ghost	1100
Mage (Dalath's Apprentice)	2300
Dalath	3900

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Pillar Challenge	3000
Dalath Event	2500
Deadwinter Run	5000
Gambling	1/1 gp won

TREASURE

Characters can receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Boots of Falling Snow (Wondrous Item; uncommon; requires attunement). These white fur lined boots with attached pom poms may be short, but they allow the wearer to walk over top of the snow, no matter their weight.

Additionally, while attuned, the wearer may utter a command word to cast *feather fall* on themselves once per day.

Frost Maiden's Embrace (Wondrous Item; very rare; requires attunement). Made from winter wolf fur, this draped cloak changes color; from grey to whisper white as snow falls and lands on it. When the cloak is completely white, it is considered fully charged.

To expend the charge, the attuned wearer may utter a command word as a reaction. In doing so, they

become stunned until the beginning of their next turn, encased in a tomb of ice. This grants them immunity to all types of damage until the beginning of their next turn.

Auril's First Kris (Weapon: dagger; very rare; requires attunement). After barely surviving a foolhardy expedition into the frozen tundra, a relatively unknown blacksmith sought to create a weapon in the name of Auril as a token of his gratitude.

A six-pointed guard sits at the base of the blue steel blade, magically frozen and chipped to a razor-sharp edge.

A creature struck by this dagger takes an additional 3 (1d6) cold damage. Additionally, they must make a **DC 11 Constitution** saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion.

Auril's Mercy (Wondrous Item; legendary; requires attunement). This six-sided snowflake shaped from everlasting ice can be split into six fragments to form a six-sided snowflake.

Each enchanted fragment negates one level of exhaustion for the creature that carries it. If all the fragments are combined to form Auril's Mercy, the attuned creature is immune to exhaustion. This item can be used as a holy symbol for followers of Auril.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I find inspiration in tinkering around with my combat encounters to the point where the turn by turn combat really becomes secondary within the experience. *Deadwinter Run* hopefully exemplifies that and encourages players to engage with more than just rapiers and fireballs.

AUTHOR BIO

My name is Andrew S. Morley and fittingly I live in the Great White North! I'm a husband, father, RPG designer, and professional ranger. There are two things I do instinctively; gaming and tinkering. I've spent years attempting to mash the two together using various mediums, but nothing felt quite right.

Nowadays, I produce a smattering of TTRPG material, both 5e and otherwise, with the express intention of sidestepping expectations. Nothing I produce will ever be entirely... normal. You can find nearly all my work on the Dungeon Masters Guild under my name.

Follow me on Twitter for semi regular updates on my work! - @Hecqubus

APPENDIX A: CHARACTER STATISTICS

DALATH

Having been abandoned in Luskan when he was only a youngster, Dalath has made quite the name for himself among the seedier parts of the town. He seemed to be naturally gifted in both lifting pockets and scrapping if he gets caught.

No one who was familiar with him is quite sure what originally spurred him into taking on the challenges of the Deadwinter Run. The people who enter themselves into those trials are shooting for the local adoration sure, but most of them don't come back whole, if at all. Dalath was never known to care what people thought of him. Born a half-elf typically has that effect on the personality.

Something changed in him when he came back. He finally had something to call his own. A wicked blade, free room and board throughout the winter, and the legacy of being the first challenger to ever complete the trials of Deadwinter Run. He valued all of these equally.

When the winter was over, Dalath left Luskan in search of more adventure, but the world is a dangerous place for a solo traveler. Carrying around an ever-frosted blade probably didn't do him any favors either. After a year of relatively pitiful success, he's returned to Luskan. He's not competing this year in the challenges but is intent on retaining his accolade and is willing to murder those who try to take it from him.

DALATH

Medium humanoid (half-elf), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +6

Skills Acrobatics +7, Stealth +10, Sleight of Hand +10, Deception +4

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 8 (3900 XP)

Indomitable (2/Day). Dalath rerolls a failed saving throw.

Cunning Action. On each of his turns, Dalath can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Dalath makes four attacks with Auril's First Kris. Or three with Auril's First Kris and one with a stolen weapon.

Auril's First Kris. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:

+7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage. Additionally, the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or suffer a level of exhaustion.

REACTIONS

Disarm. If a melee weapon attack on Dalath would fail by 5 or more, Dalath steals the weapon from the attacker. To do so, Dalath must have a free hand.



Luskan





MAYHEM AT MIDWINTER

SEVEN SWANS TO SLAUGHTER

Introduction: A celebration of peace is threatened both overtly and covertly. The adventurers need to unravel the threads of a sinister plot before blood is spilled.

A 4-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 5TH - 10TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY ANDY DEMPZ



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

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ADVENTURE PRIMER

Estimated Duration: 2-4 hours

The running time of this adventure will be determined by how much a particular group emphasizes role-play. Tables that focus on investigation and combat will likely finish the adventure in less time.

BACKGROUND

The memories of the elves are long, and the acts of the dead still haunt the living. Around -10,000 DR, at the end of the Crown Wars, the drow were banished from the surface world to make their homes in the Underdark, while **CORELLON LARETHIAN** called his prominent followers to the Arcorar woods where they established the dwelling known as Elven Court. Peace was made with the dwarves of Sarphil and lasted for two thousand years until the night that would become known as the Dark Court Slaughter.

A feast was held by the elves and dwarves in Elven Court on Midwinter Night, -4400 DR. The gathered revelers carried no weapons on the sacred grounds, and a horde of drow and duergar overwhelmed the city. Murder and ruin followed, and Elven Court was abandoned.

The memory of this night lives on in the Church of Shevarash, the elvish god of vengeance. New members are inducted into the church on Midwinter Night, making an oath to neither laugh nor smile until their final vengeance is delivered upon **LOLTH** and her followers.

But **EILISTRAEE**, the daughter of Corellon and Lolth, offers a path to those drow who would seek an alternative to the violence and cruelty of the Underdark. Following the War of the Silver Marches in 1485 DR, drow survivors who found themselves stranded on the surface may have seen a glimpse of Eilistraee dancing in the moonlight, and so, slowly, her following grows.

Now a small band of Eilistraee's followers have been invited by the church of **LIIRA**, mistress of revels, to **MORNBYRN'S SHIELD**. This village at the western edge of the Evermoors is will host the Swords Cast Down festival at Midwinter. Unbeknownst to all, an assassin (**V'RIZZEN**) travels among them. Further complicating things, the church of Shervarash intends to induct new members in Mornbryn's Shield on Midwinter as well.

EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over 3 **Episodes** that take approximately 4 total hours to play.

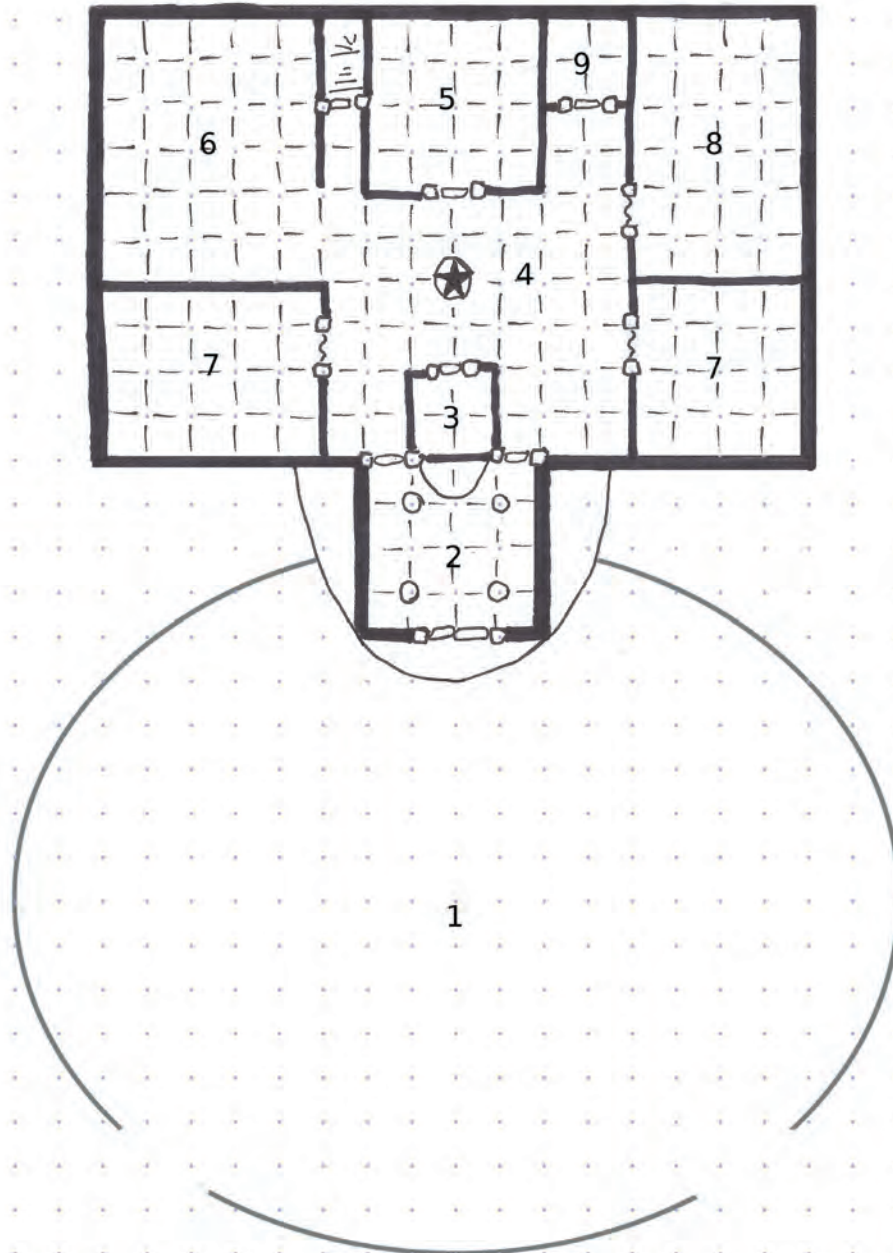
- **Episode 1: Snowfall.** The characters find themselves in Mornbryn's Shield as a heavy snow interrupts travel on the roads. The followers of Eilistraee perform a dance to welcome the Midwinter season, but the local members of the church of Shevarash maintain their suspicions of the drow. The High Revelmistress asks the characters to wait out the storm in Mornbryn's Shield and to help keep the peace. This is the **Call to Action**.
- **Episode 2: The Night Before Midwinter.** V'rizen uses mind spiders to cause the other drow to carry out preparatory acts for his murderous Midwinter plans. The church of Shevarash encourages suspicion of the drow against the wishes of Liira's followers. The characters have to decide what to do in the middle of these simmering tensions.
- **Episode 3: Mayhem at Midwinter.** All of the fuses have been lit, and whatever plots the characters haven't stopped threaten to explode. The mind spider-controlled drow summon demons in the catacombs the Liiran temple grounds and they burst forth as a murderous distraction while V'rizen tries to kill the High Revelmistress. The church of Shevarash and any new inductees turn on the drow indiscriminately at the first sight of the demons. V'rizen sends the mind spiders after the characters to capture some of their minds and turn them against each other.

EVIL NEVER SLEEPS!

This adventure is character, faction, and event driven. Adventure locations and a sample timeline are provided with the expectation that the characters will disrupt some of the plots before the conclusion. It is up to the DM to determine how the remaining plots will play out. For instance, if the players decide to investigate the catacombs early on the second day, then V'rizen won't be able to begin the demon summoning ritual. He may instead recognize the characters as a threat and send the mind spiders after them to get them out of the way. Similarly, if the players focus their character's interactions with the church of Shevarash, then they may be influenced by them or gain influence over them, and either outcome could change the course of the final fight. In the case that V'rizen is stopped prematurely, Talice can be adapted to be the main villain by changing her alignment to chaotic evil, changing her motivation to match V'rizen's, and giving her a *mind spider ring* that she was using to control V'rizen all along.

CONTENT ADVISEMENT

In the lore of the Forgotten Realms, the worshippers of Liira are known for their hedonistic revelry. While the material in this adventure implies rather than explicitly states such details, the DM should be mindful of the tone of play at their table. Safety tools like X cards can be easily found online and can help to keep play fun and within comfortable boundaries for everyone at the table. It is often the case that less is more and players can imagine more from hints than the DM could describe, so it is likely more effective to lean into implication for more evocative storytelling than to describe situations in lewd detail. This should certainly be said for violence and other potentially disturbing content as well.



EPISODE 1: SNOWFALL (CALL TO ACTION)

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

The cold outside lays waste to life, suspends the process of decay. Alone without a friend, suffer, as night becomes the death of day.

—Amebix, *Winter*

A heavy snow makes the road impassable as the characters arrive in Mornbryn's Shield, giving them an opportunity to meet the various persons who have gathered for the Midwinter celebrations.

SCENE A. ARRIVING IN MORNBYRN'S SHIELD

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters arrive in Mornbryn's Shield.

It is early in the season for a snow this heavy, and it is a relief to reach the shelter of the village of Mornbryn's Shield as the trail threatens to become impassable. And what fortuitous timing, as the villagers are busy preparing for Midwinter revels and welcome you in.

The villagers are hardy folk, accustomed to fending off dangers from the moors, but also welcoming to travelers who pass through on the Surbrin Trail between Yartar and Rivermoot. Food is available at the Troll In Flames but the inn is full and villagers suggest travelers can seek shelter at the temple of Liira.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Mornbryn's Shield is a village at the western edge of the Evermoors. It takes its name from a rocky ridge that curves around the village's western and southern sides, protecting it from flooding from the Surbrin River in the spring.

Senses. Snow continues to fall and piles in deep drifts against buildings. It is just below freezing with a moderately gusting wind that makes it feel colder when it blows. Torches and cook-fires provide warm light throughout the village as people prepare for Midwinter or make early celebrations. The smell of roasting nuts is distinct among the smoke.

Lighting. Outdoor areas in the village are lightly obscured by the heavy snowfall. During the daylight

hours there is bright light despite the overcast conditions, and in the evening there is dim light from the many torches and fires.

SCENE B. THE TEMPLE OF LIIRA

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters arrive at the temple of Liira.

The temple of Liira is an elegant stone building, gracefully designed and finished, which sits on the periphery of an open space roughly one hundred feet in diameter and surrounded by a five foot tall wall with open entryways. The grounds are welcoming and full of activity despite the continuing snowfall.

The worshippers of Liira are busy decorating the grounds for the Midwinter holiday while frequently engaging in spontaneous outbursts of song and dance. They happily make time to greet the characters and offer them simple but warm and dry accommodations inside the temple building. They are soon introduced to the High Revelmistress, **DEHEUNE** (CG female human **priest**). Deheune tells them they are welcome to shelter in the temple, but insists that they not carry weapons within the temple grounds. There are around a dozen worshippers of Liira in residence at the temple as well.

THE WORSHIPPERS OF LIIRA

DEHEUNE is a **priest** with these changes:

- Deheune is chaotic good.
- She carries no weapons and does not wear armor. Her armor class is 10.
- Deheune is one of those rare people who sees the best in everyone and is naturally free from cynicism. She found the worship of Liira fit her inclinations perfectly. She values life highly and aims to inspire those around her while making enough time for herself to enjoy life's pleasures. She has a past with Maerdeth and wishes he would abandon his militant life before it's too late.
- The other worshippers of Liira in residence at the temple live lives of casual hedonism, freely giving and asking little in return other than joy and appreciation for the gifts life has to offer. They are all **commoners**.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The temple grounds are roughly one hundred feet in diameter and are surrounded by a five foot tall stone wall.

Senses. The snowfall seems lighter inside the temple grounds and the wind is mostly blocked by

the wall. The firelight from torches and cook-fires sparkles on the snow.

Lighting. During the daylight hours there is bright light despite the overcast conditions, and in the evening there is dim light from the many torches and fires. The main hall of the temple is illuminated with bright light from braziers and torches mounted in sconces.

Inside the Temple. The temple doors open into the main hall, 20 feet wide by 20 feet deep. The ceiling is supported by sensually carved marble columns and an altar dominates the far end of the hall. Cushions and pillows are spread about the hall, making for a comfortable and inviting environment. Doors on either side of the altar lead further.

EVENTS

In the evening, the worshippers of Liira and a good number of villagers gather in the temple grounds for the preliminary celebrations. After some songs and light feasting, High Revelmistress Deheune calls the crowd's attention to the temple steps where she stands.

Deheune explains to the elated crowd that this season Mornbryn's Shield has some particularly special guests. Five figures in black traveling cloaks step out from the temple doors. Throwing back their hoods, they reveal themselves to be drow, dark elves! A current of apprehension runs through the crowd of onlookers, the War of the Silver Marches still fresh in their minds. The two male drow begin a rhythmic chant while the three females engage in an elegant dance of mimed swordplay. The crowd's attention is captured as they forget their apprehension and burst into applause at the dance's conclusion.

One of the male drow steps forward and introduces himself as V'rizen. He explains that he and his companions are refugees from the war and expresses his gratitude for the hospitality of the town and the temple. The drow begin to meekly mingle with the temple residents and curious townsfolk.

THE DROW

V'RIZZEN is an **assassin** with these changes:

- V'rizen is chaotic evil.
- He has these racial traits: He has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep. He can cast *dancing lights* at will and can cast *darkness* and *faerie fire* once per day each (Charisma is his spellcasting ability, spell save DC 10). While in sunlight, he has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight. He

has darkvision out to a range of 120 feet and speaks Common, Elvish, and Undercommon.

- He wears a *mind spider ring* and has a *piwafwi (cloak of elvenkind)* hidden among his belongings.
 - V'rizen poses as a refugee and follower of Eilistraee but really worships Vhaeraun and Lolth and was sent from Menzoberranzan to track down and punish traitors and heretics. His intentions are to kill Deheune, the other drow, and as many townsfolk as he can. He is utterly two-faced, silver tongued, and sociopathic.
 - The other four drow are survivors of the War of the Silver Marches and genuine followers of Eilistraee. Their goals are to flee drow society and to make positive connections with the people of Mornbryn's Shield.
- BRORN, LAELE, and MADALYN** are **drow** with these changes:

- They are chaotic good.
 - They carry no weapons, but Laele and Madalyn have short swords among their belongings. Brorn has no weapons.
 - Brorn was a simple foot soldier who took his first breaths of freedom after his unit was broken and scattered. He is still deferential to the female drow out of lifelong habit.
 - Laele was a battle priestess who felt Lolth capriciously abandoned her faithful when the drow met defeat in the war. In turn, Laele renounced Lolth and accordingly lost her access to clerical magic. She intends to become a priestess of Eilistraee in time. Her most precious possession is a vial of water that she took from a moonlit pool and treats as a holy symbol.
 - Madalyn was a fighter who was struck down and left for dead on the battlefield. She awoke under the light of the full moon and felt she had been reborn free from Lolth and the trappings of her old life. She was a brave warrior but is now anxious around corpses.
- TALICE** is a **drow elite warrior** with these changes:
- She is chaotic good.
 - She carries no weapons, but has a short sword among her belongings.
 - Talice was a captain of House Melarn who saw her unit decimated on the battlefield. Lost and alone, she was found and converted by the others. She still keeps her house insignia hidden in her belongings and handles it when she is alone and feels lost.

Not all of the onlookers are convinced by the drow's performance. After the characters have had an opportunity to react and possibly interact with the drow, read or paraphrase the following:

A confrontation is developing between some of the worshippers of Liira and a sun elf. The elf angrily storms out of the temple grounds, shouting as he

leaves, “You’ll be lucky to even live to regret this!” He is followed by a wood elf and a dwarf.

A character who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check heard enough of the preceding conversation to know that the confrontation began when the elf was asked to remove his weapons from the temple grounds. The same information can be gathered by asking around and making a successful DC 10 Charisma (Investigation) check. Succeeding on this check by 5 or more yields information identifying the elf as Maerdeth, a ranger and sworn follower of Shevarash, the elvish god of vengeance. He is known as a capable and dangerous defender of Mornbryn’s Shield who generally keeps to himself. The other elf and dwarf appear to be travelers, as none of the townsfolk know them. They can easily be followed or tracked back to their campsite on the ridge overlooking the town. Most townsfolk can also direct the party to it.

Skills With Different Abilities

Chapter 7 of the Player’s Handbook provides a variant rule for unusual combinations of abilities and skills. In the case of asking around about Maerdeth, Charisma and Investigation are used together because the player characters are asking around rather than piecing together clues gained from careful observation. In this case, players would use their character’s Charisma modifier and their proficiency bonus if appropriate.

THE CHURCH OF SHEVARASH

MAERDETH is a sun elf **archer** with these changes:

- Maerdeth is chaotic neutral.
- He has these racial traits: He has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can’t put him to sleep. He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet and speaks Common and Elvish.
- He carries an *oathbow*.
- Maerdeth has lived in the wilderness near Mornbryn’s Shield for as long as the living memory of the human townsfolk, contributing to the defense of the village against roaming monsters. He has a past with Deheune but thinks she is naive and can only afford her carefree lifestyle thanks to the dirty work of folk like himself.

FAERTHURIN is a wood elf **spy** with these changes:

- Faerthurin is chaotic good.
- He has these racial traits: His walking speed is 35 feet. He has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can’t put him to sleep. He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet and speaks Common and Elvish.
- Faerthurin is an adventurer whose journeys have led him down a dark path. He sought out Maerdeth and

is considering being fully inducted into the church of Shevarash. He wears a scrap of red cloth tied around his right wrist as a constant reminder of how he must acquire the skills and strength to punish evildoers.

MJOLLBARRUN is a shield dwarf **berserker** with these changes:

- Mjollbarrun is neutral.
- He has these racial traits: His walking speed is 25 feet. He has advantage on saving throws against being poisoned and resistance to poison damage. He has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet and speaks Common and Dwarvish.
- Mjollbarrun fought in the War of the Silver Marches and saw the predations of the drow firsthand. He has accompanied Faerthurin for some time. While he would like to leave the Silver Marches behind to seek his fate in the wider world, he is having great difficulty leaving the war in the past. He tends to use his recollections of the war to make fallacious arguments from authority.

Following the incident, High Revelmistress Deheune explains the following to the characters:

- There is a prohibition against carrying weapons on the temple grounds.
- In two days, they will conduct the Swords Cast Down ritual in which weapons are thrown to the ground and covered in flowers, followed by a night of revelry.
- The drow have been living as refugees in the Surbrin Hills and she has brought them here as guests for the holiday after getting to know them.
- The drow are staying in the residence quarters in the temple
- She repeats the offer of shelter in the temple to the party, but additionally requests that they watch for any further confrontations and help keep the peace. This is the **Call to Action**. If the party declines her offer of shelter and camps outdoors, they may be subject to the rules for wilderness survival detailed in Chapter 5 of the Dungeon Master’s Guide.

EPISODE 2: THE NIGHT BEFORE

MIDWINTER

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

This is the season of the fire, this is when the reaper crawls. Feed the flames and make them higher, no sanctuary behind four walls.

—Amebix, *Winter*

The characters may begin their investigation, glean advance information regarding the catastrophe to come.

SCENE A. SPIDERS IN THE NIGHT.

Use this scene if the characters decide to surveil the drow or explore the temple. The manner in which it plays out is entirely dependent on the approach of the characters.

TEMPLE RESIDENCE AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The temple residences are set off from the main hall. They are comfortably but not lavishly furnished with cushions and pillows rather than harder furniture, giving them a rather indulgent or even hedonistic feeling. The worshippers of Liira move freely from room to room, sleeping wherever suits them and their companions for the night.

The drow have a room to themselves.

High Revelmistress Deheune occupies a larger room of her own, but frequently invites others to share it with her.

There is a locked door at the end of the hall that leads down into the catacombs below the temple. The lock can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or the door can be forced open with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. High Revelmistress Deheune keeps a key to the door in a drawer in the nightstand in her room.

Senses. The temple residences are rich with the subtle sounds and smells of indulgence late into the night. Eventually the revelry winds down and all is quiet.

Lighting. Occupied rooms may have dim light from candles or braziers. Candles set into fixtures on the walls provide dim light in the halls until everyone goes to sleep.

Refer to Appendix 1 for the temple and catacombs location details.

ORDER OF EVENTS

- After the drow retire to their chambers for the night, V'rizzen summons a mind spider and uses it to take control of Laele.
- V'rizzen then sends Laele to pick the lock to the catacombs. She then spends the rest of the night in the catacombs under the mind spider's control drawing arcane symbols on the floor.
- A character that makes a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the arcane marks as summoning sigils. This check is made with advantage if the character can read Abyssal. Succeeding on the check by 5 or more identifies them as supplications to the drow Demon Queen, Lolth.
- If she is undisturbed, Laele returns to the drow's quarters before morning. V'rizzen retrieves the mind spider and instructs it to hide until he calls upon it again.
- If Laele is confronted during the night by the characters, the mind spider gives up control of her and flees. Laele is confused and insists upon her innocence.
- Laele is visibly tired the next day and has one level of exhaustion.

SCENE B. BACK AT THE CAMP.

Use this scene if the characters decide to follow or meet with Maerdeth and his allies. The meeting can take place in the village or at their campsite on the ridge overlooking the town.

CAMPSITE AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Maerdeth, Faerthurin, and Mjollbarrun have a rustic camp on the western ridge overlooking the village. While they are exposed to the elements, they have advantage on Perception checks against creatures approaching their camp.

Senses. The snow continues to come down and the wind howls, sweeping the snow off the ridge.

Lighting. Unless a fire is built or a creature brings a light source with them, the camp is in complete darkness at night.

SHEVARASH WATCHING

- Maerdeth is utterly suspicious of the drow. He considers their presence in the village to be a personal failure on his part as a protector, and a dangerous misjudgment by Deheune.
- Maerdeth is interested in the characters and if they can be won over to his cause. If there are any drow among them, he may try to split the party or presume they are sympathetic to the other drow at the temple.

- He hasn't decided yet what should be done about the drow, but he expects things will come to a bad end.
- Faerthurin is troubled by the night's events but not completely convinced one way or another. His feelings flit back and forth until he settles on a course of action. Once he does, his mind is unlikely to change.
- Faerthurin can be convinced to go against Maerdeth by the characters with a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The check can be made with advantage if substantial evidence is presented to support their claims.
- Mjollbarrun wants to stay out of any debate. He would like to leave once the roads are passable, but he knows he won't be able to until the matter of the drow is settled. However, he won't be moved to pre-emptive violence without very convincing evidence.

SCENE C. SNOWBLIND IN THE SUN.

The snow finally stops and the sun even peeks through the clouds around midday. The brightness of the sun reflecting off the snow keeps the drow in the temple hall. There they greet the townsfolk and give further demonstrations of mimed sword dancing.

- After the midday meal, one of the worshippers of Liira retires to their quarters. V'rizzen tries to discreetly send a mind spider after them.
- If the characters are in the residence halls, they might be able to spot the mind spider if they are actively maintaining a watch (by succeeding on a Wisdom (Perception) check contested by its Dexterity (Stealth) check), otherwise they may see the worshipper leaving the temple shortly after saying they needed a rest.
- A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) gives them the feeling that the worshipper isn't quite themselves.
- The worshipper heads into the village to collect a wineskin full of blood from a butcher and to purchase a quiver full of arrows. If they aren't interrupted, they stash the quiver outside the temple wall. They then return to the temple, place the wineskin just inside the door to their room, and go back to sleep. At this point, the mind spider returns to the drow's quarters.

SCENE D. TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE...

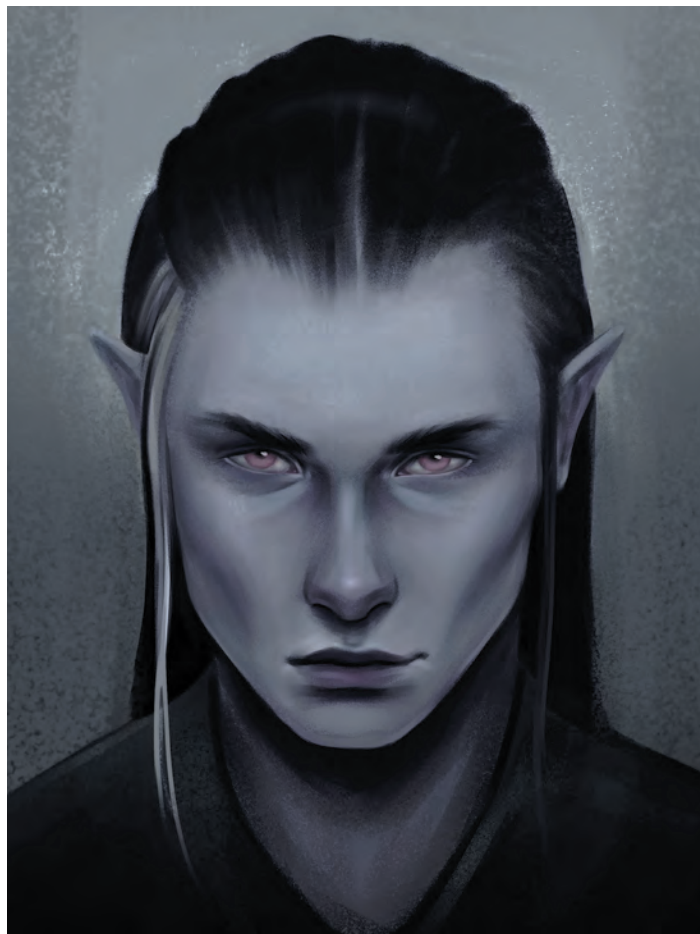
After nightfall, V'rizzen tries the same tactics as in Episode 2, Scene A, in order to complete the summoning charms.

- He uses a mind spider to force Madalyn to work on the summoning sigils all night.
- V'Rizzen then summons a second mind spider and uses it to try to take control of a member of the Shevarash faction or one of the player characters. If he is successful, he has them buy or steal a bow (or use their own) and then retrieve the arrows that were stashed outside the temple wall.
- Once they are armed, V'rizzen uses the mind spider to make its victim start shooting at the drow inside the temple.

- V'rizzen uses the ensuing chaos to retrieve the wineskin of blood and take it into the catacombs. There, he uses it to set the summoning ritual in motion.
- If V'rizzen is not caught, he works all night with the mind spider-controlled Madalyn before returning with her to the drow residence quarters, where he releases her from the mind spider's control.
- Madalyn has one level of exhaustion the next day.
- V'rizzen tries to spend the early morning in a trance to avoid exhaustion.

CROWD COMBAT

Targets benefit from three-quarters cover from ranged attacks if the temple grounds are full of revelers and the attacker is not above the crowd (flying, etc.). A creature attempting to hide in the crowd can be considered to be obscured from observers that are 10 feet away or more. After three rounds the crowd cover benefit decreases to half cover and there is no more obscuration from observers as non-combatants flee, and after five rounds the crowd effects dissipate entirely. While there is a crowd present, attack rolls that do not hit the target but that are 10 or more can be presumed, at the DM's discretion, to hit a non-combatant (**commoner**).



EPISODE 3 : MAYHEM AT

MIDWINTER

Estimated Duration: 90 minutes

Wrap up warm, you'll catch your death, don't let your death catch you. The winter tears the earth apart, let's hope we'll see it through.

—*Amebix, Winter*

If V'rizen hasn't been stopped yet, his plans bear bloody fruit.

SCENE A. REVELS

During the day the worshippers of Liira and the townsfolk begin their revelry centered in the temple grounds. Feasting, singing, dancing, and indulgence are the order of the day. The drow take part as much as their sunlight sensitivity permits. The actions of the Shevarash faction depend on what the party convinced them to do. Left to their own devices, they would be likely to stash weapons in the snow near the temple walls.

SCENE B. SWORDS CAST DOWN

As the sun sets, High Revelmistress Deheune explains the hopeful intentions of the Swords Cast Down ritual to the assembled worshippers and townsfolk. She then invites the drow to take part and the ceremony begins. Weapons are thrown onto a pile on the ground and then flowers are magically conjured atop them. Meanwhile, the worshippers begin to dance in a circle around the pile, becoming more ecstatic with each passing around.

Elsewhere, Maerdeth may be inducting Faerthurin into the church of Shevarash. Vows will be made to not laugh until vengeance is delivered upon Lolth and all her followers. They may erupt into violence if they arrive at the temple to find demons unleashed by the drow.

V'rizen's plan is to take action at the peak of the ceremony. In the temple catacombs a **yochlol**, four **dretches**, and two **shadow demons** have been summoned. The yochlol remains in the catacombs and attempts to summon more demons. The dretches prowl the catacombs, looking for prey and defending the yochlol. The shadow demons head outside, and once they reach the temple steps V'rizen sends the mind spiders against either the other drow or the characters. He attacks High Revelmistress Deheune if he can. If the battle turns against V'rizen, he will try

to escape if he can. Otherwise he will sow as much senseless death as he can before his soul is sent to Lolth in the Abyss.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

There are a number of threads that may merit resolution after V'rizen's plot is dealt with. The summoning circle in the catacombs could lead into the Underdark for further adventure and exploration. V'rizen could have been a puppet himself of a nefarious actor. The Shevarash faction may have put the player characters in a difficult position morally or in the eyes of the temple and the law, or they may be no longer welcome in Mornbryn's Shield and need to be removed by diplomacy or force. If any characters were inducted into the church of Shevarash, it is likely to color their motivations and actions going onwards. Perhaps everything wrapped up as nicely as a Midwinter present!

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
V'rizzen (Assassin)	3,900
Mind Spider	450
Yochlol	5,900
Dretch	50
Shadow Demon	1,100

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Disarm the Brazier Trap	770
Dissuade the Shevarash faction from attacking	270

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Mind Spider Ring. While wearing this ring, you can speak the command word as an action to summon a mind spider from the Demonweb Pits in the Abyss. The mind spider appears in an unoccupied space within 120 feet of you. It remains until it is killed.

While summoned, the mind spider is friendly to you and your companions. It obeys any commands you give, no matter what language you use. If you fail to command it, the mind spider defends itself against attackers but takes no other actions.

After a mind spider is summoned, another cannot be summoned for 24 hours. Up to eight mind spiders can be summoned and controlled at one time.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The inspiration for this adventure was a simple collision of some of Faerun's Midwinter rituals. The mixture of one ritual dedicated to pacifism and another to vengeance seemed obviously explosive. From a design standpoint, I wanted to make a scenario that would respond to the players' choices and unfold unpredictably. On a more personal note, Faerthurin was my first 5e character, and he took a dark turn after nearly being killed in the streets of Phandalin by the Redbrands.

AUTHOR BIO

Andy Dempz was gifted the D&D Red Box by a winter eladrin as a child, and though he took an extended sojourn in these human lands to play guitar in hardcore punk bands (though he would never claim to be a bard), study martial arts on multiple trips to Japan (nor a monk), and work as a master automotive mechanic (nor a... tinker gnome?), he has returned to the magical lands of ice and snow that he explored in his youth. The seeds for his written adventures are often sown in the multiple overlapping campaigns he DMs in his home of Ann Arbor, MI.

APPENDIX 1: THE TEMPLE AND CATACOMBS

THE TEMPLE OF LIIRA

The temple was repurposed from an older structure of indeterminate origin. The catacombs beneath were locked away and the upper area was refurnished and given a new facade to conceal and forget what lay beneath. The temple ceilings are ten feet high.

1. TEMPLE GROUNDS

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The temple grounds are roughly one hundred feet in diameter and are surrounded by a five foot tall stone wall.

Senses. The snowfall seems lighter inside the temple grounds and the wind is mostly blocked by the wall. The firelight from torches and cook-fires sparkles on the snow.

Lighting. During the daylight hours there is bright light despite the overcast conditions, and in the evening there is dim light from the many torches and fires.

Creatures. As the center of the Midwinter festivities in Mornbryn's Shield, the crowds may wax and wane, but there are people in the temple grounds from midday until the wee hours of the night.

2. MAIN HALL

This area features:

Dimensions & Features. The temple hall is 20 feet square. The ceiling is supported by sensually carved marble columns and an altar dominates the far end of the hall. Cushions and pillows are spread about the hall, making for a comfortable and inviting environment. Doors on either side of the altar lead further.

Senses. The warmth and dryness of the hall is a welcome relief from the snow outside. Incense burns on the altar and fills the hall with a mild aroma of pine needles that most find appealing.

Lighting. Braziers and torches mounted in sconces provide bright light.

Creatures. There may be travelers sleeping or relaxing here depending on the time of day and circumstances.

3. SUPPLY CLOSET

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This is a 10 foot square walk-in supply closet. Wooden shelves mounted in the walls hold various items like incense, robes (typically loose fitting and revealing), pillows and cushions, and some dry foodstuffs and beverage barrels.

Lighting. There is no light other than what creatures bring with them. There is one empty scone on the wall.

4. INNER TEMPLE

This area features:

Dimensions & Features. The inner temple hall is 35 feet wide and 20 feet deep with halls and doors heading off in various directions. At its center is a marble statue of four barely-clothed intertwined figures with a range of gender expressions. The sculpture is so dynamic and lifelike as to give the distinct impression of fluid movement, either dancing or cavorting, to observers.

There is a locked door at the end of the northwest hall that leads down into the catacombs below the temple. The lock can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or the door can be forced open with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. High Revelmistress Deheune keeps a key to the door in a drawer in the nightstand in her room.

Senses. The statue is quite provocative. Warm and pleasant smells drift out of the kitchen (area 6).

Lighting. Braziers and torches mounted in sconces provide bright light while people are up and about. Candles provide dim light in the halls until they burn out after everyone goes to sleep.

Creatures. There may be travelers lingering or passing through depending on the time of day and circumstances.

5. REVELMISTRESS'S QUARTERS

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Deheune's quarters are a 20 foot square room, pleasantly furnished and decorated with wood carvings and minimal furniture. Her bed dominates the space, with an elegant nightstand next to it. An open wardrobe that holds her clothing implies that she has little to hide. There is no lock on the door.

Senses. Light scents of incense and perfume mingle with the more heady impressions of freely-shared indulgence.

Lighting. Candles provide dim light if Deheune is present and awake or has been recently. Otherwise, there is no light other than what creatures bring with them.

Creatures. Deheune spends most of her time in the temple or its grounds during the Midwinter festivities, but she does retire to her quarters to have company or sleep.

6. KITCHEN AND DINING AREA

This area features:

Dimensions & Features. This room is the largest in the temple at 25 feet wide by 30 feet deep. The far end is dominated by a fireplace for cooking, with counters for food preparation and shelves for storage on either side. The rest of the room is filled by long tables and reasonably comfortable benches.

Senses. A blend of rich and delicate scents from the food cooking is virtually intoxicating.

Lighting. Braziers and torches mounted in sconces provide bright light.

Creatures. There may be revelers cooking or eating here depending on the time of day and circumstances.

7. REVELERS' QUARTERS

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The temple residences are set off from the main hall. They are comfortably and simply furnished with cushions and pillows rather than harder furniture, giving them a rather indulgent or even hedonistic feeling. Curtains cover the doorways.

Senses. The temple residences are rich with the subtle sounds and smells of indulgence late into the night. Eventually the revelry winds down and all is quiet.

Lighting. Occupied rooms may have dim light from candles or braziers. Candles set into fixtures on the walls provide dim light in the halls until everyone goes to sleep.

Creatures. The worshippers of Liira move freely from room to room, sleeping wherever suits them and their companions for the night.

8. DROW QUARTERS

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This is a larger residence room set off from the main hall. It is furnished similar to the other residences, with cushions and pillows and holds the drow's packs and belongings (including their weapons as noted in the sidebar to Episode 1, Scene B). Curtains cover the doorway.

Senses. The drow's room has subtle smells that will be unusual to anyone who has not spent significant time in the Underdark.

Lighting. Candles set into fixtures on the walls provide dim light if any of the drow are hosting visitors. Otherwise the room has no light sources other than what creatures bring with them.

Creatures. The drow can sometimes be found here depending on the time of day and circumstances. Bjorn and Madalyn are particularly interested in the intersection of certain aspects of worship of Eilistraee and Liira and might be found here with guests.

9. WATER CLOSET

This room has a sink and toilet with an ingenious plumbing system that uses water runoff from the ridge that protects Mornbryn's Shield.

THE CATACOMBS

The catacombs have a distinctly different appearance from the rest of the temple, being carved directly from the bedrock beneath the temple and dating much further back than the facades covering the structure above. Ceilings are seven feet high.

10. BURIAL PREPARATION CHAMBER

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Carved stone stairs with earthen walls lead down from the upper level to this chamber. The walls, floor, and ceiling are carved out of the bedrock with precision and a lack of artistry. There are two foreboding stone doors on the far wall from the stairs. Between them is a wide stone shelf that was once used to prepare bodies for burial. Some empty ceramic containers and odd metal tools are all that remain from that era, undisturbed for ages.

Senses. The sounds and warmth of the temple recede into the distance as one descends into this room. It is dry and nearly silent, assuming the door at the top of the stairs was closed.

Lighting. There is no light other than what creatures bring with them. There are empty sconces on the wall and braziers on the preparatory shelf.

Creatures. The room is empty unless the drow or demons are passing through.

11. CATACOMBS

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The two halls are nearly identical and are carved out of the bedrock like the burial preparation chamber (area 10). Each hall has six alcove tombs. The tombs have raised stone slabs with what appear to be statuesque likenesses of ancient warriors.

Senses. These halls are, appropriately, as quiet as a tomb.

Lighting. There is no light other than what creatures bring with them. There is an empty sconce on the wall in the center of each hall.

Creatures. Eleven of the statuesque warriors are actually ancient **veterans** who were petrified before death. They can be identified as living creatures by someone who examines them and makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation or Arcana) check. They give off an aura of transmutation magic if subjected to a *detect magic* spell or similar effect. Each one's petrified condition can be removed by a *greater restoration* spell. The freed warriors do not speak Common and must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be subject to a randomly determined form of short term madness as detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, Chapter 8.

Secret Door. The warrior statue closest to the secret door has had its head split from its body. The head covers a pressure plate and the secret door swings open if the weight of the stone head is removed from the plate. The fracture between the body and head can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check by someone searching the tomb, and afterwards a character making a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check determines that the pressure plate controls the opening of a secret door. Tracks leading to the door itself can be found by making a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check. The door has AC 17, 27 hit points, and is immune to poison and psychic damage.

12. THE FANE OF LOLTH

This chamber was the site of some ancient dark ritual. Vrizen intends to tap into the residual power to open a small portal to the Demonweb Pits of

the Abyss. The braziers that light the room act as a complex trap.

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. This octagonal chamber is carved out of the bedrock, but much more roughly than the other areas of the catacombs. Each has six alcove tombs.

Senses. This chamber is silent except for the virtually imperceptible sound of a host of tiny spiders moving about and spinning at their webs. If the ritual has begun, then the room is filled with acrid, otherworldly smells.

Lighting. Eight braziers burning with purple flame provide dim light if the drow have been here. Otherwise, the room has no light sources other than what creatures bring with them. If the braziers have been lit, refer to the **Brazier Trap** for further information.

Creatures. Depending on the events that have transpired, this area may have one of the drow or multiple demons in it. Hundreds of tiny spiders work feverishly to fill the corners of the room with webs.

Summoning Circle. At the center of the room is a summoning circle written in silver dust in the shape of a huge spider. If the ritual has been completed, then a hole has ripped open in the floor and a portal to the Demonweb Pits pulses 100 feet below the surface. Under the scrutiny of a *detect magic* spell or similar effect, the circle has an aura of conjuration magic.

The circle can be disrupted and the portal closed by making three successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) or Dexterity (Sleight Of Hand) checks. A creature making a failed attempt suffers 3 (1d6) necrotic damage or 10 (3d6) necrotic damage if they failed the attempt by 10 or more. This check is made with advantage by a devout worshipper of Eilistraee.

A creature crossing the active circle must make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, it takes 17 (5d6) necrotic damage and is prevented from entering. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and can enter the circle.

A creature inside the active circle is protected from attacks from outside the circle as if *mage armor* had been cast on them.

BRAZIER TRAP

Complex trap (level 5-10, dangerous threat)

When the braziers are lit and a creature stands directly between any pair of them, a purple firebolt flies between a random pair or a fire burst goes off centered on one of them. The trap cannot harm creatures inside the **Summoning Circle**.

Trigger. The trap activates when a non-drow crosses between two of the lit braziers and remains active as long as two or more of the braziers are lit.

Initiative. The trap acts on initiative count 20.

Active Elements. A firebolt arcs between two randomly determined braziers or a fire burst goes off centered on one.

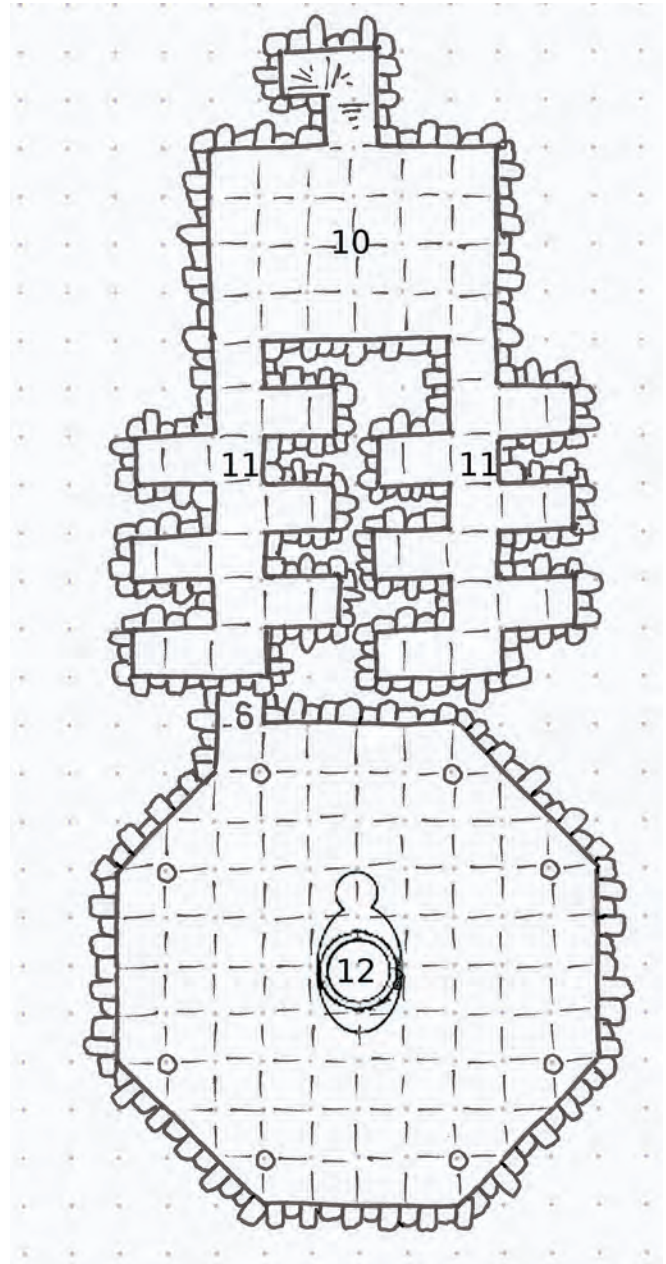
Firebolt/Fire Burst. The braziers are designated number 1 through 8 starting from the northeast and proceeding clockwise. Roll 1d8 twice.

If the results are different, a firebolt attacks each creature between those two braziers, with a +8 bonus to the attack roll and dealing 22 (4d10) radiant damage on a hit.

If the results are the same, a fire burst goes off centered on that brazier with a 10 foot radius. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

If the results include a brazier that has been deactivated, then the trap does not activate that round.

Countermeasures. Each brazier can be deactivated if a creature uses an action to knock it over or extinguish the flame.



ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Each round the portal is open, a demon of challenge rating 1 or lower can crawl out of the portal. The total number of demons is at the DMs discretion and should make for an exciting encounter without being overwhelming.

APPENDIX 2: CREATURE STATISTICS

A mind spider resembles a spider the size of an adult human fist except its abdomen is shrunken and deflated. They are a demonic twist on intellect devourers, and they capture and control the minds of sentient creatures in a similar fashion

In The Service Of Lolth. The rings that summon mind spiders are given by Lolth to particularly devious drow to sow treachery and chaos. The possessor of a mind spider ring can summon one spider each day. They can command the spider and any creature it inhabits, as well as observe the world through its senses by concentrating.

Possession. Mind spiders are most often used to force their victims to commit horrible acts. The mind spider is then recalled from the victim's body, leaving the victim to bear the consequences of whatever foul deeds it committed while under the spider's control.

MIND SPIDER

Tiny demon, lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 21 (6d4 + 6)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Senses Blindsight 10 ft., Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 12

Languages Deep Speech understands but can't speak, Telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Detect Sentience. The mind spider can sense the presence and location of any creature within 300 feet of it that has an Intelligence of 3 or higher, regardless of interposing barriers, unless the creature is protected by a *mind blank* spell.

Spider Climb. The mind spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the mind spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The mind spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

Actions

Multiattack. The mind spider makes one attack with its bite and uses Capture Intellect.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Capture Intellect. The mind spider targets one creature it can see within 10 feet of it that has a brain. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw against this magic or take 11 (2d10) psychic damage. Also on a failure, roll 3d6: If the total equals or exceeds the target's Intelligence score, that score is reduced to 0. The target is stunned until it regains at least one point of Intelligence.

Body Thief. The mind spider initiates an Intelligence contest with an incapacitated humanoid within 5 feet of it that isn't protected by protection from evil and good. If it wins the contest, the mind spider teleports into the target's skull, magically envelops the target's brain with its abdomen sack, and takes control of the target's body. While inside a creature, the mind spider has total cover against attacks and other effects originating outside its host. The mind spider retains its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as its understanding of Deep Speech, its telepathy, and its traits. It otherwise adopts the target's statistics. It knows everything the creature knew, including spells and languages.

If the host body dies, the mind spider must leave it. A *protection from evil and good* spell cast on the body drives the mind spider out. The mind spider is also forced out if the target regains its captured brain by means of a *wish*. By spending 5 feet of its movement, the mind spider can voluntarily leave the body, teleporting to the nearest unoccupied space within 5 feet of it. The host body has its brain returned and its Intelligence score restored, but it has no memories of the time period it was inhabited by the mind spider.

APPENDIX 3: MAGIC ITEM

MIND SPIDER RING

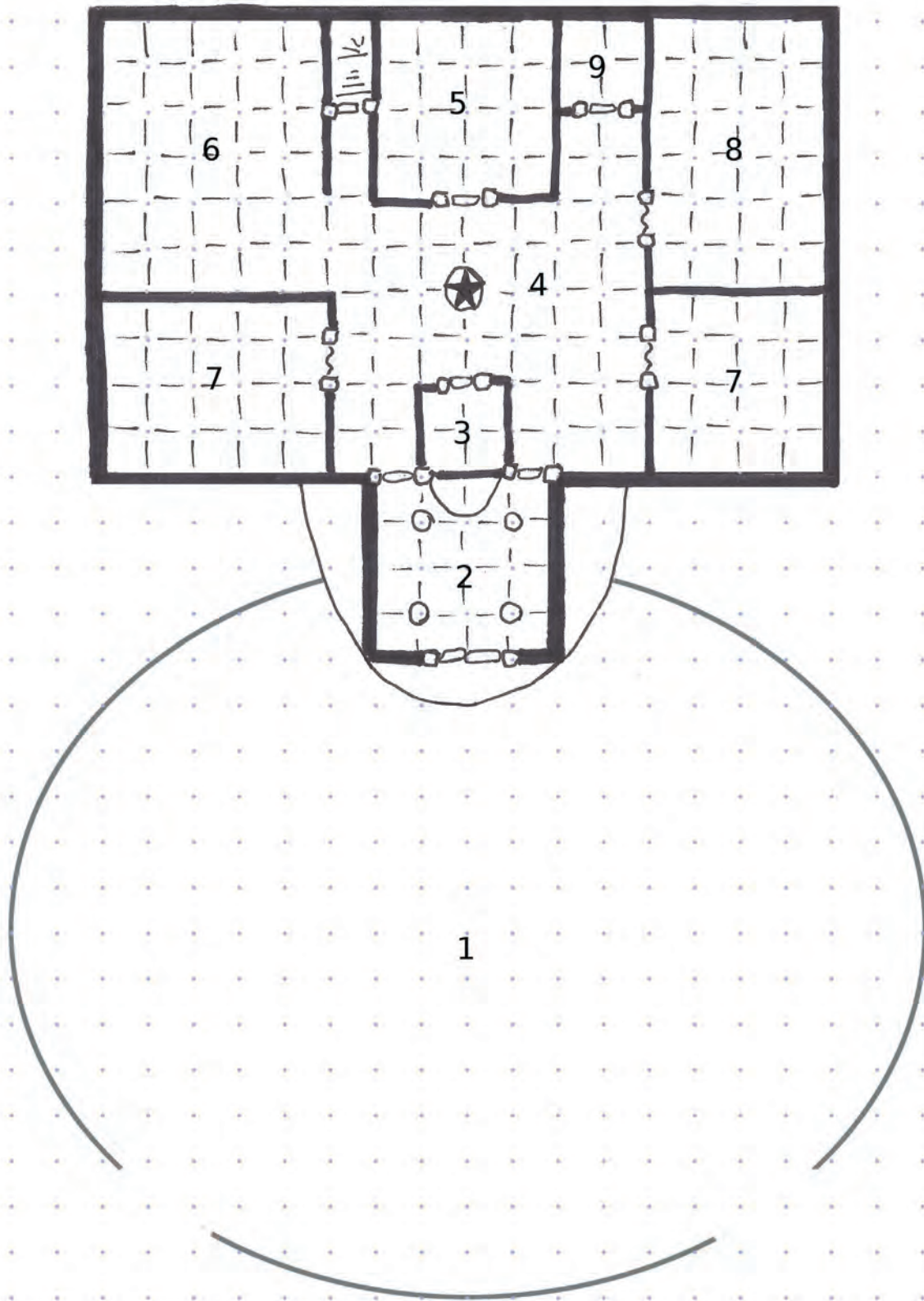
Ring, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this ring, you can speak the command word as an action to summon a mind spider from the Demonweb Pits in the Abyss. The mind spider appears in an unoccupied space within 120 feet of you. It remains until it is killed.

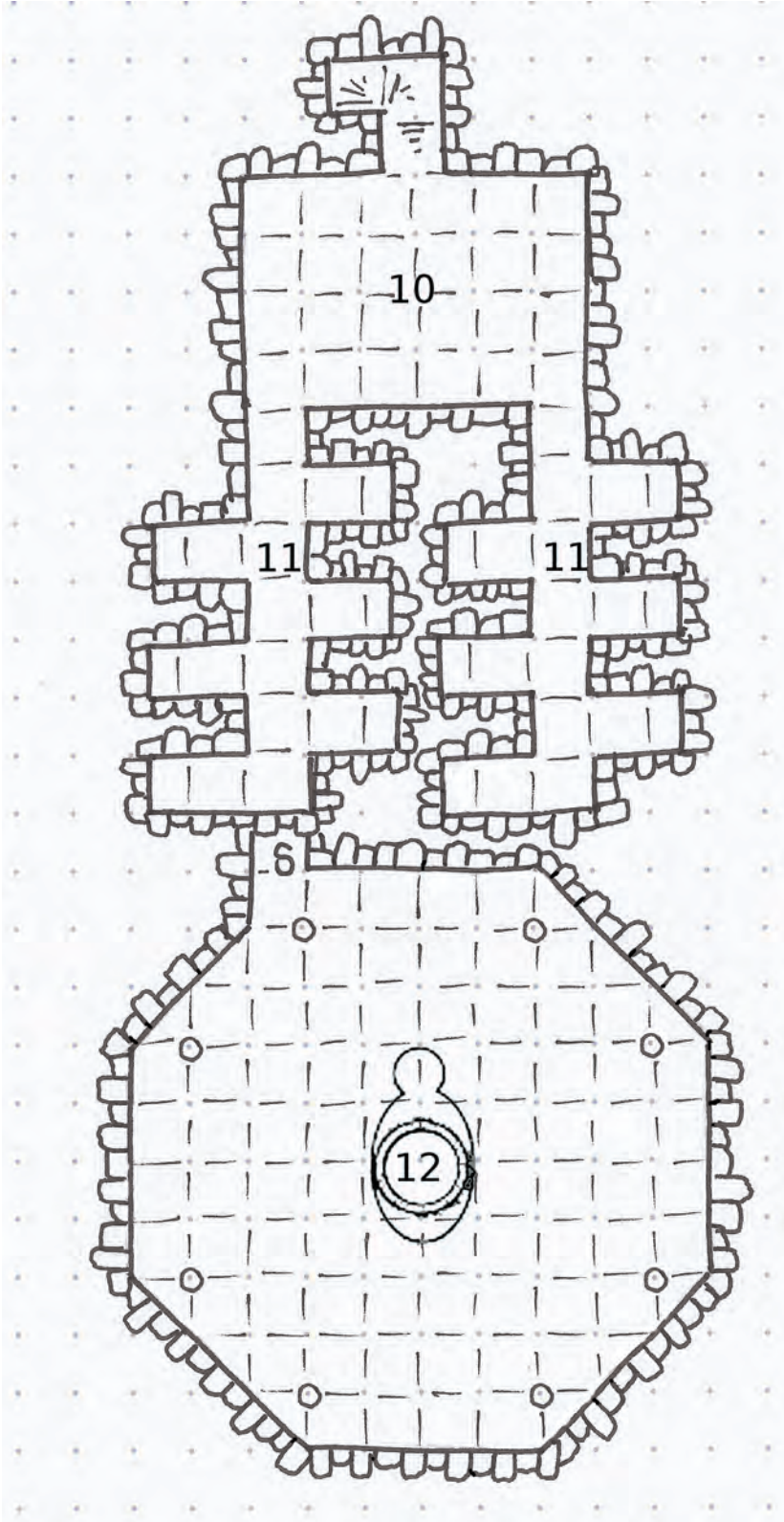
While summoned, the mind spider is friendly to you and your companions. It obeys any commands you give, no matter what language you use. If you fail to command it, the mind spider defends itself against attackers but takes no other actions.

After a mind spider is summoned, another cannot be summoned for 24 hours. Up to eight mind spiders can be summoned and controlled at one time.

THE TEMPLE OF LIIRA



THE CATACOMBS





BE GOOD FOR GOODNESS SAKE

EIGHT MISCHIEVOUS MOPPETS

Introduction: There is a fable in the hamlet of Kinderville that is told every midwinter. The story goes that obedient, kind children are brought sweets and toys on the night of the Midwinter Festival and rewarded for their virtue. But woe befalls children who have been naughty. A creature of darkness and horror descends upon them and steals them from their beds in the dead of night. A group of adventurers find themselves in Kinderville on such a midwinter night where many children have been naughty this year. Can the adventurers save these brats from the malevolent Midwinter demon, or will the children be lost forever as punishment for their sins?

A 4-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 5TH - 10TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY DAVID HARMON



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

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ADVENTURE PRIMER

This module can be presented as a standalone adventure or as an addition to existing campaign. Kinderville can be placed in any setting as long as it is snowy and remote. References to Selûne can be changed to any benevolent god or goddess.

BACKGROUND

Nestled away in a snowy forest is a small hamlet known as **KINDERVILLE**. This village was long ago visited by a cleric of Selûne and the children of the village helped that cleric build a shrine to the goddess. As thanks, the cleric blessed Kinderville, saying that as long as the children held goodness in their hearts, the goddess would protect them.

Years later, a darkness started to prowl around the woods on the outskirts of Kinderville. Every Midwinter, on the darkest day of the year, a demonic entity that the villagers have named “Krampus” tests the Selûne’s protection over the hamlet. To all the good children of the hamlet, the ancient blessing protects them from Krampus’ clutches. But children that have forsaken goodness and instead been naughty get snatched up by the demon and are carried away into the night.

This particular year, the children of Kinderville have been very naughty. No one was taken the previous year or the year before that, and the youngest kids have started to doubt that **KRAMPUS** even exists. Perhaps this was all part of Krampus’ plan, as goddess’ protection is the weakest it’s been in years and the demon will strike with a fury Kinderville has never seen before.

EPISODES

The adventure is spread over **3 episodes** that take approximately 4 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1: You Better Watch Out.** The characters come across **KINDERVILLE** in the middle of its Midwinter Feast preparations. The matriarch of the Kinderville, **ANKE**, says that she has had premonitions that something will go wrong during this Midwinter celebration. She asks the adventurers to defend Kinderville until the next morning. To this end, she asks the adventurers to investigate some disturbances at the edge of the woods. There the adventurers find some **WINTER WOLVES** that they can either learn valuable information from or fight.

- **Episode 2: You Better Not Cry.** The characters are invited to the Midwinter Feast and may assist in its preparations. Additionally, they are requested to round up a number of naughty children and deliver them to Anke. She

tells them the legend of **KRAMPUS** in an attempt to get the children to behave, but the children don’t listen. Later that night, the Midwinter Feast begins, but the children have a prank planned for the evening. What starts out as a joyous banquet quickly descends into chaos as the prank goes awry. As a result, **YETIS** from the forest attack the fest hall and ruin the dinner. It is up to the characters to stop the monsters and, if they are capable, salvage the Feast.

- **Episode 3: Krampus is Coming to Town.** After the Feast, the characters are invited to stay the night in the village. Just as Kinderville settles down to sleep, screams are heard in the night! Investigating the screams, they discover that a number of children have been taken in the night. Soon, all the minions of Krampus descend upon Kinderville. The characters learn Krampus is targeting the shrine of Selûne at the center of Kinderville. They can then either sneak or fight their way to the final confrontation where some of the naughty children are helping Krampus destroy **THE SHRINE OF SELÛNE**. The adventurers must stop them in order to save Kinderville from Krampus’ reign of terror.

WHAT’S THE DEAL WITH KRAMPUS?

No one knows the true origin of Krampus, but some say that the cosmos itself desires balance, and that Krampus was spawned to balance out the spirit of Midwinter. That the charity, kindness, and forgiveness that the season inspires must be offset by greed, wrath, and spitefulness. Others say that Krampus was created by some lawful god to punish the wicked, and to deter good people from doing evil deeds.

In any case, Krampus plans on stealing several children on the night of the Midwinter Feast and intimidating them into destroying the Shrine of Selûne, which will allow Krampus to take everyone in Kinderville, whether they’ve been naughty or nice.

EPISODE 1: YOU BETTER WATCH OUT (CALL TO ACTION)

Estimated Duration: 15 - 30 minutes

It's the hap-happiest season of all

With those holiday greetings and gay happy meetings

When friends come to call

It's the hap-happiest season of all.

—Andy Williams, *Most Wonderful Time of the Year*

In this section, the adventurers come across the hamlet of Kinderville. They are greeted by the villagers and meet Great-Grandmother Anke, the matriarch of Kinderville. Anke has had premonitions that something bad will happen the night of the Midwinter Feast. She asks the characters to defend Kinderville against any and all threats until the morning comes. To that end, she requests that the party investigate some disturbances that have been occurring at the edge of the woods outside of Kinderville.

At the beginning of this adventure, you may want to employ one of the following hooks to draw the characters in or make up one of your own:

- **Family Ties.** A character may have distant relatives who live in Kinderville. Midwinter is often a holiday to bring together families either out of love or obligation.
- **Pilgrimage.** A character who is particularly religious may have heard that there is an obscure but holy shrine in Kinderville. They may also know that there is a celebration held in the town in the name of the goddess. The devout of Selûne or other good-aligned deities may want to visit this shrine on Midwinter and partake in the festivities.
- **A Waypoint on the Road.** Some characters may simply be traveling through Kinderville on the road to their own destinations and are simply looking for a safe place to rest and find a meal.

SCENE A. THE HAMLET OF KINDERVILLE

When the characters first arrive at Kinderville, they see a small, close-knit community in the midst of celebrating Midwinter and preparing for the upcoming feast. The adults of Kinderville greet them kindly, but the children do not. The villagers direct the adventurers to speak to Great-Grandmother Anke, who will request the party to defend Kinderville for the night.

You see on a hill, one of the most quaint and festive villages you have ever laid eyes on. Each house is decorated with care. Banners, ribbons, garlands, and wreaths are everywhere. The townsfolk are rushing about, bells jingling on their clothes. They smile and shout holiday greetings to everyone they meet. Welcome to Kinderville, the happiest place to celebrate the Midwinter holiday.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Kinderville is a small hamlet of only two dozen buildings clustered together in a 500-by-500 foot area. The ground between houses is unpaved but snow has been shoveled out of the common roads and walkways. Everything else is covered in three feet of snow, making it difficult terrain. Kinderville is situated on a gentle hill and at the top of the hill is **THE FEAST HALL**. At the center of Kinderville is **THE SHRINE OF SELÛNE**, which can be identified with a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Religion)** check. Followers of Selûne automatically succeed on the check.

Sights. The houses and trees in the village are covered in decorations such as streamers, banners, ribbons, bells, candles, and gingerbread. Dozens of wooden statues are carved and painted to look like carolers, dancers, festive soldiers, and other holiday appropriate iconography. The villagers wear colorful cold weather gear.

Sounds. The villagers also wear bells so there is a constant jingling in the air.

Temperature. The villagers also wear bells so there is a constant jingling in the air.

Lighting. Though it is a bit cloudy, the sun provides bright light for the entire village.

CREATURES/NPCs

At any given time, there are around 20 villagers (various humanoid **commoners**) running through the streets of Kinderville. They are carrying pies, firewood, musical instruments, utensils, cookies, decorations, wrapped presents, and other miscellaneous items as the rush from building to building. A gang of six children (various humanoid **commoners** who are size small) play in the snow, despite calls from the busy adults to do their chores or help out with the preparations. Praying at the Shrine of Selûne is **GREAT-GRANDMOTHER ANKE** (female human **commoner**).

Objectives/Goals. The villagers are doing last minute preparations for the feast tonight. They are extremely busy and do not have time to stop and chat. The adults will give a smile to the adventurers and give them a season's greetings, but if the characters try to ask them any questions, they will just direct them to talk to Great-Grandmother Anke.

The children see the adventurers as interesting new targets. They will attempt to hit the characters with snowballs as soon as their backs are turned, prioritizing any adventurer not wearing armor. They return fire if snowballs are thrown back, but immediately run away if chastised or threatened.

Great-Grandmother Anke immediately identifies the characters as adventurers and is very grateful to see them, as she wishes to enlist the adventurers' services in defending Kinderville.

What Do They Know? The villagers, the band, and the children all know that there is no inn or tavern in the village. Everyone does their drinking and celebrating in the feast hall. The village has no formal government, but everyone respects Great-Grandmother Anke's wisdom and leadership over the town. If the adventurers ask what all the commotion is about, they will respond that tonight is a great feast to celebrate Midwinter, and the whole village is doing its part to make it as great as it can be. If the characters ask if they can join the feast, help with the preparations, find food, secure lodging, listen to rumors, find adventures, or any other general question, they will be directed to talk to Anke at the Shrine of Selûne.

Anke has had premonitions that something terrible will happen tonight. She believes that the adventurers may be able to stop it.

CALL TO ACTION

Great-Grandmother Anke shares with the characters that she has had terrible nightmares of late. She believes they are not merely dreams but visions of what may come to pass. In these nightmares, some indescribable force of hunger and wrath attacks Kinderville and many lives are lost. Anke does not know many specific details, but she is certain that the attack will happen sometime tonight as tonight is the night of the Midwinter Feast.

Anke requests that the adventurers stay the night in Kinderville and defend the hamlet against any and all threats. In exchange, Anke will make them guests of honor at the Midwinter Feast. Additionally, no threat appears by morning, or if the adventurers repel all threats until the morning, then Anke will reward them



with Kinderville's most treasured possession, a solid gold star that they use to adorn their feast hall, which Anke estimates to be worth 1000 gp.

Anke's only concrete lead regarding the nature of the threat to Kinderville is that there have been a few disappearances of people who have gone into the woods to the north of Kinderville. No one knows what caused the disappearances, but Anke recommends the party investigate the area to learn more.

SCENE B. THE WOODS OUTSIDE OF KINDERVILLE

As the characters move to the edge of the woods outside of Kinderville, they come across a two of **winter wolves** prowling in the snow. If they are diplomatic, the adventurers may learn about an evil entity lurking in the forest. If the adventurers are not diplomatic, they might (incorrectly) believe that they have defeated the threat that Anke warned them of.

Snow begins to gently fall as you make your way to the forest outside of Kinderville. The temperature is only just below freezing, but as you look into the darkness of the woods, an unexplained chill goes down your spine. Something dangerous is lurking amongst these trees.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The tree line has been well maintained so that there is stark dividing line between the forest and the area around Kinderville. The snow in this area has not been shoveled and is several feet deep making it difficult terrain for medium and smaller creatures.

Sounds. Gently falling snow muffles sound in this area. Perception checks to hear are rolled with disadvantage.

Temperature. Though the air is chilly and brisk, it is not enough to be uncomfortable to those used to a wintry climate.

Lighting and Visibility. The sun still provides bright light for the area, but the gently falling snow makes everything lightly obscured.

CREATURES/NPCs

BARK and **BITE** (two **winter wolves**) are laying on the ground, using their *Snow Camouflage* feature to hide in amongst the trees and observe the party. One hundred feet into the forest their master, a **frost troll**, is busy snacking on the carcass of a human lumberjack.

Objectives/Goals. Bark and Bite are loyal to their master and protect him with their lives. However, they are not necessarily hostile to the adventurers. If adventurers seem peaceable, Bark will break stealth to speak with the party in Common. He warns the party not to come any closer lest they are prepared to fight. If combat breaks out, the winter wolves howl, alerting the frost troll of the party. The frost troll fights, hoping to eat as many of the adventurers as he can, but flees if he thinks his life is in danger.

What Do They Know? Bark will readily admit that they have killed villagers that have wandered into the woods. He says that humans are not the master's preferred prey, but that there are fewer elk and deer in the forest as of late. Bark will say that some great predator is eating everything in the forest. Bark has not seen this predator and doesn't know exactly what it is, but does know that it is powerful and its hunger seems unending. Bark does not have the authority to tell the master to stop eating humans and the master will try to eat the adventurers as soon as look at them. Even if the frost troll pauses long enough to talk in broken Giant, he is absolutely incapable of remembering a negotiated deal or abiding by one.

TREASURE

If the characters defeat the frost troll, they can find the following items inside the stomach of the troll:

- A half-digested knapsack, which has inside diamond dust worth up to 300 gp
- A *potion of animal friendship*

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **WINTER WOLF**. Reduce the **FROST TROLL**'s health to 84 hp.
- **Weak:** Remove one **WINTER WOLF**.
- **Strong:** Add one **WINTER WOLF**.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **FROST TROLL**.

EPISODE 2: YOU BETTER NOT CRY

Estimated Duration: 60 - 90 minutes

Worse? How could it get any worse? We're at the threshold of hell!

—Clark Griswold, *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*

In this episode, the adventurers will have some time on their hands before the Midwinter Feast. Anke asks the characters to help with the preparations for the Feast. If they help the townsfolk and embody the spirit of the season, they may earn a boon from Selûne herself. If they act rudely or misanthropic, they could be punished with a bane from Krampus. Then the parents of Kinderville ask the characters to round up several misbehaving miscreants and deliver them to Anke, who tells them the legend of Krampus to warn them that their behavior will not go unpunished. Afterwards the characters will attend the Midwinter Feast itself, which will be interrupted by one of the children's pranks gone wrong, resulting in yetis attacking the Feast. It is up to the adventurers to save the feast or at least make sure no one dies.

SCENE A. PREPARATIONS FOR THE FEAST

Anke will tell the adventurers that the Midwinter Feast does not begin until sundown, which gives the adventurers a few hours of time to kill. She says that any help they give in preparing for the feast is optional but greatly appreciated. This will provide the characters with the opportunity to earn various blessings or banes.

ASSISTING THE VILLAGERS

The following are five tasks that Anke will suggest they aid with. However, allow the players to come up with their own way that they can assist the villagers and use your discretion for an appropriate check and DC. If the character succeeds on the check or roleplays embodying the spirit of the season particularly well, consider awarding the character a Boon of Selûne (see "Boon of Selûne sidebar for more details). If however, they do not even attempt to assist the villagers or roleplay being particularly rude or antithetical to the spirit of the season, consider giving the player a Bane of Krampus (see "Bane of Krampus" sidebar for more details).

Chopping Firewood. To effectively chop enough firewood for the feast hall hearth, a character must succeed on a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics)** check.

Carve Wooden Figurines. More holiday figurines are needed as table centerpieces at the feast hall. To carve a few beautiful holiday figurines, a character must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity** check using woodcarver's tools.

Religious Iconography Arrangement. The decorations at the feasthall need to be arranged in a way that is in accordance with the traditions of the church of Selûne. To assist the villagers in this task, a character must succeed on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Religion)** check. Followers of Selûne have advantage on the check.

Cooking in the Kitchen. To effectively help with preparation of the meal of the Midwinter Feast, a character must succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom** check using cook's utensils.

Inspiring Leadership. The villagers have been working for so long, that their morale has started to drop. To inspire the villagers to keep up the hard work, a character must succeed on a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)** check. A character with the Inspiring Leader feat has advantage on the check.

BOON OF SELÛNE

Throughout Episode 2, the characters have an opportunity to embody charity, kindness, generosity, or forgiveness. If they do so, consider giving them one of the following boons randomly by rolling on the "Boon Effect" table (see below). **THESE BOONS DO NOT TAKE EFFECT UNTIL EPISODE 3.** It is recommended not to tell the player that they have earned this boon until Episode 3. A player can earn up to three different boons but can only get the benefit of any one boon once.

D8 Boon Effect

- 1 You are under the effects of the *shield of faith* spell for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 2 You gain the halfling's "Lucky" trait, which lasts for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest. If you already have the trait, it now triggers on a roll of a 1 or 2.
- 3 You gain a fly speed equal to your walking speed for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 4 You gain advantage on all saving throws for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 5 You are immune to the blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, and poisoned conditions for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 6 You gain 50 temporary hit points, which last 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 7 You regain 1 hit point when you start your turn with 0 hit points. This benefit lasts 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 8 You gain resistance to all damage for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.

BANE OF KRAMPUS

Throughout Episode 2, the characters have an opportunity to embody greed, selfishness, apathy, or wrath. If they do so, consider giving them one of the following banes randomly by rolling on the Bane Effect table (see below). **THESE BANES DO NOT TAKE EFFECT UNTIL EPISODE 3.** It is recommended not to tell the player that they have earned this bane until Episode 3. A player can earn up to three different banes but can only get the detriments of any one bane once.

D8 Bane Effect

- 1 All attacks against you receive advantage for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 2 You have vulnerability to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 3 Your walking speed is reduced by half for the next 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 4 You have disadvantage on all saving throws for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 5 You have disadvantage on all ability checks for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 6 Your hit point maximum is reduced by half for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 7 You cannot gain advantage on any attack roll, saving throw, or ability check for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.
- 8 On your turn, you can use your action or your bonus action, but not both for 24 hours or until you next take a long rest.

SCENE B. STORY TIME

As their parents are busy with arranging the Feast, Anke asks the adventurers to round up a number of naughty children. She then tells the legend of Krampus for both the children and the characters to hear.

ROUNDING UP THE CHILDREN

Great-Grandmother Anke tells the adventurers that several children in the village have been quite naughty and that she would like to have a word with them. She requests that the adventurers round up five specific children and bring them to her in the feast hall. In order to find one of the following children, a character can attempt a **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check** to search Kinderville. On a success, they find one of the children. On a failure, one of the children sneaks up behind the character and throws a snowball at the back of their head, dealing 1 point of bludgeoning damage. If a character is particularly mean or vindictive towards a child, it is strongly recommended to give that character a Bane of Krampus (see "Bane of Krampus" sidebar).

Charlotte Carvel. Charlotte is a human female child (**commoner**) with golden blonde hair. She pretends to be innocent but when she doesn't get her way, Charlotte throws extremely loud temper tantrums. The characters can find her outdoors, hiding in a large bush. When found, Charlotte immediately tries to hide something behind her back. If questioned, she says that it's nothing. A passive Perception of 10 sees that she has been opening presents early and is hiding the evidence. No check is required to bring her to Great-Grandmother Anke, but Charlotte cries loudly that she doesn't want to be punished the entire way back to the feast hall.

Nakia Nahas. Nakia is a tiefling female child (**commoner**) with large bull-like horns. Nakia delights in scaring other people, especially children younger than herself. The characters can find her at a makeshift playhouse where her little brother, Najib Nahas is playing. When the characters find her, she is wearing a rat mask and is sneaking up behind her little brother with the intention of scaring him. If the players stop her, Nakia complains that they're ruining her fun. If they don't stop her, she terrorizes her little brother until he runs to the adventurers to save him. No check is required to bring Nakia to the feast hall,

but she spends the whole time asking the adventurers what frightens them most.

Wyr Wasanthi. Wyr is an elven male (**commoner**) with long dark hair and several small scars across his face. Wyr is obsessed with breaking things. He also likes stealing things, but stealing is just a means to obtain new objects to break. The characters can find him on the roof of a building, throwing delicate ornaments at other houses. Wyr will only willingly come down from the roof after he's broken the remaining ten ornaments he has. If the characters let him break all ten, he will happily go with them to the feast hall. Otherwise, he attempts to steal anything delicate off of each character's person.

Bardryn Bofdann. Bardryn is a male dwarf child (**commoner**) who has a full beard and wears "plate armor" made of tree bark. Bardryn pretends to be a mighty warrior, but his roughhousing often leads to someone getting injured. The characters can find Bardryn at the village chicken coop. When the characters find him, Bardryn is throwing rocks at the chickens, which are clucking and scattering everywhere. If the characters stop Bardryn, he justifies his actions, saying that he needed moving targets to improve his accuracy. No check is required to bring Bardryn to the feast hall, but he spends the entire time asking the adventurers how many people and monsters they've killed.

Gynn timer Goodearth. Gynn timer is a female halfling (**commoner**) who has poppy red hair that is as long as Gynn timer is tall. Gynn timer loves sweets and desserts, and she wants them all for herself. The characters can find her just outside of the kitchen by the feast hall. She's hiding below a window and is attempting to steal pies as they're set to cool on the window sill. If the characters stop her from stealing a pie, she softly cries and won't stop until she's given something sweet to eat.

THE LEGEND OF KRAMPUS

Once all the children have been collected in the feast hall, Great-Grandmother Anke quiets the children. She tells the adventurers that they should hear what she has to say as well. Then Anke begins to tell the Legend of Krampus.

Great-Grandmother Anke looks out over the faces of the children. "I think you all know why I'm speaking to you today. All of you have been very naughty this year. You haven't listened to your elders, some of you have stolen things that didn't belong to you, and others have acted wrathfully. This is not behavior befitting of the holiday season.

"Perhaps some of you think you can get away with this behavior. Perhaps you think you can endure whatever punishment will come your way. But let me tell you a story that just might change your mind:

"Once upon a time, many winters ago, a terrible snow storm struck Kinderville. A blizzard so violent and so cold that everyone had to huddle in the feast hall for warmth. There was no Midwinter Feast that year, as we had to ration out food just to survive through the winter.

"One particular night, in this never ending storm, a young girl awoke just around midnight. She was so cold and so hungry, she thought she might die. In her desperation, this girl snuck into the food stores in the kitchen while everyone else was asleep, and she began to gorge herself. She ate more than she had ever eaten in her life, all at the expense of her family and her neighbors.

"Suddenly, while the girl was still in the food stores, she heard the rattling of chains, the beating of hooves on the ceiling, and deranged chanting just outside the feast hall. She hid in one of the cupboards in the kitchen as the walls of the feast hall, this feast hall, cracked and splintered apart. She closed her eyes and covered her ears but she could hear the screams of adults and the maniacal singing of demonic songs.

"The door to the kitchen burst open and she looked through the crack in the cupboard. Standing in the doorway was a terrible figure. It was as large as a bear with horns like a goat. It carried a blood-red sack in one hand, and a cruel flail in the other. She knew exactly what this thing was: it was KRAMPUS, the demon of Midwinter!

"She tried to hold her breath and not make a sound, but Krampus cannot be fooled. Krampus can smell where naughty children are. It ripped the cupboard doors off and seized the young girl. She screamed to no avail. Krampus raised her up and was about to stuff her into its sack when this girl did the only thing she could think to do: she prayed.

"The girl prayed to Selûne, begging for the goddess' forgiveness, asking for her protection. The girl promised never to be selfish again; to live a life of self-sacrifice and devotion. In that moment, a radiant light burst forward and Krampus let go of the girl. Krampus howled in pain, disappearing in a flash of darkness. The girl fell to the ground and then the world fell silent.

"That little girl was safe, but a fear still gripped her heart. She was afraid that the next child might not be so lucky. The next naughty child might not be saved so easily. So the next time you think you can get away with some naughty deed, remember this: Krampus is watching. Krampus is always watching."

The children grumble disbelievingly at the tale. Great-Grandmother Anke sighs and turns to the adventurers, telling them that the Feast is about to begin.

Scene C. The Midwinter Feast

After sundown, everyone in the hamlet gathers in the feathall for the Midwinter Feast. At first, the Feast is going wonderfully, but two children wanted to capture a monster from the woods and unleash it in the feast hall as a prank. However, they bit off more than they could chew, as a couple of yetis started stalking them. The children ran back to Kinderville, leading the hungry Yetis right to the feast hall, where they shall attempt to devour as many villagers as they can. It is up to the adventurers to save the Feast or at least make sure that no one dies.

The time has finally arrived and the Midwinter Feast has begun! The entire town has gathered in the feathall for this grand celebration. The tables are filled with hams, turkeys, pies of every assortment, puddings, fruitcake, and many more holiday treats. The air is filled with sounds of joyous laughter, drunken cheers, boisterous table banter, and the ear piercing screams of children. The fireplace is ablaze with an inviting fire that warms the entire feathall.

Great-Grandmother Anke taps a spoon on her glass and all the adults fall silent. Some of the children continue to bicker, but Anke begins her speech, "I would like to acknowledge our guests of honor at this year's Midwinter Feast." Anke turns and gives you all a kind smile. "May Selûne's light guide you on the darkest of nights. May goodness always reside in your hearts. And may we all have a very merry Midwinter." A great cheer of agreement rings throughout the feast hall.

Anke looks as if she's going to continue, but suddenly the doors of the feast hall burst open and three young children come running in, tears streaming down their faces. "Krampus is here! Krampus is here!" There is a murmur of confusion among the adults. Then a bone chilling howl from just outside the feast hall rings out over the townsfolk.

Have the characters roll initiative. They have one round before the **YETIS** burst in through the western wall of the feast hall.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The feast hall is a large, single floor building. The main room is 60-by-40 feet,

with an attached kitchen that is 20-by-20 foot. The main room has four 30 foot long tables that run the length of the room. In the back of the hall is the head table that is 30 foot long and behind it is a massive fireplace that is currently lit.

Sights. The feast hall is adorned with wreaths, ribbons, and garlands. Mistletoe hangs in the center of the hall. The tables have candles, pinecones, cornucopias, and other centerpieces.

Smells. Out of the kitchen, there is a strong smell of ham and turkey cooking. There is also the aroma of pumpkin, apple, mince meat, and pecan pies being baked.

Temperature. The feast hall is warm, cozy, and inviting. Inside, characters do not need to wear cold weather gear.

Lighting. Between the massive fireplace in the back of the hall, and the many lit candles on the table, it is bright light throughout the feast hall.

CREATURES/NPCs

A total of 60 **VILLAGERS (commoners)** including children are occupying the feathall at the moment. After a round, one **abominable yeti** and one **yeti** crash through the western wall of the feast hall.

Objectives/Goals. The villagers simply want to avoid being eaten. Seeing the yetis, they are too panicked to act rationally. If one of the characters uses their action to succeed on a **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** then that character can direct where the villagers should go. The yetis are focused on eating as many villagers as they can but will attack anyone who tries to get in their way. The yetis speak their own language. Even if the party is somehow able to cross the language barrier, the yetis are not interested in talking unless they have been thoroughly subdued.

What Do They Know? If pressed, the three young children who burst into the feast hall admit that they went to the forest to capture monsters to unleash on the feast as a prank they thought would be funny. However, once they thought they were being stalked by a predator, they ran all the way back to Kinderville. The yetis know that many of their favored prey has been depleted from the forest. It is as if someone or something has been making sure the only viable food source is Kinderville.

EPISODE 3: KRAMPUS IS COMING

TOWN

Estimated Duration: 60 - 90 minutes

And then for better or worse you'll turn, unable to resist, though try to resist you still will, fighting with everything you've got not to face the thing you most dread, what is now, what will be, what has always come before, the creature you truly are, the creature we all are, buried in the nameless black of a name.

And then the nightmares will begin.

— Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves*

Just as Kinderville is settling down to sleep, screams shatter this silent night. The adventurers can investigate the screams and discover the parents of various children stuck in deadly traps. While they free the parents, the minions of Krampus descend on the hamlet, and Krampus uses the children it captured to attempt to destroy the shrine of Selûne. The adventurers can either fight or sneak their way past the minions to get to the final confrontation. There, they must either free the children or defeat Krampus to halt its demonic machinations.

SCENE A. RESIDENTIAL HOUSES

Just as Kinderville is lulling itself to sleep, screams in the night alert the characters that something is afoot. The party can explore several houses where the screams originated. From each one, a child has been stolen and their parents stuck in horrific traps. The characters must be careful if they want to free the parents without killing them. **Note to the DM:** keep track of which families were saved and how many members of the family were saved, as this will come into play in Scene C.

You begin to settle in for the night. The rest of Kinderville has already gone to bed, and the whole village is quiet. There is almost a satisfied tranquility that permeates the air. Suddenly, that tranquility is shattered as an ear-piercing scream rings out through the night. The hair stands up on the back of your neck, and then another scream cries out. This time you can identify that this is a child's scream. Then another scream and another and another. Five screams total ring out and then fall silent.

The characters may run to where they heard the sounds of screaming. There is a cluster of residential houses that they can identify where the screaming was heard. Each house has signs of a recent break in.

AREA INFORMATION

Each of the houses share the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Each house is 20 by 20 foot with a single room for the entire house that acts as both sleeping, living, eating, and cooking quarters. There is only one door at the front of the house and four windows: two in the front and two in the back. A fireplace is located on the western wall of the domicile.

Lighting. Unless otherwise specified, each house is completely dark, save for whatever light the characters bring with them.

Traps. After Krampus took each child, he stuck the caretakers of each child in an elaborate trap befitting the child's transgression. Each trap is unique and detailed below.

TRAPS GALORE

The following houses and their respective traps can be run in any order.

Present Trap (Carvel Home). In the center of Charlotte Carvel's house is a 10 foot cube box wrapped in green paper and a red ribbon bow to resemble a large present. Inside the present are Charlotte's unconscious parents (two human **commoners**). Beneath the wrapping is a bomb that is rigged to explode. A character that uses their action and succeeds on a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check** detects the bomb. A character can then attempt to deactivate the bomb with a **DC 16 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check**. On a success, the bomb is rendered inactive, and the present can be opened safely. On a failure, the bomb triggers. If the present is unwrapped or moved without deactivating the bomb, it automatically triggers. If the bomb triggers, it causes an explosion. Each creature within 20 feet of the bomb must make a **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw**. On a failure, a creature takes 28 (8d6) fire damage. On a success, it takes half that damage. Being inside the box provides no cover from this explosion, which means if the bomb triggers, Charlotte's parents are likely dead.

Nutcracker Trap (Nahas Home). When the characters enter the home of Nakia Nahas, they are greeted with a very strange sight. A large cage with Nakia's unconscious mother (tiefling **commoner**) is in the middle of the room. Surrounding the cage are **six zombies**, dressed in brightly colored uniforms resembling nutcrackers. As soon as any of the characters enter the room, the closest zombie will dance towards the character who entered first. The nutcracker zombie will pirouette and then

bow gracefully to the closest character, holding up its decaying hand to silently ask for a dance. If a character attempts to dance with the zombie, they may make a **DC 14 Charisma (Performance) check**. On a success, the zombies open the cage and allow the characters to rescue Nakia's mother. On a failure, the zombie will refuse to continue dancing with that character, but a different character can also attempt the check. If combat breaks out, the zombies focus on defending the cage. Each time a zombie dies, a **swarm of rats** bursts out of the chest cavity of the fallen zombie. The rats then move through the bars of the cage and attempt to devour Nakia's mother.

Ornament Trap (Wasanthi Home). When the adventurers arrive at Wyr Wasanthi's house, they see that the floor of the house is covered wall-to-wall with festive glass ornaments. Wyr's fathers (two elven **commoners**) are at the back of the room and they do not recognize the ornaments nor do they know how they got into their house. They are afraid to touch the ornaments and have not moved since they awoke in the night. A character with a Passive Perception of 13 or higher notices a pathway through the house that would allow Wyr's fathers to step around the ornaments and make their way to the entrance of the house without touching anything. However, the ornaments are actually an illusion created by the spell *mirage arcane*. This illusion also completely disguises a *wall of thorns* spell that bisects the house. The "safe" passage actually leads right through the center of the wall of thorns. The *mirage arcane* can be dispelled (DC 17) as can the *wall of thorns* (DC 16). Wyr's fathers could also just climb out one of the back windows.

Bear Trap (Bofdann Home). When the adventurers enter this home, they see Bardryn Bofdann's mother (female dwarven **commoner**) trapped underneath a sleeping **polar bear**. If the polar bear awakens, it immediately attacks Bardryn's mother. Each time a character takes an action inside the home while attempting not to wake the polar bear, that character must succeed on a **DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check** or else they wake the bear. If a character would like to slip Bardryn's mother out from underneath the bear, they must succeed on a **DC 20 Strength (Sleight of Hand) check** or else wake the bear.

Pie Trap (Goodearth Home). In the center of Gynnie Goodearth's home is an enormous pie, 15 feet in diameter and a foot deep. There is nothing else of note in the room as all four of Gynnie's relatives (halfling **commoners**) are unconscious but stable inside the pie. Upon inspecting the pie, it is immediately identifiable as a mince meat pie.

If a character reaches into the pie, they are able to tell that it is even deeper than it appears to be from the outside, as the pie is actually a portal to an extradimensional space of pie fillings. A character can dive into the pie and search around inside the extraplanar pie filling. As the pie filling is opaque, this area is heavily obscured. To search it, they must physically swim through the pie filling and perform a **DC 14 Strength (Investigation) check**. On a success, the character is able to find one of Gynnie's four caretakers. On a failure, the character gains one level of exhaustion.

REWARDS

Award the 300 xp per player for each family that the party manages to successfully rescue. Only award this experience if they manage to rescue ALL family members.

SCENE B. STREETS OF KINDERVILLE

While the party was busy investigating the houses of the stolen children, the minions of Krampus have marched onto the town. The characters can see a powerful glow of energy from the center of Kinderville. They can then choose to either fight their way through the streets, or sneak past the evil minions to get to the final confrontation.

You hear a faint sound that begins to grow. Is it singing, or is it chanting? Louder and louder it grows, eerie tones haunt you. This music, if it can be called that, is clearly demonic in origin.

Suddenly, you see a beacon of light radiate from the center of town. This pure, soothing light is obviously holy in nature. However, the abyssal carolers simply jeer and laugh. They begin to vandalize the town, tearing down and destroying every festive decoration they can find, singing their repulsive song every step of the way.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The walkways between houses are unpaved but snow has been shoveled out of the common roads and walkways. Everything else is covered in three feet of snow, making it difficult terrain.

Sounds. The minions of Krampus are chanting in Abyssal, filling the area with demonic, yet festive

music. They rattle chains and break decorations to the beat of their horrific songs.

Temperature. The temperature has dropped well below freezing.

Lighting. The minions of Krampus have snuffed out any torches or fires. Kinderville is completely dark except for a glowing beacon of light coming from the center of town. Snow has started falling, lightly obscuring the hamlet. As such, all Stealth checks are made at advantage.

CREATURES/NPCs

A patrol of three **SHADOW DANCERS** dressed in festive green and red dance in the streets. They recklessly destroy any decorations and sing in abyssal. If the party would like to simply sneak around the shadow dancers, a successful **Group DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check** is able to avoid detection from Krampus' minions.

Objectives/Goals. The shadow dancers desire to celebrate Krampus' reign and to pervert any symbols of the Midwinter holiday. If they spot the characters or any villagers, the shadow dancers will toy with them, torturing them before killing them. They do not take combat seriously unless a character demonstrates that they are a substantial threat.

What Do They Know? The shadow dancers' songs reveal that Krampus is planning on destroying Selûne's shrine and to steal away all the children of Kinderville.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **SHADOW DANCER**. Reduce the remaining **SHADOW DANCERS'** health to 39 hp.
- **Weak:** Remove one **SHADOW DANCER**.
- **Strong:** Add one **SHADOW DANCER**.
- **Very Strong:** Remove one **SHADOW DANCER**. Add one **GLOOM WEAVER**.

TREASURE

If the characters defeat Krampus' minions, they can find the following treasure on them:

The chains the shadow dancers use as weapons are made of silver and are worth a total of 200 gp. Each link in these chains look like the twisted face of a screaming child.

Two *potions of superior healing*.

SCENE C. THE SHRINE OF SELÛNE

At the center of Kinderville, Krampus' plan is finally coming to fruition. The stolen children are being coerced to destroy the Shrine of Selûne and if they succeed, nothing will stop Krampus from unleashing its full wrath upon Kinderville. The adventurers must either rescue the children, or defeat Krampus in order to save the hamlet and save the Midwinter holiday.

The Shrine of Selûne is the source of the holy light you saw earlier. The statue of Selûne at the Shrine's center radiates calmness and serenity. However, the five children surrounding the statue are clearly distraught. They hold in their hands shovels, pick axes, clubs, and other tools. Tears stream down their faces as they use their implements to strike at the holy statue. Their blows are slowly chipping it away and with each attack, the light from Selûne dims a bit more.

Just as you approach the shrine, the snow swirls around you and out of nowhere, a terrifying figure appears. As large as a bear, with horns like a goat, this demonic creature looks at you all with glowing red eyes. It emanates hatred and bloodlust. This creature must be the one, the only, **KRAMPUS!**

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Buildings surround the town square, creating a 50-by-50 foot clearing. In the center of the town square is the Shrine of Selûne. The Shrine of Selûne is an open-air chapel with a 15-foot radius dome supported by six 20-foot tall columns. In the middle of the shrine is a 10-foot cube marble statue of Selûne.

Temperature. The temperature has dropped well below freezing.

Lighting. The Statue of Selûne radiates bright light for 50 feet and dim light for another 50 feet. This light suppresses all forms of magical darkness. At the end of each round, the radius of the bright and dim light are reduced by 5 feet.

CREATURES/NPCs

Standing between the characters and the Shrine of Selûne is **KRAMPUS** itself with a three-headed flail in one hand and a red, overstuffed sack in the other. Flying 60 feet above the ground are four **BIPEDAL REINDEER**. Inside the Shrine are the five children that were taken by Krampus: Charlotte Carvel (female human **commoner**), Nakia Nahas (female tiefling **commoner**), Wyr Wasanthi (male elven **commoner**),

Bardryn Bofdann (male dwarf **commoner**), and Gynnie Goodearth (female halfling **commoner**). Each of them has shovels, picks, and other tools they are using to strike the statue of Selûne.

Objectives/Goals. Krampus cannot directly harm the Shrine of Selûne itself, so it has coerced the children it has kidnapped to destroy the Shrine. Krampus cannot be negotiated or reasoned with. It will do everything in its power to ensure its plan is brought to fruition and kill anyone or anything that gets in its way. All of the children are terrified of Krampus. They believe that by destroying the Shrine, Krampus might show them mercy and let them return home (Krampus has no intention of doing any such thing).

COMBAT

In order to successfully stop Krampus' machinations, the characters must do one of two things: either kill Krampus or convince all of the children to stop attacking the statue of Selûne. If the party is unable to meet either of these conditions within ten rounds of combat, then the statue of Selûne is destroyed and Krampus is victorious.

Shrine of Selûne. Neither the party nor Krampus nor any other creature can enter or teleport into the Shrine of Selûne during this combat. Any creature that attempts to do so feels rebuffed by an invisible barrier surrounding the Shrine. No spell nor magical effect can affect the children inside the Shrine of Selûne. Similarly, the Shrine is excluded from any spell or magical effect's area. Additionally, the children cannot be hit by any weapon attack nor suffer any damage whatsoever. The only way to stop the children from attacking the statue is by talking with them and attempting to convince them to stop their actions.

Convincing the Children. A character can attempt to convince a child to stop attacking the statue by using their action to speak to one specific child. On a successful **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** the child ceases attacking and simply curls up into a fetal position in the shrine. If the party rescued all of the specified child's caretakers, Selûne flashes into the mind of the child how the party rescued their family, granting the characters advantage on all Charisma checks in dealing with that child. If the party failed to rescue even one of the specified child's caretakers, then Krampus flashes into the mind of that child the horrible fate that befell their family, imposing disadvantage on all Charisma checks with that child. Each time a child is successfully convinced to stop

attacking the statue, a burst of light radiates from the statue and each adventurer receives 10 temporary hit points.

Tactics. Krampus focuses on characters that are trying to talk to the children. It uses its Teleport ability to escape any grapple or effect meant to hinder its movement, such as *wall of force*. Remember that Krampus wears a *Mantle of Spell Resistance* (see treasure) and as such has advantage on all saving throws against spells.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **BIPEDAL REINDEER**. Remove all of **KRAMPUS'** legendary actions.
- **Weak:** Remove two **BIPEDAL REINDEER**.
- **Strong:** Add two **BIPEDAL REINDEER**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **BIPEDAL REINDEER**. Increase **KRAMPUS'** health to 210 hp.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters are able to defeat Krampus or convince the children not to destroy the statue of Selûne, read the following:

The light from the Shrine of Selûne bursts forth and sears the very air with holy power. Krampus crumples defeated in the snow, shielding its eyes from the radiance. It lets out a horrific howl that shakes the town, a howl of pain and hate. The light overwhelms your senses and you have to close your eyes. When you reopen them, Krampus is gone. Where it last stood, only a blood-soaked cloak remains.

If the characters are unable to defeat Krampus and fail to stop the children from destroying the statue of Selûne, read the following:

The statue of Selûne cracks and then it shatters. The children all wail in recognition of the horrible deed they have done. Krampus lets out a guttural chortle in celebration of its unholy victory. Krampus then opens up its bag and darkness begins spilling out. This flood of darkness begins to cover all of Kinderville. The day is lost, the only thing you can do at this point is to run for your lives.

TREASURE

If the characters defeat Krampus or convince the children not to destroy the statue of Selûne, they can find the following treasure left by Krampus after it fled:

A mantle of spell resistance

Conclusion

If the party has succeeded and saved Midwinter, Great-Grandmother Anke honors her word and presents the party with a solid gold star that the town used to adorn the feast hall. All the villagers cheer for the party. Everyone joins hands and sings a heart-felt song in praise of the season and of Selûne.

If the characters failed to stop Krampus, the demon of Midwinter reigns supreme over the hamlet of Kinderville. All the villagers are taken by Krampus. The only thing the characters can do is flee for their own lives.

TREASURE

For successfully completing the adventure, Great-Grandmother Anke awards the party the following treasure:

A solid gold star worth 1000 gp.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Winter Wolf	300 xp
Frost Troll	3,900 xp
Yeti	300 xp
Abominable Yeti	5,000 xp
Zombie	50 xp
Swarm of Rats	50 xp
Polar Bear	450 xp
Shadow Dancer	2,900 xp
Gloom Weaver	5,000 xp
Bipedal Reindeer	200 xp
Krampus	5,900 xp

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Present Trap	300 xp
Nutcracker Trap	300 xp
Ornament Trap	300 xp
Bear Trap	300 xp
Pie Trap	300 xp

TREASURE

Characters receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item	Value
Diamond Dust	300 gp
Silver Chains	200 gp
Gold Star	1000 gp

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Mantle of Spell Resistance. *Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement)* You have advantage on saving throws against spells while you wear this cloak.

This cloak is blood-red with fluffy white trim. This cloak is warm enough to function as cold weather gear.

Curse. Any character that attunes to this mantle turns into a goat-humanoid hybrid over the course of 3 days. Tieflings are immune to this curse. Throughout the first day, shaggy fur begins to grow all over the cursed character's body. After 24 hours, the character's eyes become goat-like, and stumpy horns sprout from the brow. On the last day, the character's fingers and toes meld into double digits, and the horns grow to full length. This transformation doesn't prevent the character from wielding weapons or casting spells. *Remove curse, greater restoration*, or any other effect that ends a curse restores the character's original appearance, but only a *wish* spell can rid the mantle of its power to transform those who attune to it.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In central European folklore, Krampus is a half-goat, half-demon that is often portrayed as a companion of St. Nicholas. While the saint rewards children who have been good, Krampus punishes children who have been naughty.

AUTHOR BIO

David Harmon loves coffee, long walks on the beach, demons, bad movies, and, of course, Dungeons & Dragons. You can find his inane ramblings on Twitter at @dharmon202. He is a Community Content Creator for Adventurer's League; his adventures can be found on DMsGuild.

APPENDIX A: CREATURE STATISTICS

FROST TROLL

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138 (12d10 + 72)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	22 (+6)	5 (-3)	8 (-1)	4 (-3)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +3

Skills Perception +3

Damage Immunities cold

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Giant

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Frosty Degeneration. At the end of each of the troll's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it takes 11 (2d10) cold damage, unless the troll has taken acid or fire damage since the end of its last turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 16 (3d10) cold damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 5 (1d10) cold damage.

(Based on Rot Troll from MToF pg 244)

BIPEDAL REINDEER

Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Wis +2

Skills Perception +2

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Abyssal

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Rampage. When the reindeer reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the reindeer can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a bite attack.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The reindeer makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its shortsword.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

(Based on Gnoll Flesh Gnawer from VGtM pg 154)

KRAMPUS

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Wis +5

Skills Intimidate +5, Perception +3

Damage Resistance cold

Senses truesight 120ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Aura of Blood Thirst. If Krampus isn't incapacitated, any creature with the Rampage trait can make a bite attack as a bonus action while within 10 feet of Krampus.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Krampus fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Special Equipment. Krampus wears a *mantle of spell resistance*.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Krampus makes three flail attacks. If an attack hits, Krampus can cause it to create an additional effect of his choice or at random (each effect can only be used once per Multiattack):

- The attack deals an extra 22 (4d10) psychic damage.
- The target must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the target must make a melee attack against a random target within its reach on its next turn. If it has no targets within its reach even after moving, it loses its action on that turn.
- The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed until the end of its next turn.

Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Teleport. Krampus magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Krampus can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Krampus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Swat Away. Krampus makes a flail attack. If the attack hits, the target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be pushed 15 feet away in a straight line from Krampus. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target also falls prone.

Teleport. Krampus uses its Teleport action.

Savage (Costs 2 actions). Krampus makes a bite attack against each creature within 5 feet of it.

(Based on Flind from VGtM pg 153 and Yeenoghu from MToF pg 155)



2019

FLIGHT OF THE NUTCRACKER

NINE FAIRIES FLOCKING

Introduction: As Midwinter approaches, the adventuring party hears stories of a clique of fairies that perform a wondrous dance during the night of the solstice. The fairies inform the party that they seek worthy champions to help their friend, a female knight cursed into the form of a wooden nutcracker. They must journey into a realm within the Feywild to defeat the tyranny of the Wererat King and find her ward, the Prince of their homeland.

A 3-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 5TH - 9TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY JACKY LEUNG



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, Dungeon Master's Guide, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

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ADVENTURE PRIMER

This is, indeed, a place where magic happens...

—Amanda V. Shane, *Snow Maiden*

BACKGROUND

Midwinter approaches in the tranquil town of Three Streams. As the harvest season draws to a close, the townsfolk begin to gather behind the warm fireplaces of their homes as the winter winds blow through the valley. Despite the inclement weather, festive decorations adorn the town and the people appear to be in good spirits.

The holiday spectacle leaves the residents distracted enough to find things missing. This is a common occurrence caused by local faeries that reside in the adjacent forest. In the past, the misplaced objects were hidden and easily found again, but this year the items are simply stolen instead. The pranks have become a disturbance, which the town may pursue to reclaim the lost property.

Though unbeknownst to anyone, the small folk hope to draw the attention of worthy adventurers to aid an old friend in their quest. The solstice weakens the barrier between planes, granting access to a hidden realm lost to legends. Their friend, a former knight, was turned into a wooden nutcracker by a wicked **WERERAT KING** and claimed their ancient home. The **KNIGHT** must find her ward, the lost and imprisoned **PRINCE** of their realm. The longer the enchantment remains, the less the knight remembers, and the effects become permanent.

EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over **4 Episodes** that take approximately 4 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1: Town of Three Streams.** The party arrives at the village of Three Streams in time to celebrate the Midsummer festivities. Items and decorations have gone missing and the locals believe the resident faeries have stolen them.
- **Episode 2: Forest of Faeries.** In their investigation, the adventurers learn that the fey wanted to draw the attention of capable warriors to help their friend, a knight cursed into the form of a nutcracker. The faeries will help the party enter the knight's home realm in the Feywild so they can defeat the wererat king and liberate the town time forgot.
- **Episode 3: Land of Discarded Dreams.** Once in the Feywild, the adventurers need to traverse through a desolate town to reach the Wererat King's stronghold. Along the way, the group will face various minions of the Wererat King. If the party explores the town, they might find allies and use-

ful objects to help them in their fight ahead.

- **Episode 4: The Wererat King's Lair.** The party confronts the Wererat King in his lair and break the curse on the townsfolk. If they succeed, the party are hailed as heroes and are brought back to the Material Plane on the following morning.

STORY BEAT: TOWN CURSE

A number of years have passed for the Knight and the denizens of the Land of Discarded Dreams. As time passes, the Knight loses more of herself, becoming more like a wooden doll. There is a limited amount of time left for the Knight to break the curse before the effects become permanent. The effects accelerate once back in the Feywild, it takes approximately three hours to traverse through the town to the Wererat King's stronghold. If the party explores and recruits the aid of the toy-turned townsfolk, it will consume valuable time but improves the chances to storm the Wererat King's lair. Bypassing this facet grants a speedy infiltration but does not grant knowledge of the secrets behind the town curse, which still consumes the time available.

EPISODE 1: TOWN OF THREE

STREAMS

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

The nutcracker sits under the holiday tree, guardian of childhood stories. Feed him walnuts and he will crack open a tale.

— Vera Nazarian

The party arrives at the small village of Three Streams. It is near the midwinter solstice and the town is decorated for the upcoming festivities. The townsfolk greet the newcomers and invite them to visit the local tavern for a warm meal and lodgings.

SCENE A. TAVERN GAMES

The local tavern in Three Streams is a small two-story building with the main dining hall on the first level and the rooms are upstairs. The tavern is a 100-foot by 120-foot building. The dining hall at this time is crowded with patrons and travelers. There is a large hearth where the meats and stew sit to cook and stay hot. The second floor consists of six rooms for lodgings.

This section can be run in a free-form manner. Be mindful of your time but encourage everyone to interact with the games and environment.

As you open the large, wooden door, the aroma of roasted meats and stews greet you. The clamor of mugs and tankards meet the clashing choirs of cheers and conversations. A group of minstrels plays festive melodies near the hearth. In the opposite corner, you spot a group of children huddled near an elderly woman wrapped in old blankets and shawls. All enamored by some sort of wondrous tale. You also notice some of the townsfolk partaking in games.

Depending on where the player characters want to go, you can paraphrase the following information:

Eat and Drink. Upon taking a seat near one of the benches, a member of the wait staff will greet the player character and offer a helping of holiday venison stew accompanied by a mug of honey mead. The meal costs 1 sp, but if the party decided to acquire lodgings at the tavern for the night, it is included with their fees.

Card Game. In one of the corners, several townsfolk sit gathered around a round table playing a card game. They invite any newcomers to join, playing

up to a maximum 5 gp bet for each participant. A character who participates in the game can use Charisma (Deception), Insight (Wisdom), Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), or another appropriate skill:

DC 12: You employ a feint at the table, but ultimately someone got a better hand than you.

DC 14: You manage to keep your composure during play, letting you keep the amount of your ante.

DC 16: You pull a compelling feint at the table and walk away from the table with twice what you bet.

Old Nan. The elderly woman in the corner surrounded by children draws quite a crowd with her next tale: “The Prince and his Lady Knight.” If any of the characters choose to sit nearby and listen, read or summarize the following:

The elderly woman adjusts her shawl and her seat before she begins, “Let’s see, how did it start again?”

“Ah! Yes, here we go. Long ago in a land far, far away, there lived a Prince and his lovely kingdom nestled in a woodland forest, past the stream, and over a hill. He ruled with kindness and sincerity and was beloved by his subjects. Never far from him, his was lady knight. She was a fierce warrior, graceful, and bound by her duty to her Prince and their home.”

“Until one day,” she continued. “An evil wizard arrived in the kingdom and laid a powerful curse on its people. The lady knight tried her hardest to stop the wizard but was no match for the wizard’s foul magic. She was turned into a wooden doll, some say a nutcracker. The kingdom and the Prince were lost.”

“What about the lady knight?” Asked one of the little girls in the circle.

“They say she was never found, that her doll roams the valleys and mountains here to find worthy champions to help free her people from the vile wizard,” she replied.

“I want to save the lady knight!” Exclaimed one of the other girls in the group which was followed by a crescendo from the rest of the children as a chant.

Once the adventurers have a few moments to interact with the townsfolk in the tavern, their meals will be ready for them at the long bench tables.

SCENE B. MISSING OBJECTS

As the characters settle in with their warm meals, they can hear the occasional commotion from the staff and patrons in the tavern. At a passive Perception 12, the adventurers overhear that some of the decorations were missing since this afternoon, specifically a prized toy soldier ornament that rested on the hearth. At a passive Perception above 12, the adventures overhear one of the farmers mention missing equipment and their harvest bounty.

The party can interact to learn more about the mysterious missing objects across town.

Charisma (Persuasion) DC 12. Every Midwinter, various objects in the village disappear for the length of the festivities. Usually, most of the items are found the next morning.

Charisma (Persuasion) DC 14. The various objects that are missing are actually misplaced, as if a part of an elaborate prank. Its purpose remains unclear to you.

Intelligence (Nature) DC 14. The nature of these missing objects seem attributable to common behavior for mischievous fey spirits. It's possible the fey are performing some ritualistic prank on the villagers.

Intelligence (Arcana) DC 14. The consistency and oddity of these occurrences cannot be natural in origin. You suspect some sort of illusion magic might be at play.

Intelligence (History) DC 12. The town of Three Streams is a small hamlet nestled in the valley where three streams cross, hence the name. The Midwinter festivities have been active for years, though most do not recall exactly when or why they started.

Intelligence (History) DC 14. Nearly seventy years ago, several of the children in Three Streams went missing but were found the next morning near a frozen lake. Allegedly, the children were drawn to the lake late at night, but none of them suffered ill effects from the frigid night.

Intelligence (History) DC 16. The town of Three Streams seems unremarkable, yet there was once a vibrant druidic order nearby that seemed to have vanished centuries prior. The druids tapped into the natural energies of the region, befriended the local fey spirits, and safeguarded it against invaders.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

This section is essentially a series of role-playing moments with some dice rolling. It is encouraged to make this section inviting and welcoming, especially if the adventurers are simply passing through the town of Three Streams and seek shelter for the night as part of a longer journey. Plus, it's the holidays.

If you have a combat-focused group, you may shorten this portion, but it's encouraged that they at least hear Old Nan's story to the children before proceeding to the quandary of the missing objects in town. You will also wish to adjust the portions in the next section as well.

For more helpful or curious groups, you are empowered to give more characteristics to the townspeople, as well as expand on the existing history of Three Streams. It may even be encouraged that a laundry list of missing objects be available in preparation for the next section.

The party can interact to learn more about the mysterious missing objects across town.

TREASURE

If any of the player characters partake in the card game, depending on your results, the character can be rewarded either 0 gp, an amount of gold equal to their initial bet, or up to twice their initial bet based on your skill checks.

DEVELOPMENTS

As the night progresses and revelry begins to quiet down, one of the residents approaches the party inquiring if they would be interested in locating their missing objects for 50 gp finder's fee. Alternatively, an object of relative importance from the characters goes missing. Finally, a would-be scholar approaches the party to investigate the nearby frozen lake for odd occurrences. The scholar will reward the party 100 gp for any information they discover.

EPISODE 2: FOREST OF FAERIES

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Why do fairies let bad things happen to good people?— Heather Dixon Wallowrk, the Enchanted Sonata

As midnight approaches, regardless of how they get persuaded to help the townsfolk to find their missing items, a full moon arches high in the clear night sky.

The weather has become calm, the snow freshly fallen, and the winds from before have become eerily still. The forest near Three Streams is only a short walk away from the village limits. A mix of needle pines and leafless oaks create an otherworldly charm. Read or paraphrase:

Once past the crooked oak trunks with their leafless branches clawing towards the night sky and the snow-smothered pines, only the glow from the full moon lights the winding gaps and pathways.

Amidst the silence, the gentle pluck of laughter perks your ears, guiding you through the snowy patches and frozen creeks. A bottle can be seen jutting out from the snow patch. Several steps away, you spot a hammer resting on a tree trunk. You notice a developing trail of trinkets and lost equipment, but as you approach some of the objects spring to life and begin to assault you.

SCENE A. COMBAT ENCOUNTER

There are at least 12 animated objects. While they're not life threatening, they can hurt as much as a **flying sword**.

Once the objects are reduced to 5 or fewer hit points, they immediately collapse to the ground, no longer animated by magic. Damaging or destroying the objects may lead to several disappointed and upset villagers later.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

While the combat in this section is light. If your players are more roleplay-focused, considering using one or two of the following suggestions:

- Characters can attempt to restrain the objects, requiring a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. The objects will attempt to escape each round unless a dispel magic or remove curse is cast on them.
- Alternatively, if your players are more combat-focused, any creature that misses an object with a melee weapon attack, the object can use a reaction to make a melee weapon attack roll against that creature.

SCENE B. A KNIGHT'S PLIGHT

Whether the party decides to return the missing items back to the villagers or attempt to secure them, the player characters will notice more trinkets that lead to a frozen lake where they discover a group of pixies are responsible for the disappearing equipment. If you had an item from one of the character's possessions stolen, it can be found here by the edge of the lake. Read or paraphrase the following:

You continue to follow the trail of trinkets and odd equipment lead to a frozen lake. The tranquil scenery is lit by small orbs of light that skip along the edge, surrounding a pile of missing items.

One of the orbs approaches you and you hear a tiny voice emanate from it. "You came! You came! Please kind travelers, will you help a fellow warrior in need?"

If the characters squint their eyes to assess the source of the voices from the orbs of light, they will be surrounded by over a dozen pixies.

If the characters address the pixies, they will share the following information openly:

The pixies will admit to stealing and misplacing the equipment, tools, and decorations from the villagers.

The pixies stole the items to find worthy companions to help their friend, a knight named Marie.

Marie was a former knight of a kingdom from a far away land, invaded and ruled by a cruel tyrant.

Marie's personality is quickly fading, and they wish to honor her deepest wish.

Any other information might require additional coaxing, but if the characters assert a desire to help, the pixies will present the characters to Marie, levitating a small wooden doll in the shape of a female knight.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

A once proud and noble eladrin knight, Marie was defeated by the Wererat King years ago. She was cursed into the form of a wooden doll. As the years passed, more of her spirit began to fade. With the last of her will, she escaped to the Material Plane with the help of the pixies. Alone and without any other allies, the knight plotted her triumphant return to her homeland in the Feywild. She would rescue her ward, the Prince, and defeat the Wererat King. Marie is intelligent, steadfast, and determined.

Quote: *“The safety of my Prince and my homeland is of utmost priority. I will settle the score with the wererat soon.”*

After the characters have had a moment to engage Marie in discussion, the wooden knight’s memories have become fractured from the many years under the curse. Long conversations tire her spirit. Marie as a doll is able to telepathically communicate with creatures within a 10-foot radius of her. Allow the characters to engage in some roleplaying or Charisma-based skill checks. Marie can communicate the following points:

Marie was an eladrin knight for a kind Prince.

She was transformed into a wooden doll by a powerful curse from the Wererat King.

She does not know where the Prince is hidden but wishes to rescue him.

The Wererat King is a formidable foe with knowledge of the arcane arts and is accompanied by his wererat soldiers.

The nature of the curse causes those transformed to eventually become ordinary objects eventually.

Decades have passed for Marie and the pixies since their escape.

The Wererat King is most likely fortified in the stronghold of their former kingdom. Before going there, the party would need to traverse through the town to reach it.

The pixies can create a portal to the Feywild, where the kingdom is located, but Marie is uncertain where they will arrive once they pass through it.

Marie’s spirit is slowly fading and can only provide a limited amount of answers. She can answer up to one question per character present. Any further inquiries will result in uncertain answers riddled with doubt.

DEVELOPMENT

This section is primarily roleplay-focused, even considering the encounter with the animated objects assaulting the characters. If the characters attack the pixies, they will yield after half of them are defeated. They will consider the group sufficiently powerful enough to lay waste to the wererat king, but Marie will have an unfriendly disposition with the characters for their unnecessary show of force.

Additionally, the characters may persuade the pixies to return the missing items in agreement for complying with their request to aid Marie. If the characters destroyed any of the objects during their encounter, they may find some unhappy villagers afterward and the finder’s fee is reduced to only 25 gp.

If the party agrees to help Marie, the pixies inform them that the characters’ participation is essential to open the portal to Marie’s homeland in the Feywild.

Proceed to Episode 3.

EPISODE 3: THE LAND OF DISCARDED DREAMS

Estimated Duration: 60 - 90 minutes
This is all like a dream come true. The Land of the Dolls is so beautiful and everyone's so kind. I've known some of you all of my life. And to think we could all be together forever.

— Clara, *The Nutcracker Prince*

In order to reach the Feywild kingdom, the pixies volunteer to use their magic to assist in creating a portal to the realm. Due to the chaotic nature of the Feywild, the location is never direct and is susceptible to external influences. They will request the assistance of the party to help prepare the ritual and help attune with Marie to bring her home.

SCENE A. WALTZ OF THE CELESTAS

Dimensional travel can be a tricky and dangerous endeavor, but the pixies are confident in their abilities. The pixies will ask that the characters walk onto the frozen lake and form a circle. When the group is ready to start the dance and skills challenge, read or paraphrase:

At the center of the lake, you stand in a circle with the wooden form of Marie in hand. The pixies arrange themselves equidistant to each other. The gentle chimes of a song begins to play. Their bright glowing bodies bob and weave in intricate patterns, an arcane circle forms beneath your feet and icy vines stretch around you to form a dome.

SKILLS CHALLENGE

Use these guidelines for running your skills challenge:

Difficulty Class. The base DC for skill checks is set to moderate difficulty (**DC 15**). Characters with affinity to nature energies (such as druids, rangers, and Oath of the Ancients paladins) have advantage on their checks.

Objective. Assist the pixies in their ritual (which is a dance) to help direct the arcane energies for the portal to transport the party (including Marie) to the Feywild.

Making Ability Checks On their turn, a character can make one ability check using any ability score and skill proficiency they like, as long as they can explain how this check could reasonably help the

pixies prepare for the ritual, attune the group to the wild chaotic energies of the Feywild, or magically empower the dance. For each failed check, you can add a hard or deadly encounter using the Toy Town encounter table.

Outcomes. If the party accumulates a total number of failures equal to the number of characters in the party over the course of the skills challenge, they will appear in a dangerous portion of the Forgotten Woods.

If the party instead earn a number of successes equal to the number of player characters, they will appear in the Town of Broken Toys.

RUNNING A SKILL CHALLENGE

In this encounter, the player characters help the pixies enact the magic necessary to create a portal to Marie's Kingdom in the Feywild. The chaotic nature of the Feywild impresses itself on the emotional status of its travelers. During the course of the skills challenge, the characters can ask Marie to help give them imagery for the town and the surrounding scenery. The imagery should be pleasant and reminiscent of a time prior to the Wererat King invading.

If the player characters fail in this challenge, their thoughts are not grounded enough to assist in the teleportation magic, and they arrive off course in the Forgotten Woods. If the players succeed in the challenge, they manage to mentally attune to the images provided by Marie and arrive in a twisted variation of her beloved home.

SCENE B. THE FORGOTTEN WOODS OF REGRETS

This woodland area was once a lush and vibrant forest, but the Wererat King's curse has infiltrated and corrupted the roots of the trees and soil. When the party arrives in this location, the sky is covered by dark clouds. The characters will realize they did not arrive to their intended destination and will need to traverse through this region to reach town.

The characters can make an individual or group Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 15) to navigate into town. On a failure, the characters go the wrong direction and become noticed by monsters. You can create an encounter using the Forgotten Woods table below.

After the party accumulates three success, proceed to the Town of Broken Toys. If the characters sustained any damage or injuries, they can find a

secure location for a short rest prior to entering into town.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTERS

Here are some suggestions for random encounters:

- **Very Weak:** Use only the top three encounters.
- **Weak:** Instead of 1 **Wererat** per character, use 1 **Wererat** for every two characters.
- **Strong:** Replace **Shambling Mound & Green Hag** with **Green Hag (Coven variant)**, replace **Ogre Zombies** with **Wight** per character.
- **Very Strong:** Add 1d4 **Giant Spider** to **Ettercap** encounter. For **Werewolf** encounter, replace with 1 **Werewolf** per character instead. Replace **Shambling Mound** and **Green Hag** with **Young Green Dragon**. For **Oni** encounter, add 2-3 **Poltergeist**.

FORGOTTEN WOODS ENCOUNTERS

D6	Encounter
1	1 Ettercap per character
2	1 Werewolf plus 1 Dire Wolf per character
3	1 Shambling Mound plus 1 Green Hag
4	1 Oni
5	1 Wight and 2 Ogre Zombie
6	1 Wererat per character

SCENE C. THE TOWN OF BROKEN TOYS

Read or paraphrase:

The cold mist subsides to reveal a twisted landscape. You stand in what resembles a town square, the buildings seem crooked and uneven, the sky is covered by dark clouds, and the smell of rot hangs heavy in the air. The streets and avenues are empty, the windows for the shops and homes are dark and dirty, and all the plants seem withered or dead.

Further ahead on the main boulevard, a tall stone keep rests on top of a cliff face along the jagged mountain range. The lower half of the moon peeks through the clouds like an ornament and looms behind the ominous stronghold.

“There,” Marie starts, “the Wererat King rules from the former keep where our Prince resided. We must unseat the usurper and break this curse.”

Navigating through the dilapidated town is quite treacherous. Marie will inform the party that the Wererat King’s minions wander the streets, and that if the Wererat King is aware of their presence, they will fortify the stronghold ahead. The party can use

the buildings as cover to avoid the patrols, but there is always the chance of discovery and confrontation.

It takes roughly 6 hours to carefully sneak through the town to reach the winding path leading to the stronghold on the cliff. If the characters decide to follow this stealth path, use the following information to craft your encounters:

Have the characters make a group ability check every hour that passes.

A **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth)** check or another appropriate check will be necessary to avoid any impending patrols.

Have an occasional patrol narrowly pass by if the party succeeds on the check.

On a failed check, the party stumbles on one of the patrols. Create a hard encounter using the Toy Town Encounters table below.

Any stragglers or survivors that escape will alert the Wererat King to your presence, causing the stronghold to strengthen their fortifications. This will cause future encounters to become hard or deadly in the Mousetrap Castle section.

Depending on involved the characters are in the stealth/roleplaying portion of this section, allow them to explore the town, discovering the history of the town and the curse placed on it. Whenever the party succeeds on a check, they can enter a building to obtain valuable information about the town, the Wererat King, the curse, and possibly about the stronghold.

A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana)** or **Intelligence (History)** check while rummaging through the various snippets of books, scrolls, and murals grants the characters any of the following information:

The townspeople consisted of peaceful autumn eladrin, gnomes, and pixies. The curse turned everyone into toys.

The Wererat King is a charismatic but cowardly leader of his army of wererat soldiers.

Some of the toys have become corrupted by the influence of the foul magic.

As time passes, the personality and soul of the cursed citizens fade until they’re just toys.

The Wererat King bested the Prince in single combat and cursed him into the form of a nutcracker.

The Wererat King focused the curse on an item to keep its effect permanent.

An ancient blade called Moonsbane is locked away underneath the stronghold. The Wererat King sealed it away out of fear.

The curse can be alleviated for a short time but requires a special ritual to temporarily reverse it.

A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check can be made by the characters to learn more about the nature of the curse and how to temporarily reverse its effects for several hours. A spellcasting character can perform the ritual as follows:

The ritual has a 1-hour casting time.

The character must have access to any of the following spells available; *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, *greater restoration*, or *dispel evil and good*.

Marie can be used as an arcane focus for this ritual.

Once the ritual is completed, Marie will be restored to her original form, wielding weapons and armor. She will be extremely thankful and friendly to the party, promising to provide aid when the group heads to the castle.

Marie may also inform the party that they could restore some of the toy-turned townspeople back to normal. The townsfolk are treated as eladrin commoners. The characters can ask the citizens to help cause a distraction for the wererats stationed in the town. Alternatively, the characters may suggest that the restored townsfolk help assault the stronghold as a distraction. Reward the players with additional information of a secret passage beneath the cliff top that can be used to infiltrate the stronghold.

Alternatively, the player characters can rush through town and head straight to the Wererat King's stronghold. Create and arrange at least three medium encounters using the Toy Town Encounters table below. The player characters can take a short rest after they exit the town. Once the party reaches the stronghold, they will find wererats with bows drawn and ready to strike the characters.

TOY TOWN ENCOUNTERS

D6 Encounter

1	A Swarm of Cranium Rats
2	1d4 + 1 Wererat Assailants
3	1d2 Wererat Brute and 2d3 Wererats
4	1d6 + 1 Rogue Pentadrones
5	2d4 + 2 Wererats
6	1d2 Wererat Brutes and 2d4 Wererat Assailants

WERERAT KING'S CURSE

If you wish to apply additional pressure on the characters, you can have the curse start to affect them as well. Each hour, the characters must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, the character suffers no ill effects. On a failed save, a part of their body begins to turn into a wooden doll. They gain vulnerability to fire damage for the duration. The character can repeat the saving throw in an hour. If the character successfully saves against this effect three times, they are no longer affected by it. If the character fails their saves three times, they are turned into wood and shrink to tiny size. The successes and failures do not need to be consecutive; keep track of both until the character collects three of a kind.

While transfigured, if the character is physically broken while wooden, it suffers from similar deformities when reverted to their original form.

Casting a *remove curse*, *greater restoration*, or *dispel evil and good* on a character adds one success to their track.

DEVELOPMENTS

This section has a mix of combat, roleplaying, and exploration. The bulk of your gameplay will be centered here. Do not be afraid to grant the players some time to assess and calculate their next action.

If the characters are informed about Moonsbane and wish to retrieve it, proceed to the next section under Obtain the Moonlight Blade.

If the characters learn about the secret passage underneath the stronghold, proceed to the next section under Prowl and Pounce.

If the characters decide to assault the castle, proceed to the next section under Storming Mousetrap Castle.

• **Special Rewards.** Marie is restored to her eladrin form and acts as an ally to the party.

EPISODE 4: THE WERERAT KING'S

LAIR

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

*Strike the battle march, loyal vassal drummer!—
E.T.A. Hoffman, the Nutcracker and the Mouse King*

Whether the adventuring party decide to assault or infiltrate the Wererat King's fortress, there are a plethora of hidden dangers.

Read or paraphrase:

An ominous air hangs around you as you approach the jagged fortress ahead. The portcullises are down, blocking the main gate from entry, the moon peeks through the dark clouds, casting its strange yellow glow. The stronghold looms over the town and the mountains cast an imposing shadow over everything. The daunting silence masks the sinister plots of the enemies you have confronted in your expedition. Caution directs your eyes toward your surroundings, hoping to catch the movement of shadow.

SCENE A. STORMING MOUSETRAP CASTLE

If the characters decided to storm up to the stronghold from town, they will find that the wererats have developed sophisticated fortifications on the stone walls, the portcullis, and within the halls of the castle.

A successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check can open the portcullis at the main gate. Doing so will alert various denizens and guards of the party's approach. A group of 1d4+1 **wererats** and 1d4 **wererat brutes** will confront any intruders by the gate. They will wait for any characters to pass the threshold first to launch a coordinated strike.

Once combat ends and the characters pass through the gate threshold, they will arrive in the courtyard. Read or paraphrase:

The castle courtyard seems uncomfortably deserted even with the commotion of your previous confrontation. A small keep sits in the center, roughly three stories tall with large wooden double doors at its entrance. You also notice a set of stairs not far from the keep, leading downward.

"The keep is where the vile vermin king sits!" Marie exclaims.

When the party enters the keep, read or paraphrase:

Inside the keep, the stone tower remains unusually quiet, as if time has stopped. Cobwebs and dust litter the walls and floors. Furniture and objects have seemingly been left unattended for years. Opposite of the door, you spot a golden box sitting on top of a pedestal near the center. Further away, you see the stairwell leading up to your quarry.

The keep consists of three levels. On the first level, the characters will see a golden music box sitting on a pedestal at the center. The music box is worth 2000 gp. Once the party walks up the stairs, proceed to the Doll Room.

CLOCKWORK MENACE

Complex trap (level 5-10, dangerous threat)

Trigger. The trap activates when the golden box is picked up. The box begins to play a melody and large golden arms erupt from the four corners of the room.

Initiative. The trap acts on initiative count 20 and 10.

Active Elements. Each arm has a reach of 30 feet and tries to grab and place their targets back into restraints on the walls.

Clockwork Claws (Initiative 20). The arms attack each creature within reach with a +6 bonus to attack rolls. On a hit, the creature takes 11 (2d10) piercing damage and is grappled.

Golden Restraints (Initiative 10). Each creature grappled by a Clockwork Claw is immediately restrained. If a creature is within 10 feet of the walls, they must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained. In addition, each creature that is restrained takes 11 (2d10) lightning damage. A creature can escape the restraints by making a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity saving throw as an action on their turn. The restraints prevent magical teleportation.

Countermeasures. The trap can be neutralized by either stopping the music box from playing or disabling the claws.

Stopping the Music Box. Dismantling the music box will stop the clockwork mechanisms of the room. A successful DC 17 Dexterity check using a tinker's

kit, smith's tools, or thieves' tools will open the box. A DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) will determine mechanism to stop the music. Alternatively, casting a silence spell will also work. Each check requires an action unless otherwise stated.

Disabling the Claws. The clockwork claws can be broken by brute force. Reducing the claws to 0 hit points (AC 17, 20 hp; resistance to all damage, immune to poison and psychic damage) will deactivate them for one round. If at least one claw is still functional by the end of the turn, one of the arms repairs itself up to half its hit points. All four claws must be at 0 hit points at the end of the turn to deactivate the trap.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

This section has more combat-focused encounters, including the Clockwork Menace trap. For more roleplay-focused characters, they will wish to traverse over the walls of the stronghold, which requires a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) to climb it. Going this route grants the characters a chance to catch the wererats and wererat brutes by surprise.

SCENE B. OBTAIN THE MOONLIGHT BLADE

Underneath the stronghold, between the town and the winding path up to the cliffs, a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check will reveal the hidden entrance to the chamber where the Moonsbane weapon rests. After passing through a winding tunnel, the characters will find a dark chamber that is 20 feet tall and 30 feet long on each side. A tiny beam of pale blue light shines from the top of the chamber onto the center of the floor.

If a character investigates the section of the floor lit by the blue light, they will see an inscription which reads:

“Always old, sometimes new. Never empty, sometimes full. Never pushes, always pulls.”

The riddle is encapsulated in the image of a crescent moon. The first line of the riddle references the Moonsbane. The second line references the different moon phases, and the last line refers to a hidden mechanism that requires someone to pull a secret lever located in the room. The light shining on the moon icon creates a “full” moon, but the lever only appears on a “new” moon.

In order to find the lever, the area illuminated by the light must be covered. Afterwards, a lever emerges

from the ceiling of the chamber. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check is enough to reach the lever and pull it.

Once the lever is pulled, a secret panel is opened and reveals the Moonsbane, an enchanted silvered longsword. If the party chooses to assault the stronghold when exiting the chamber, proceed to Storming Mousetrap Castle. If the characters learned of the secret passage to sneak into the keep and wish to use it, proceed to Prowl and Pounce.

TREASURE & REWARDS

The **Moonsbane** is magical silvered longsword that will require attunement to gain its benefits. The party can take a short rest at this point if they wish to attune to it. It will certainly be a powerful weapon against all the lycanthrope enemies you encounter!

SCENE C. PROWL AND POUNCE

An abandoned tunnel not far from the base of the cliff may provide a route to infiltrate the stronghold above. The tunnel is 20 feet wide and 120 feet long and riddled with debris, causing the area to be considered difficult terrain.

Three successful DC 17 Strength (Athletics) Dexterity (Acrobatics), or Wisdom (Survival) group or individual checks will provide the optimal path to cross the wreckage. For each failed check, each creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage.

At the end of the tunnel, there are arcane runes placed into the shape of a circle. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check will reveal that the runes form a teleportation circle that most likely leads to the keep and that command word is inscribed on the circle.

Once the party uses the teleportation circle, proceed to the Doll Room.

SCENE D. THE DOLL ROOM

Read or paraphrase the following:

You enter into a room that smells of wood varnish, dust, and mold. It is dark and only streaks of light manage to pierce through the dirt stained windows. You spot a table near the window, and as you approach, you discover an array of nutcracker figurines all lined up. Each figure has unique garb and poses.

“The Prince must be one of these,” Marie states. “We need to find the Prince and make sure he is still safe.”

Under the curse, the Prince has been turned into a nutcracker figure. Unfortunately, there are 88 other figurines on the table. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check will allow a character to realize that all of the nutcrackers are cursed creatures by the Wererat King.

Depending on the characters’ roleplaying involvement, Marie will want to find and secure the Prince’s safety. If the party has learned of the arcane ritual to temporarily reverse the curse, they may attempt it on the Prince. But they have to find him first.

A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check will have a character notice one of the nutcrackers has scratch marks on it but is undamaged. This is the Prince! If the party performs the arcane ritual, the Prince will be restored and reunite with Marie. Marie will want to keep the Prince out of the confrontation with the Wererat King if possible. If the characters insist that they help them in the fight ahead, the Prince will give them ***Knight’s Reprieve***, a magical spear to use for the duration of this adventure.

Once the party is ready, proceed to Requiem of the Wererat King.

TREASURE & REWARDS

The characters have a chance to acquire ***Knight’s Reprieve***, a magical longsword that will draw the ire of the Wererat King in the encounter ahead.

SCENE E. REQUIEM OF THE WERERAT KING

Read or paraphrase the following:

You enter through the double doors into an ornate but dark chamber. The walls are gilded with gold, majestic tapestries hang on the walls, and ahead you spot a golden throne. There, the Wererat King sits, longing to add you to his ever-growing collection of nutcrackers and twisted toys.

“There’s the foul usurper! For the realm!” Marie exclaims.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The throne room is 60 feet long on each side, the walls are 15 feet tall, but the central point of the ceiling is 40 feet tall. The throne sits 50 feet from the doorway.

Senses. The room smells of rot and decay that has been left to sit for years.

Other Features. There are cloth tapestries that are 20 feet wide hanging on all four walls of the room. In addition, there are bones of various small animals scattered along the floor. The throne is tall enough to provide cover.

Lighting. The room is dark, with no visible light.

The **Wererat King** is a powerful adversary with its own set of tactics and strategies presented further in this section. In addition, the Wererat King has taken years to develop the former Prince’s throne room into its own lair. This kingdom has become the seat of the Wererat King’s influence within the Feywild.

The Wererat King encountered in his lair has a challenge rating of 11 (7,200 XP).

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the wererat king can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; the wererat king can’t use the same effect two rounds in a row:

The wererat king uses its influence to call rats to his aid. A **swarm of rats** appears and attacks one creature that the wererat king can see within 60 feet of it. The swarm of diseased rats remain until the next lair action or until killed, after which they disappear.

The wererat king springs one of the main traps hidden within the throne room. Each creature must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 14 (4d6) damage of a type of the wererat king’s choosing: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage.

A mist of deadly poison emits from the center of the dome down to the throne room. Each creature must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 13 (3d8) poison damage and is blinded until the next lair action. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn’t blinded. The Wererat King regains hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

WERERAT KING TACTICS

The Wererat King employs the following tactics:

Use Magic First. The Wererat King is a powerful wizard and will use powerful damage spells to test the resilience of its foes. Afterwards, it will use spells to impede martial characters and take out any spellcasters with targeted spells.

Out of Reach. The Wererat King can cast *invisibility* on itself and climb up the ceiling - out of reach of the martial fighters.

Summon Rats. Whenever the Wererat King uses the lair action to summon **swarms of diseased rats**, it will try to make a melee attack with its infected dagger and bite attacks.

Moonsbane & Knight's Reprieve. The Wererat King has a deep animosity for each of these magical weapons. If any of the characters are wielding either one or both of these magical swords, the Wererat King will focus on eliminating the character holding them. In addition, the Wererat King has disadvantage on its saving throws against the effects of the weapons.

Once the Wererat King is vanquished, the characters need to find the source of the curse, and soon. Upon searching its belongings, the characters

will find a crystal orb with floating snowflakes inside. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check will determine the object is the source and catalyst for the curse on the realm.

The orb can be destroyed by using either *Moonsbane* or *Knight's Reprieve* to reduce it to 0 hit points (AC 18, 5 hp, resistance to all damage). Alternatively, casting *moonbeam* or *dispel magic* will also cause the orb to come inert.

Once the curse is broken, the characters are thanked by the Prince, Marie, and the townspeople. They are eternally immortalized in the history books, tapestries, and stories of the little kingdom. As a final obligation, the Prince and several others help send the adventurers back to the Material Plane. Read or paraphrase:

The Prince and townspeople encircle you and in unison begin to sing and dance. There is a familiar joy and triumphant sound, the once twisted trees and vines are vibrant and green again. The leaves are shades of red, orange, and yellow; swirling into a flurry until your vision is only the leaves.

When you open your eyes again, you are greeted by the sun as it peeks past the mountaintop. The distant sound of songbirds, the sudden chill of winter, and the snowy ground surprises you. You spot the frozen lake where your journey began. When you return back to the village of Three Streams, it is the next morning and the decorations are restored to their proper places and the people greet you with warm smiles. Was it all a dream?

DEVELOPMENT

Once the Wererat King is dispatched and the curse has been lifted, the denizens of the kingdom return to their original forms. Any townsfolk temporarily restored by the ritual suffer no ill effects. The characters will be returned back to the Material Plane. Any character without the Fey Ancestry trait must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the character does not remember their experiences with Marie, the Prince, or the Wererat King and believes it was all a dream. On a successful save, the character vividly remembers the events of their adventure.

TREASURE & REWARDS

The characters at the end of this encounter will be given the option to keep *Moonsbane* and *Knight's Reprieve* if they are in the party's possession. Additionally, if the Wererat King's orb is inert, it is worth 2500 gp. The Prince will award the characters 1000 gp each for their valor and heroism.



ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Flying Objects	50
Ettincap	450
Werewolf	700
Dire Wolf	200
Green Hag	700
Shambling Mound	1,800
Oni	2,900
Wight	700
Ogre Zombie	450
Wererat	450
Wererat Assailant	700
Wererat Brute	1,100
Swarm of Cranium Rats	1,800
Rogue Pentadrone	450
Swarm of Rats	50
Wererat King (in Lair)	5900 (7,200)

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Encounter	XP Per Character
Tavern Games/Stories	200
Waltz of the Celestas	500
Learn about Curse	100 per successful check
Learn Ritual	500
Restore Marie	500
Restore townsfolk	500
Clockwork Menace trap	750
Obtain Moonsbane	500
Restore the Prince	500
Inert crystal orb	500

TREASURE

Characters receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item/Event	Value
Card Game	0 or twice bet
Find Equipment	50
Assist the Scholar	100
Music Box	2000

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

MOONSBANE

Weapon (longsword), very rare (requires attunement)

This blade glistens like the water's reflection of moonlight. In darkness, the unsheathed blade of this sword sheds moonlight, creating bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this silvered magic weapon. When you hit a shapeshifter with it, that creature takes 2d10 radiant damage and must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of its next turn.

KNIGHT'S REPRIEVE

Weapon (spear), very rare (requires attunement)

This ornate spear remains untarnished with its golden blade tip with a knight's sigil on the shaft. You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

Knight's Challenge. While attuned, you have 3 charges. As long as the spear is attuned to you and you are holding it in your hand, you can cast *bleed* (1 charge), *compelled duel* (1 charge) or *crusader's mantle* (1 charge). Each dawn, Knight's Reprieve regains 1d3 charges.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I grew up loving the story of the Nutcracker, the Princess (or Ballerina), and the Mouse King. I also enjoyed the idea of the town of abandoned toys and that helped inspire the dark perversion of the wererat king's curse.

AUTHOR BIO

My name is Jacky Leung, also known as Death By Mage. I am a D&D and RPG blogger and writer. I've written and contributed to several bestsellers on the DMsGuild including: *Journey into the Feywild*, *Artifacts of the Guild*, *Uncaged Anthology Vol. 3*, and *Villains and Lairs II*. I also create indie RPGs on deathbymage.itch.io and you can find my blog at: <http://deathbymage.com>.

APPENDIX B: CREATURE STATISTICS

WERERAT ASSAILANT

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Nature +3, Perception +3, Stealth +5, Survival +3

Damage Immunities Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common (cannot speak in rat form)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. The wererat assailant can use its action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wererat assailant has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). The wererat assailant makes two ranged attacks or two melee attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

WERERAT BRUTE

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Athletics +6, Perception +5

Damage Immunities Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common (cannot speak in rat form)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Shapechanger. The wererat brute can use its action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wererat brute has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). The wererat brute makes two melee attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage, or 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage if used with two hands.

WERERAT KING

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Intelligence +9, Wisdom +6

Skills Arcana +13, History +13, Insight +6, Intimidation +7, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Immunities Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Elvish (cannot speak in rat form)

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Shapechanger. The wererat king can use its action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Magic Resistance. The wererat king has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wererat king has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pact Tactics. The wererat king has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wererat king's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Spellcasting. The wererat king is a 13th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +13 to hit with spell attacks). The wererat king has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *fire bolt*, *infestation*, *poison spray*, *prestidigitation*

1st-level (4 slots): *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*

2nd-level (3 slots): *acid arrow*, *invisibility*, *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

3rd-level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *fear*, *fireball*

4th-level (3 slots): *blight*, *evard's black tentacles*

5th-level (2 slots): *cloudkill*, *synaptic static*

6th-level (1 slot): *disintegrate*, *otto's irresistible dance*

7th-level (1 slot): *finger of death*

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). The wererat king makes two melee attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Infected Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The wererat king can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The wererat king regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Cantrip. The wererat casts a cantrip.

Noxious Aura. A foul emanates from the wererat king. Each creature within 5 feet of the wererat king must succeed a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of the creature's turn.

Toywork Malediction (Cost 2 Actions). The wererat king retrieves a crystal orb and points at one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be restrained for 1 minute as parts of the creature's body turns into a metal and wood. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the wererat king's curse for the next 24 hours.



WHAT PAST WE KEEP

TEN KNIGHTS RETREATING

Introduction: On Midwinter Day, high-ranking followers of the Red Knight – the deity of strategy and battle tactics – observe the Retreat, a ceremony in which members share the results of the past year’s campaigns and codify the lessons they have learned into canonical teachings. This year, at the request of a deceased benefactor, the Retreat is hosted in a remote mountain-side hunting lodge where attendees can relax and get away from every day cares. When one participant falls victim to a nefarious trap, the guests of honor are tasked with identifying and apprehending the culprit among a room full of the land’s greatest strategists.

A 4-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 11TH - 16TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY ETHAN YEN



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

The chill is in the air / Which the wise know well, and even have learned to bear. / This joy, I know, / Will soon be under snow... Night falls fast. / Today is in the past.

-Not So Far as the Forest, Edna St. Vincent Milla

This section provides the adventure's background, an overview of the adventure in play, and hooks that you can use to introduce your players' characters to the action. A list of prominent NPCs is found in *Appendix A: Cast of Characters*.

BACKGROUND

Years ago, two strategists of the **CHURCH OF THE RED KNIGHT** were waging battle on behalf of Lord Shulaar against devil-worshipping mountainfolk on **MOUNT DIHIMAH**. Under the guidance of the tactical prodigy, **JESSIDEH KARYSTKAL**, the mountainfolk were defeated. The victory was not without cost, as Jessideh's strategy resulted in the presumed death of her fellow strategist, **SEPHRICK ABREL DELGRIM**. Unknown to the Church, Sefhrick was captured by the mountainfolk and subjected to an infernal ritual, transforming him into a vampire general in the service of the Archdevil Levistus. Blaming Jessideh and—by extension—the Church of the Red Knight for his humiliation, Sefhrick became obsessed with the utter destruction of all followers of the Red Knight.

Years later, Sefhrick put his plan of vengeance into action, poisoning Lord Shulaar and forging a will that bequeathed the lord's hunting lodge, **DIHIMA LODGE**, to the Church of the Red Knight to be used as the site of the next **RETREAT**. Here, Sefhrick plans on killing a member of the Church and letting the Knight Commandants suspect and eventually destroy each other, thus proving his absolute strategic superiority.

However, knight **ARMAND WRENLING** suspects something is afoot, and has alerted Jessideh of a possible trap. The two have decided to allow the Retreat to commence in order to draw out the traitor.

As a new tradition, the characters have been asked by the Church of the Red Knight to attend the Retreat as honored guests in order to share their experience as great (and famed) adventurers so that their knowledge can be applied to future war strategies. The offer of free meals, lodging, and a relaxing getaway is too good to pass on.

While trapped with the others, the characters may end up foiling or inadvertently enabling Sefhrick's plan.

EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over three episodes that take approximately 4 total hours to play.

Episode 1: Abominable Weather. Arriving early, the characters have been spending time at Dihima Lodge, relaxing and enjoying themselves in peace before the official start of the Retreat. They partake in a ski race, during which a severe blizzard forms.

Episode 2: Retreat from the Storm. The characters meet the other participants of the Retreat and the ceremony commences. Shortly after, Jessideh is found dead and the characters are asked to investigate. Over the course of the next few hours, suspicions grow into hostility.

Episode 3: Knight Takes Pawn. With his existence revealed, Sefhrick turns to desperation as he attempts to eradicate the remaining members of the Church of the Red Knight.

THE STYGIAN'S STRATEGY

Sefhrick's plan is straightforward once the pieces are in motion. Through espionage, Sefhrick was able to ascertain that Knight Commandant Leiren Haust would be giving a secret gift to Jessideh Karystkal. While Leiren was on the road to Dihima Lodge, a disguised Sefhrick discretely exchanged Leiren's gift for a trapped gift to be used as the tool for murder. Additionally, months before the Retreat, Sefhrick used the same disguise to pretend to be a master artisan and crafted a lanceboard set at Knight Commandant Tymeus Mindoro's request. The lanceboard carries a curse that causes all those nearby to grow paranoid and hostile. Trapped by a magical blizzard and the Retreat's protective wards, the inhabitants of Dihima Lodge have nowhere to go, creating a recipe for self-destruction once Jessideh's death is discovered. Throughout the adventure, Sefhrick observes from outside the lodge in his snow cloud form, eager to enjoy the show of his making

EPISODE 1: ABOMINABLE WEATHER

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

Look at winter/With winter eyes/As smoke curls from rooftops/To clear cobalt skies.

—Douglas Florian, *Winter Eyes*

Adventuring is hard work. Arriving early at Dihima Lodge, the characters have rewarded themselves with rest and relaxation until the remaining participants arrive today on Midwinter's Eve to begin the Retreat. During this time, a severe blizzard forms, forcing everyone inside.

SCENE A. ON THE SLOPES

For the past two days, the characters have been enjoying themselves atop Mount Dihima with some of the Knight Commandants until the official start of the Retreat. The characters are currently with Knight Commandant **URRINI TAWNY** on one of the slopes, preparing for a friendly ski race down to the lodge.

From the top of the peaceful slope of Mount Dihima, you see wisps of chimney smoke coming from Dihima Lodge, rising behind the wall of evergreen trees. The blue skies and bright sun above, combined with the crisp air and cold temperature, clear your mind and electrify your senses.

"Shall we make this more interesting?" Knight Commandant Urrini Tawny says, pulling up next to you on her set of skis. She gives you all a sly smile, "Last one down to the lodge has to empty the chamber pots tonight!"

Treat the race similar to running a chase (DMG 252). With skis, each character has a speed of 60 feet, and the distance from the start to Dihima Lodge is 720 feet.

AREA INFORMATION

The slope of Mount Dihima features the following:

Dimensions & Terrain. The slopes are covered with a thick layer of snow, covering all of the terrain underneath. Evergreen trees stand tall, the branches weighed down by snow and acting as obstacles.

Senses. The air is crisp and cold, which is refreshing and almost therapeutic. The wind from racing down the slope is invigorating.

Lighting. The sky is clear, and the sun shines brightly high in the sky. Characters can easily see the village at the base of the mountain, blanketed with snow.

DEVELOPMENTS

After two rounds of the chase, proceed to the next scene.

SCENE B. BLIZZARD AMBUSH

Partially through the race, the weather dramatically shifts, and a severe blizzard begins to take form. At the end of the second round of the chase, characters with a passive Perception of 15 (subtract 5 if the character uses the Dash action) notice the formation of clouds at the peak of the mountain behind them, growing larger and darker.

Succeeding on an Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check of DC 15 deduces that a blizzard is forming and by the color and shape of the clouds, the blizzard will be a severe one. Succeeding by five or more on this check suggests that there is something unnatural about how quickly the clouds are forming. Characters familiar with cold climates can make this check at advantage.

Characters have one round to prepare themselves before the blizzard overtakes them all.

AREA INFORMATION

Once the blizzard hits, the slope features the following:

Blizzard. A strong wind blows up the slope of the mountain and heavy snowfall covers the area (DMG 110), imposing disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight, and extinguishing open flames.

During the race, and for the rest of the adventure, if a character is outside of the Lodge during the blizzard, at the start of each round, all characters exposed to the blizzard must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, all characters take 4d10 cold damage, and half as much on a success.

If a character in the race does not reach Dihima Lodge at the end of five rounds, the character must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the start of each turn. On a failure, the character receives one level of exhaustion.

Lighting. The blizzard obscures the sun, causing the area to be cast in a dim light.

THE WARMTH OF SHARING A GOOD STORY

This adventure imposes exhaustion on characters after prolonged exposure to the magical blizzard.

Exhaustion, while an evocative mechanic, can quickly become severely penalizing. Throughout the adventure, characters are encouraged to share their past experiences of growth and regale the NPCs of accomplished adventures and times of learning and are rewarded for their efforts by receiving Inspiration. Explain to the players that for the purposes of this adventure, Inspiration can be used to remove one level of exhaustion from any character.

TREASURE & REWARDS

If the characters successfully beat Urrini in the race, she is impressed with their athletic ability. Any social interactions with Urrini are made at advantage for the rest of the adventure. If Urrini is in danger, and the characters save her life, she will gift them her **SCARF OF THE WINTERLANDS** in thanks.

DEVELOPMENTS

Once all characters reach Dihima Lodge, they are quickly ushered into the heated interior, just as the temperature drops to a lethal level.

EPISODE 2: RETREAT FROM THE STORM

Estimated Duration: 120 minutes

By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is bitterest.

—Confucius

Safe inside Dihima Lodge from the blizzard, the characters meet the other Knight Commandants. The retreat commences, and a participant meets an untimely demise, stirring suspicions among the group.

SCENE A. KNIGHTLY RECEPTION

Upon reaching Dihima Lodge, read the following:

Through the shearing winds and heavy snowfall, you manage to arrive at Dihima Lodge. The door opens, firelight and warmth pouring forth. At the doorway stands an anxious but well-dressed gnome.

“We were beginning to worry, please come in, let me take your coats.”



The gnome who greets the characters at the door is **ARMAND WRENLING**, the caretaker of the lodge and servant of the late Lord Shulaar. Secretly, Armand is a knight placed in charge of security at the Retreat. The characters are led to the dining hall, where a steaming hot afternoon meal is waiting for them. Urrini will introduce the characters to the last two Knight Commandants, **TYMEUS MINDORO** and **LEIREN HAUST**, who arrived while the characters were out skiing. Leiren apologizes for her tardiness, as she ran into a merchant on the road selling items that caught her eye (this merchant was Sefhrick in disguise). During the meal, Head Knight Commandant **JESSIDEH KARYSTKAL** will excuse herself for a short nap as she grows tired quickly due to her old age. She will return before the start of the Retreat. After the meal, the characters are free to interact with any of the eight Knight Commandants (use the statistics for the **KNIGHT** for all Knight Commandants not named in this adventure) for the next hour in the living room until the Retreat begins. Refer to Scene C of this Episode for a description of the rooms. Refer to *Appendix A: Cast of Characters* for a description of the adventure-relevant Knight Commandants and any information the characters may gain by interacting with them.

YOUR REPUTATION PRECEDES YOU

The Retreat hosts some of the most famous and reputable tacticians and war strategists of the current age. Use this time of introductions to emphasize the Knight Commandant's prowess and how rare of an occasion it is to have so many important figures in one location. While speaking with the Knight Commandants, the characters can make Intelligence (History) DC 15 checks to see if the character recognizes the accomplishments of the Knight Commandants. Refer to the Notable Battles table for ideas on names of well-known military events.

Likewise, the Knight Commandants may already know the accomplishments of the characters. Some Knight Commandants may be honored to be in the presence of the characters, and others may view the characters in distaste due to their lack of planning and excessive collateral damage. Use this time to remind the characters of their greatest (and worst) well-known accomplishments.

Throughout the adventure, encourage referencing past events by having Knight Commandants refer to past battles that taught them something of value (e.g., “This reminds me of the time when we were caught on the defensive at the Battle of Twin Hills...”). If characters do the same, award inspiration.

NOTABLE BATTLES

d10	First Part	Second Part	Third Part
1	Battle of	Twin	Hills
2	Siege of	Argent	Peaks
3	Sack of	Bloody	River
4	Defense of	Golden	Pass
5	Crusade of	Ruined	Mountains
6	Conquest of	Verdant	Armies
7	Revolution of	Withering	Fields
8	Campaign of	Wandering	Woods
9	Operation	Southern	Swamp
10	Clash of	Five	Bay

During this time, characters can learn of the following by succeeding on the relevant skill checks, or by speaking to Knight Commandants, who will freely give this information if asked a related question:

Battle of Mount Dihima. Characters that succeed on an Intelligence (History) check of DC 15 know that the mountain used to be home to tribes of mountain folk, until Lord Shulaar attempted to drive the tribes off the mountain so he could expand into the area. He hired the then young Jessideh Karystkal and her mentor, Sephrick Abrel Delgrim of the Church of the Red Knight to lead his troops after the mountain folk resorted to allying themselves with the icy Archdevil Levistus and transforming themselves into large snowbeasts through infernal rituals.

The battle was nearly lost, but Jessideh, displaying her prodigious tactical skill, devised a plan to lure the mountainfolk into a nearby ravine and create an avalanche, burying the mountainfolk under snow and rock. However, Sephrick was skeptical of this strategy and instead drove his forces to meet the mountainfolk head-on, ultimately losing his life.

Sephrick Abrel Delgrim. Sephrick was known to be a brilliant tactician but was not without his flaws. Sephrick preferred to work alone when devising tactics and therefore had little experience cooperating with other strategists. He had a flair for showmanship, viewing his tactics as ways to show off his intelligence. He also absolutely hated the winter season, as the cold dark days often made him irritable and lethargic. This information may provide helpful when identifying Sephrick's vampiric weaknesses during the eventually confrontation in Episode 3 of this adventure.

Lord Shulaar. Lord Shulaar had been grateful to the Church of the Red Knight since his victory and had been a generous donor. A successful Intelligence (History) check DC 15 reveals rumors that Lord

Shulaar was in good health before his sudden death, prompting suspicions of foul play.

Protective Wards. Prior to any guests arriving, abjuration wizards from the Church of the Red Knight placed wards around the lodge, preventing any divination magic or scrying sensors cast from outside the lodge from targeting any inhabitants inside the lodge, and preventing any teleportation or planar travel into the lodge and 120 feet around it. Years of war campaigns have made the Knight Commandants many enemies. Teleportation, planar travel, and scrying within the Lodge grounds is not prohibited, but this fact is not explicitly stated.

CHURCH OF THE RED KNIGHT

The members of the Church of the Red Knight, also known as the Red Fellowship, consist of military commanders, quartermasters and war college instructors. Members are hired by nations and nobles to train their soldiers and consult on battle tactics and strategies. In some cases, forces on opposing sides of a war have been known to each employ Red Fellowship tacticians for their own armies. They believe careful planning and preparation are keys to victory. High ranking members are called Knight Commandants.

The Red Knight (also known as the Lady of Strategy or the Crimson General), is the lawful neutral deity of strategy, battle tactics and war. Her symbol is a red knight lanceboard piece with stars for eyes.

DEVELOPMENTS

After the hour break after lunch, the characters and the Knight Commandants are led to the Meeting Hall to begin the Retreat.

SCENE B. A STUDY IN WAR

With all the participants present, the Retreat begins, and everyone gathers in the Meeting Hall. The blizzard continues to rage on outside, just as strong, if not stronger than before, with the snow on the ground noticeably higher.

For a gathering of some of the most brilliant tactical minds in all the land, The Retreat itself is a surprisingly tedious affair. Gathered in the warm and musty meeting hall, the Knight Commandants begin the ceremony with a prayer to the Red Knight. The day of presentations begin: Knight Commandants share a battle they conducted in the past year, taking out a map and placing markers to indicate troop movements. The knights discuss the strategies of the battles, pointing out flaws and strengths. Eventually,

at the end of each presentation, any notable conclusions and learnings are written in a red tome.

After the day's presentations have been conducted, Head Knight Commandant Jessideh Karystkal raises her arm, turning towards all of you.

"And now for the most interesting part of the day. Please, come and share with us your valued experiences."

The characters are invited to present a combat experience from their past adventures in which they learned a valuable lesson or executed (or fell victim to) a well-laid plan. This could be a time of triumph or a time of failure. The experience could be during a small battle, great war, or even against a single foe in a dungeon. The characters need to explain how the experience applies to strategies of war. Use this time to allow the characters to reflect on (and perhaps embellish) their past adventurers and share it with others.

During the characters' presentation, Jessideh will get up from her chair and head to her bedroom, insisting that everyone remain to learn from the presentation.

Once their presentation is complete, have the main spokesperson of the group make a Charisma check with a DC 20. The check can be made at advantage if the presentation is particularly well done or if all characters participated. On a success, the Knight Commandants are noticeably impressed with the group, and the characters gain the following benefits for the rest of the adventure:

- If the characters share a **triumph**, whenever a character rolls a natural 20 on a d20, that character gains inspiration.
- If the characters share a **failure**, whenever a character rolls a natural 1 on a d20, that character gains inspiration.

SCENE C. PAST IN THE PRESENTS

The Retreat ends with a final prayer to the Red Knight and everyone files out of the room. Armand will ask the characters to check on Jessideh Karystkal in her room (D6 on the map), where they find the Head Knight Commandant dead. It is suspected that one of the Knight Commandants is responsible, as with Jessideh gone, a new Head Knight Commandant must be elected by the morning according to Church law. Speaking with any of the Knight Commandants will reveal that everyone suspects Tymeus Mindoro, as it was assumed Jessideh would announce her retirement after the Retreat and nominate a new Head Knight Commandant – which would unlikely be Tymeus. The characters have eight hours before the sun rises on Midwinter Day.

RUNNING A MIDWINTER MYSTERY

Running a mystery adventure can be difficult as players will concoct elaborate theories and suspicions that may derail the adventure if left unchecked.

In order to keep the adventure within four hours in length, focus the characters' suspicions on Tymeus, Leiren, and Armand. Tymeus is suspicious due to their belief in being the next Head Knight Commandant and for bringing a cursed item into the lodge. Leiren is suspicious due to possessing the trapped secret gift that killed Jessideh. Both Tymeus and Leiren can be absolved of guilt if the characters discover that the same person—a disguised Sephrick—crafted Tymeus' lanceboard set and ran into Leiren on the road to the Lodge. Armand draws suspicion by being the only one not in the Meeting Hall during the death of Jessideh but may be absolved once he reveals his true identity.

Clever players will also begin to suspect an external party is at work. Assist the characters by having Knight Commandants constantly reference the Battle of Mount Dihima and stress the theme of learning from the past. Additionally, refer to the one clue that Armand has: the traitor is a member of the Church of the Red Knight.

AREA INFORMATION

Dihima Lodge has the following features:

Lighting. Rooms are lit by candlelight, fireplaces and lanterns. Opening any of the windows or doors will extinguish open flames in the room and expose everyone to the effects of the blizzard.

Animals Heads. In every room of the lodge hangs the head of a stuffed dead animal – trophies of Lord Shulaar's many hunts. The eyes of the animal heads have been replaced with glass eyes. However, these glass eyes are enchanted, serving as conduits for the *clairvoyance* spell, allowing Armand to view what is going on in each room through his **BOWL OF MANY EYES** located in the Cellar.

D1. LIVING ROOM

The living room is a large 30-foot square room furnished with chairs, tables and rugs for numerous people to relax. A fireplace is located on one side of the wall, with a stuffed head of a brown bear hanging over the mantelpiece. Two windows look out to the back of the lodge. In the corner of the room is a bloodwood statue and shrine to the Red Knight.

Lanceboard. Tymeus has brought a new commissioned lanceboard set made of mithral metal with him to the lodge. However, this lanceboard was

acquired from a master artisan (in reality, Sephrick). A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check knows that mithral is a rare material that has properties that lend itself to being used in magical items and armor. A DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals small runes under each lanceboard piece. The runes on their own don't mean anything (Tymeus assumes they are simply the artisan's signature), but when put together in a certain order replicate the runes for *Nystul's magic aura*. Characters can make this connection after succeeding on a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The lanceboard set is cursed (see sidebar).

THE CURSE OF PARANOIA

Sephrick has enchanted Tymeus' new lanceboard set with a curse and disguised its magical presence using *Nystul's magic aura*.

While the lanceboard set remains in the lodge, each creature who plays a game of lanceboard must make a Wisdom saving throw DC 16 or succumb to the effects of the curse. A creature automatically succeeds if immune to being frightened.

The curse amplifies a creature's suspicions and causes a creature to hallucinate that their allies have hostile and traitorous intent. Under the influence of the curse, a creature will act on their worst suspicions, turning violent to protect themselves from their perceived foes. Using the *remove curse* spell or becoming immune to being frightened ends the effects of the curse. Cursed creatures also emit a faint aura of enchantment magic visible by using *detect magic*.

During the game, characters that fall victim to the curse form suspicions based on false observations. Whenever a character fails an ability check, such as Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Insight), the character perceives their target as performing an action with some hostile intent. Perhaps a failed Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a Knight Commandant slipping something mysterious into their pocket, or perhaps a failed Wisdom (Insight) check convinces a character that the Knight Commandant is drawing a knife to stab an ally, when the knife is used for cutting food. When under the effects of the curse, failing ability checks does not simply deny characters helpful information, it may directly hinder characters by providing false incriminatory information. If any Knight Commandants are under the effect of the curse, consider adding events between two Knight Commandants such as accusations, combat, and even death.

Secret Gifter. Next to the statue of the Red Knight in the corner of the room is a pile of identically sized gifts wrapped in red cloth and white ribbon. These gifts are anonymously exchanged between each of the Knight Commandants at the stroke of midnight on Midwinter Day. As a friendly game, each of the Knight Commandants attempt to guess the identify of their secret gifter by writing their guess on the accompanying blank tag. If correct, the name disappears and the tag glows. If incorrect, the tag burns up. There is a gift for each of the Knight Commandants. A successful DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the identity of the secret gifter by examining the origin of the gift, and the handwriting on the tag, provided the character is aware of the gifter's existence. Each gift includes a random art object worth 750 gold pieces, except for Leiren Haust's gift for Jessideh Karystkal (see Jessideh Karystkal's Room).

D2. MEETING HALL

This room holds planning meetings before hunts. Inside, racks holding rolled maps, shelves with books on nature, history and hunting, and hunting trophies (e.g., animal bones, fur pelts, flags of fallen mountainfolk tribes, etc.) line the walls and hang from the ceiling. A large 20-foot-long table occupies the center of the room, expertly crafted of oak wood and carved with images of hunters, animals and trees. Wooden chairs line all sides of the tables.

Map Racks. Maps of Mount Dihima and the surrounding area are stored in wooden map racks. A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a set of old maps of Dihima Lodge, which shows the layout of the lodge, including the Cellar below the Shed.

Secret Passage. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a ladder behind one of the bookshelves in the corner, leading to Jessideh Karystkal's room. Jessideh knew of this secret passage, as Armand had shown her the passageway as a possible means of escape if she was in danger.

D3. DINING HALL

The Dining Hall is a 25-foot square room with a large table and chairs. Oil paintings of the surrounding mountains and countryside hang on the walls.

D4. KITCHEN

The Kitchen is a sparsely stocked room with a fire and large iron pot where Armand cooks food.

D5. ARMAND'S ROOM

Armand's room is located adjacent to the kitchen.

Notes. On the table is a set of handwritten notes detailing information and history about Dihima Lodge and Lord Shulaar. A successful Wisdom (Insight) check of DC 15 will suggest that these notes were written in such a way as to remind someone of talking points if they were unfamiliar with the topic.

D6. JESSIDEH KARYSTKAL'S ROOM

One bed, two cabinets, a round table and two chairs occupy this room. A large rug is set in the center of the floor, and four windows line two of the walls.

Body Under Snow. The body of Jessideh Karystkal lies on the ground, under a five-foot tall pile of snow. An Intelligence (Investigation) check DC 15 or a Wisdom (Medicine) check of DC 15 will reveal that the Head Knight Commandant was crushed by the weight of the snow. This death is reminiscent of the assumed death of Sephrick Abrel Delgrim when an avalanche buried him and his troops along with the opposing mountainfolk. A fact that characters may be able to pick up on. Any attempt at *resurrection* will fail, as Jessideh's soul is unable to return to her body due to the protective wards. *Speak with dead* will reveal that Jessideh decided to open her gift early in her room while on her way to take a nap. The characters are asked to determine what happened and who is responsible.

Secret Gift. The box lies on the bed next to the pile of snow. The box is empty, and the tag remains blank as Jessideh did not have time to make a guess as to who was her Secret Gifter. As this gift was actually given by Sephrick, the tag will only glow if his name is written on the tag. An Intelligence (Investigation) check DC 20 or a *detect magic* spell will reveal the remnants of arcane runes written under the lid of the gift box. A successful Intelligence (Arcana) check DC 20 will allow a character to decipher the rune fragments and deduce that the runes make up two spells: the first being *Nystul's magic aura* to make the gift seem non-magical and the second being *glyph of warding* that stored a snowy version of the spell, *ice storm*.

D7. TYMEUS MINDORO'S ROOM

Acceptance Speech. On the bedside table is the half-written note of an acceptance speech for becoming the next Head Knight Commandant.

D8. THROUGH D11. KNIGHT COMMANDANT ROOMS

These rooms host other Knight Commandants that are not relevant to the adventure.

D12. LEIREN HAUST'S ROOM

Leiren's Personal Kit. A successful Intelligence (Investigation) check DC 20 reveals Leiren's personal covert operations kit, stored underneath some loose floorboards. Inside the kit is a Disguise Kit, Thieves' Kit, and a Forgery Kit. Additionally, there are sketches of various soldiers and members of the Church, which Leiren keeps so she can study their facial features and develop more convincing disguises for her spies. An Intelligence (Investigation) check DC 15 will reveal that one of the faces is of Armand.

D13. ADVENTURER'S AND URRINI TAWNY'S ROOM

The 20-by-25-foot room contains enough beds for the characters, as well as Urrini Tawny, who has been lodging in the same room due to lack of space. A window looks out to the front of the lodge.

Midwinter Gift. Sitting on one of the beds is a gift addressed to the characters, accompanied with a blank tag. None of the Knight Commandants will claim to know who left the gift, as it is not usual for the adventurers to be included in the Secret Gifter game. This gift was given to the characters by Armand, in the hopes that they would discretely assist him in his mission.

Inside the box is a **SCROLL OF PROTECTION AGAINST UNDEAD** and a note that reads, "One of us is a traitor, trust no one but yourselves."

D14. SHED AND STABLES

Outside the lodge, 120 feet away, is a small 15-foot square wooden shack. Inside crates of dried meats and spices and canned vegetables are stored and frozen solid due to the frigid temperatures. Attached to the shed is a canopied stable, capable of housing four horses.

Cellar Door. A successful Intelligence (Investigation) check of DC 18 will reveal that under the crates in the corner of the shed is a trap door that opens to a ladder leading down below. The door is frozen shut and requires a DC 25 Strength saving throw unless the ice is melted away. A successful DC 20 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check will unlock the door. A failed check to tamper with the door will cause the *symbol of sleep* (spell save DC 18) inscribed on the other side of the door to activate. If all characters fall unconscious, they will wake up in the Cellar, with Armand there to explain the situation.

ARMAND'S GAMBIT

Having investigated Dihima Lodge before the Retreat, Armand knows that the location is a trap that will somehow result in the destruction of the Church of the Red Knight leadership. Armand was unable to find any traps within the lodge. Working with Jessideh, the two of them decided to allow the Retreat to happen in order to draw out the traitor, believing it to be a risk worth taking. Their hope was to catch the traitor before any plan was set in motion by having Armand spy on all the participants using his Bowl of Many Eyes.

D15. CELLAR

Below the shed is a 20-foot square room built of stone. Glowing magical flames float in the corners of the room, providing heat. Chained to one side of the wall is a figure, dressed in finely made clothes – now dirtied and shredded. A large metal box stands on the other side of the room and a diamond-encrusted basin sits at the center of the room.

Chained Captive. A human-looking man with pale skin is chained to the wall, nearly unconscious. The man will be mumbling for help and ask to be released. This man is the actual caretaker of Dihima Lodge. He was turned into a **VAMPIRE SPAWN** by Sephrick and was supposed to take care of the guests during the Retreat. Armand discovered his true nature and captured him. He will only respond to any interrogation that his employer is a “member of the Church of the Red Knight,” and that his mission was to “ensure the destruction of the Church”. If released, he will immediately attack the players, making use of his spider climb abilities in order to escape and vanish into the woods during the blizzard. As a spawn of Sephrick's lineage, the vampire spawn is immune to cold and replaces its vampire weaknesses with the following:

- **Teamwork Incomprehension.** After a character deals damage to the vampire for the first time that turn, the next attack that successfully hits from a different character that turn deals twice as much damage as normal.
- **Lethargy.** If the vampire moves more than 20 feet in a round, then the next attack the vampire makes is at disadvantage.
- **Sunlight Hypersensitivity.** The vampire takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Metal Box. A metal box, roughly five feet long and three feet wide, sits at one end of the room. A padlock keeps the box shut and can be opened with a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check. The box stores blocks of ice covered in snow. Inside

is a *clone* of Armand, in case he dies. Unfortunately, Jessideh was unable to have a clone created for her in time for the Retreat.

Bowl of Many Eyes. In the middle of the room, stands a diamond encrusted stone basin full of water. By touching the corresponding jewel on the basin, a user can see an image of one of the rooms of Dihima Lodge through the glass eyes of the stuffed hunting trophies in each room. Armand has been using the basin to spy on all the inhabitants.

DEVELOPMENTS

Once the characters have determined that Sephrick is behind Jessideh's death, or if eight hours have passed and the sun will soon rise, proceed to the next episode.

EPISODE 3: KNIGHT TAKES PAWN

Estimated Duration: 75 minutes

I used to attack because it was the only thing I knew. Now I attack because I know it works best.

—Garry Kasparov

Once the characters have discovered Sephrick's existence, or if the Knight Commandants are all still alive after eight hours, Sephrick will resort to a direct attack in order to eliminate the remaining Knight Commandants.

SCENE A. THE STRATEGIST RETURNS

Suddenly, all the windows are blown open, and a severe wind rushes in, blowing out all open flames. A cool voice echoes throughout the lodge.

"I was hoping to witness the self-destruction of the Red Fellowship, but I guess I will have to do it myself."

SEPHRICK ABREL DELGRIM will appear briefly from his snow cloud form, entering an open window or door near the characters. He is joined by two **YETIS** adorned with furs and animal bones. For Sephrick, use the statistics for a **SPELLCASTER VAMPIRE** with the following changes to its statistics:

- The vampire is immune to cold.
- Instead of polymorphing into a cloud of mist, the vampire polymorphs into a cloud of snow. The statistics while in snow form are the same as in mist form.
- Instead of summoning a swarm of bats or rats, the vampire can summon 2d4 ice mephits using its Children of the Night ability.

Furthermore, Sephrick has the following vampire weaknesses instead of the normal weaknesses:

- *Teamwork Incomprehension.* After a character deals damage to the vampire for the first time that turn, the next attack that successfully hits from a different character that turn deals twice as much damage as normal.
- *Lethargy.* If the vampire moves more than 20 feet in a round, then the next attack the vampire makes is at disadvantage.
- *Sunlight Hypersensitivity.* The vampire takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features the following traits:

Dimensions & Terrain. As the snow is now falling into the lodge, a bed of snow will begin building up on the floor. After three rounds of snowing, the floor of the lodge now has enough snow for the terrain to be considered difficult.

Senses. While the blizzard is inside the lodge, all Wisdom (Perception) checks are made at disadvantage.

Paralyzing Cold. While the blizzard is inside the lodge, any character that does not move at least 15 feet on their turn takes 4d10 cold damage.

Lighting. As it is still before sunrise, it is still dark. Once the blizzard enters the lodge, all nonmagical flames inside the lodge are extinguished.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Weak or Very Weak:** Remove one **YETI**.
- **Strong:** Remove two **YETIS**. Add two **ABOMINABLE YETIS**.
- **Very Strong:** Remove two **YETIS**. Add three **ABOMINABLE YETIS**.

TACTICS

Sephrick knows that he is outmatched in an open fight against the characters, and in fact, wants to avoid direct battle with them. Instead, Sephrick will travel from room to room, using his cloud of snow form to do so. His first objective is to cast *dominate person* on the most powerful Knight or character and use his victim to begin targeting the other Commandants and characters. His second objective is to eliminate the Knight Commandants, working from weakest to strongest.

The yetis will split up and attempt to keep the characters busy while Sephrick eliminates the Knight Commandants.

DEVELOPMENTS

Once Sephrick reaches 50 HP, he will attempt to flee using his cloud of snow form. After leaving the lodge or if he is defeated, the yeti spellcasters located on the mountaintop will cast a spell to create an avalanche to bury the lodge and all its inhabitants. Proceed to the next scene.

SCENE B. BURY IT ALL

After Sephrick departs, the blizzard ceases, and the characters can hear rumbling from within the mountain. Looking out the window, they can see snow falling from the slopes above, creating an avalanche that is rapidly approaching Dihima Lodge.

Characters have 1 minute to execute a plan to protect themselves, and the surviving members of the Church. Characters caught in the avalanche

unprotected must make a Strength saving throw DC 20. On a failure, the character takes 18d10 bludgeoning damage, and half as much on a success. If characters have found some way to protect and secure themselves, they must make a Strength saving throw DC 15 and take 10d10 bludgeoning damage on a failure, and half as much on a success.

DEVELOPMENTS

After the avalanche, the sun rises in the sky, marking the end of the Retreat and the arrival of Midwinter Day. The weather returns to the peaceful calm at the start of the adventure, and the surviving Knight Commandants thank the characters for their service.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

- The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

- Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience per Foe
Yeti	700
Abominable Yeti	5,000
Ice Mephit	100
Vampire Spawn	1,800
Vampire Warrior	13,000

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task	Experience per Character
Skiing through the Blizzard	2,000
Presenting at the Retreat	1,000
Deducing Sephrick's Existence	1,000
Knight Commandants Survive (total of eight)	250 per Knight Commandant

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Scarf of the Winterlands. A red wool scarf embellished with the symbol of the Red Knight on one

end. Treat this as a *Boots of the Winterlands*, except the item is a scarf.

Scroll of Protection Against Undead. Scroll, rare. Using an action to read the scroll encloses you in an invisible barrier that extends from you to form a 5-foot-radius, 10-foot-high cylinder. For 5 minutes, this barrier prevents undead creatures from entering or affecting anything within the cylinder.

The cylinder moves with you and remains centered on you. However, if you move in such a way that an undead creature would be inside the cylinder, the effect ends.

A creature can attempt to overcome the barrier by using an action to make a DC 15 Charisma check. On a success, the creature ceases to be affected by the barrier.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The winter season is a time of internal reflection, a time where we retreat from the cold outside and warm ourselves by the fire during the long nights, reminiscing about the past year. Sheltered from the elements, we begin to think about who we were, who we are, and who we wish to be once the snow thaws once more. *What Past We Keep* allows the players' characters to experience those same thoughts and feelings all the while interacting with prominent individuals in an intimate and dangerous setting. After their many adventures together, the characters have a chance to engage with the past and appreciate how far they have grown. At this year's Retreat, inability to learn from the past becomes a tangible threat.

AUTHOR BIO

Ethan Yen is a writer and content creator. His adventures focus on emotional themes, problem-solving, and opportunities for character development while incorporating engaging encounters and evocative environments.

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APPENDIX A: CAST OF CHARACTERS

The adventure features six major non-player characters, with four additional unnamed Knight Commandants not relevant to the adventure. The profiles below (organized in alphabetical order by first name) provide information that can be used throughout the adventure.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Each of the Knight Commandants already harbor opinions of the two main suspects of the adventure: Tymeus Mindoro and Leiren Haust. Speaking with the Knight Commandants can reveal the following information:

- Jessideh's mind is slowly leaving her, and the Head Knight Commandant has been referencing past events more frequently, often addressing friends as "Sephrick," the name of her mentor.
- While others may think Tymeus Mindoro as the likely candidate to succeed Jessideh, many believe they are far too arrogant to become the next Head Knight Commandant.
- Leiren is suspicious of Armand Wrenling. She cannot pinpoint why, but she believes the gnome to not be who he claims to be.
- Some Knights disapprove of Leiren's covert tactics, believing espionage and assassination to not be a part of the Red Knight's portfolio.

ARMAND WRENLING

LN Gnome **MAGE** (with proficiency in Deception)

Armand is a middle-aged gnome with a straight back and jutting chin accented by his finely groomed goatee. He asks many questions of the guests, wanting to know where everyone is always going.

Armand tends to stay in the background during the Retreat. He cooks, cleans and conducts general housekeeping and maintenance while the guests are conducting their ceremony, he is often seen going to and from the Shed where he stores the food.

Secret. Armand is actually a member of the Church of the Red Knights and was in charge of securing Dihima Lodge prior to the Retreat. He and Jessideh hatched a plan to lure out a traitor in their midst. Armand is disguised as the caretaker of the lodge in order to spy on all the members and discover any clues. The other Knight Commandants are not aware of Armand's actual affiliation with the Church.

JESSIDEH KARYSTKAL

LG Dragonborn **KNIGHT** (with Intelligence of 20)

Jessideh Karystkal is an elderly copper dragonborn and the Head Knight Commandant of the Church of the Red Knight. Her scales have lost their reflective sheen with age and she carries an ivory walking stick carved into the shape of a red knight lanceboard piece. Her voice is soft and wavers, which would be difficult to hear if not for the fact that everyone quiets when she speaks out of deep respect for her.

Jessideh is often seated by the fireplace, sleeping.

LEIREN HAUST

LN Lightfoot Halfling **ASSASSIN**

Leiren Haust specializes in battlefield reconnaissance and wartime espionage. She wears a large fur-lined jacket despite being indoors, claiming to suffer from a condition that causes her to be perpetually cold (though her colleagues suspect she wears the jacket to conceal items and disguises).

Leiren is often found watching the windows and exploring the maps in the Meeting Hall. A former adventurer, Leiren best relates to the characters, but also knowing full well to expect shenanigans whenever adventurers show up.

Secret. After Jessideh's death, Leiren realizes that she is the prime suspect if anyone discovers she was Jessideh's Secret Gifter. She will hide this information as best as she can, perhaps stealing gifts.

SEPHRICK ABREL DELGRIM

LE shield dwarf **SPELLCASTER VAMPIRE**

Sephrick is a well-groomed dwarf with white hair. He has abandoned any symbols of the Red Knight in favor of frost-covered black armor with ice motifs in honor of his archdevil master. His eyes are cold and dead, which is more upsetting when combined with the fact that his mouth is always turned into a bitter smile, as if he always has something planned. He is confident, skilled, and thinks highly of himself.

TYMEUS MINDORO

LN Moon Elf **MAGE** (proficient in Gaming Set (lanceboard))

Tymeus is a middle-aged moon elf who has made a name by being an expert war strategist. They wear a long robe in faded red and a white scarf emblazoned with the symbol of the Red Knight. Around Tymeus' neck is a necklace with the symbol of the Red Knight fashioned out of red wood.

Tymeus is the most recent winner of the Queen's Gambit, an annual festival in which members of the Church of the Red Knight partake in feasting and a tournament of lanceboard and does not let anyone forget that fact. As such, Tymeus is always looking for someone to play against. Tymeus is hospitable towards the characters and will offer a friendly match of lanceboard during their free time. Treat a lanceboard match as contested Intelligence ability checks. Characters that are proficient in lanceboard have advantage on the check.

URRINI TAWNY

LG Half-Orc **KNIGHT**

Urrini Tawny is the most recent addition to the Knight Commandants, known for her practicality and "simpler is better" strategies. She wears a red cape and full plate armor and wears her rust-red hair braided and tied back. A well-used battle-axe is strapped to her back. She acts as an advocate for the adventurers, providing information and support.

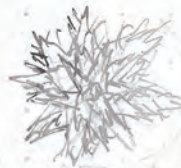
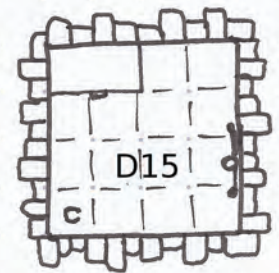
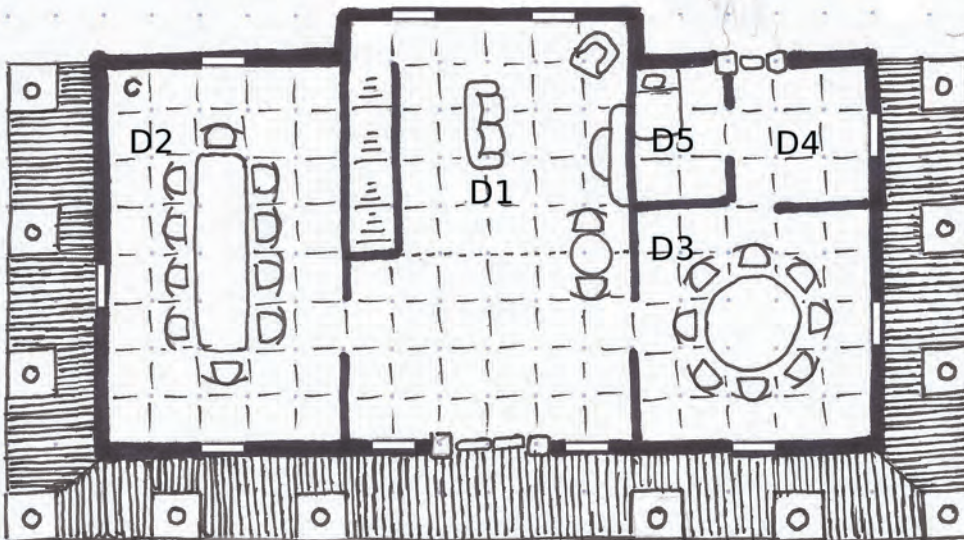
She is looking forward to relaxing and getting away from the hustle of daily life for the next few days and is usually found in the living room, trying to keep herself entertained.



LODGE MAP



120 Ft
Away





SILKEN DOPPELGANGER

ELEVEN SPIDERS SPINNING

Introduction: A well-meaning traveler is invited to showcase his winter traditions in the market square. At the sound of a bell, the desert metropolis of Arkosar has gone missing, stolen off to lands unknown.

A 3-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 14TH-16TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY JOSEPH AVERY



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

*“Little darling, it’s been a long cold lonely winter
Little darling, it feels like years since it’s been here
Here comes the sun
Here comes the sun, and I say
It’s all right”*

-The Beatles

BACKGROUND

From the south came a humble far traveler, Ionko Seeliche. New to the region and new to the language, he sought a community which he found in Arkosar, a city-state on the edge of the Anauroch desert. Years passed and the city accepted the traveller as a forgotten son. The customs that Ionko found alien began to come comfortably. His newfound family encouraged him to open up about the customs he practiced where he once lived.

Ionko told the city’s denizens about the Wiñol Xipantu: a celebration that marks the new year, the birth of the sun, and rebirth of the self. He emphasized an all-night feast that stretched across the longest night of the year. He spoke of a merry game of changing faces, and how, aided by helpers, one can find a new path. Finally, he mentioned an offering at the end of the festivities, which Ionko remembers as a small thing, something his youthful soul never took notice of. Probably unimportant.

LOCATION AND NPC SUMMARY

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure:

Arkosar (AR-co-SAR) is a bustling burg and the largest city inside the Anauroch desert. It sits as a diamond in the rough, the neutral adobe buildings beset by a riot of colored draperies. The rich metropolis supplies the towns beyond with water using an intricate aquifer which makes their absence immediately felt.

Ionko Seeliche (EE-on-ko she-LEH-che). A traveller from southern lands who settled in Arkosar decades ago. This elf was encouraged to show his culture’s celebration. While Ionko doesn’t have a perfect recollection of the rites his parents performed, he is pretty sure it wasn’t like this... Even so, he is confident everything is going as planned.

Lord Dixely. A fey creature (called a spindle; see the Appendix) of some authority who has come here out of curiosity more so than anything else. He speaks with authority about the Gloaming Court, presided over by the Queen of Air and Darkness. The tiny spindle rides



atop his giant spider, Thistledown, and is bolstered while in the Feywild.

EPISODES

The adventure’s story is spread over 3 **Episodes** that take approximately 3 total hours to play.

- **Episode 1: Stolen City.** Arkosar is missing. The characters are recruited to find it before the neighboring cities die of thirst. Upon arrival each character finds a new face is projected upon their own, this one happy and dressed in ritual garb. All around them are dozens of tiny spiders which the townsfolk seem to greet warmly.
- **Episode 2: Longest Night.** Either Ionko or Lord Dixely will interact with the characters and give a more robust understanding of their situation. A massive silk egg is being built by jingle spiders (see the Appendix) over the market square while the characters hunt for their face.
- **Episode 3: Egg Drop.** The characters must decide if they should destroy the massive egg that looms above the city or to defend it from would-be aggressors. Either can be the right or wrong call (see Quantum Storytelling sidebar).

QUANTUM STORYTELLING

Two backstories for the Queen of Air and Darkness may exist until the conclusion.

Long Live the Queen. The egg is a gift. The Seelie Court has found and delivered a phoenix to the Queen of Air and Darkness to please her. By her leave, for one year the night gives way to a new day, as it has every year since the dawn of time.

Queen of Thieves. The egg could be a theft perpetrated by Lord Dixely. Using his command of spiders he found and bound the spirit of the sun presenting as a phoenix. Breaking the egg is the only way to release the sun.

Whichever backstory you choose can be relayed to the characters afterward via Lord Dixely..

Who Steals a City? A magus of authority approaches the party seeking to recruit them to find the city of Arkosar, presumed stolen, and “bring the thief to justice.” Only distant scrys can view where the city once lay. Once a character touches the sand Arkosar once sat upon they are pulled immediately into the Feywild, surfacing at the south western gate of the “stolen city”.

Dry County. Water from Arkosar’s channels have dried up. The town will die without it. Fix this, heroes! Once the party get to the Arkosar aqueducts they will find them spilling over, the water unable to breach the resilient sphere.

The Other Side. If in the Feywild already, the party should know supplies in the Feywild aren’t to be trusted. A mountain-sized spider passes by with what looks like a desert city on its back. Entrance into the sphere seems a one-way affair, however.

PLOT HOOKS

Listed below are potential adventure hooks

that you can use to get your characters involved in the adventure. Alternatively, you may take advantage of Arkosar being a desert hub, where adventurers often restock and regroup before going deeper into the desert.



EPISODE I: STOLEN CITY

Estimated Duration: 15 - 30 minutes

*“Sorry I’m not home right now
I’m walking into spiderwebs
So leave a message
And I’ll call you back”*

—*No Doubt, Spiderwebs*

Arkosar. City of Crystal Springs. Glass Crown of Anauroch. The city goes by many names, but only one name is important right now: lost.

Good news, you’ve found it and everyone is okay.

Bad news, you are now lost as well.

SCENE A. FACE IN A CROWD

The characters arrive to find the townsfolk mid-festivities.

Upon arrival you are met with a shining city. Though night has fallen, countless torches and lanterns in Arkosar shine off massive, feather-light drapes of white silk. Music can be heard thrumming in the distance and smells of exotic spices and roasted meat drift here, to the gates.

A welcome comes from an unlikely source: a small boy with the voice of an old woman spies your party and waves for you to enter. The boy points to one of you and winks at another unlikely pair, a wizened dragonborn female and a young dwarven male who both chatter in raspy, feminine voices.

“Your friend here has the face of Theroy, Kellia’s youngest,” the boy says to your party, again pointing to the young dwarf. “What fun. Sorry, the festival has us all feeling our oats, as it were. Care for some food?”

The matronly voice, though clashing with what you see, seems at home with these mannerisms. Down the main thoroughfare you see mismatched tables stretched from one side street to another. On top of them are dozens of plates piled high with food and scores of people sitting, talking, and dancing along the streets.

“If none of that catches your fancy just follow along, you’ll find something eventually,” the boy waves and after a moment remembers, “And a happy Wiñol Xipantu!”

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Arkosar is encased in a 2 mile radius resilient sphere which encapsulates the city entirely and some distance beyond the walls. Further investigation reveals the sphere is also the

abdomen of a gargantuan spider, currently walking across the Feywild. A caster must succeed at a DC 22 spellcasting ability check with dispel magic to dispel the sphere; the disintegrate spell works as normal. If the sphere is dispelled, the spider shrinks to a normal size while the city drops to the ground in the Feywild.

Senses. Depending on where you are in Arkosar, music can be heard from mortal hands. Pervasive throughout is a soft tinkle of jingle spiders and smells of rich food.

Feywild. While not immediately apparent, the city has been transported to the Feywild and is subject to its proclivities.

Face Swap. All of the humanoids present have a glamour on them to look like someone else, who is also present (see the Glamorous City sidebar).

Lighting. Night has fallen. The city has lit hundreds of lanterns along its streets. Even the darkest corner has the soft light of a jingle spider dancing among it.

GLAMOROUS CITY

It is clear that the characters are under an illusion immediately. Everything worn is obscured by the glamour but can be felt through physical inspection. Feeling through the illusion in this way doesn’t break its effect, however. The glamour has the following features:

- **Shuffle.** The specific glamour image shuffles occasionally. At the end of the 4th round of each combat encounter, everyone still glamour changes to a different image.
- **Double Take.** When a creature hits a target within 5 feet of a glamour ally, they must succeed at a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw or hit their ally instead, regardless of their AC. Succeeding at a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check to keep the faces straight confers advantage on the save until the glamour shuffles again.
- **Resolution.** A creature can remove the glamour by finding the person who currently has their look, holding them, and making an affirmation for the year to come. Examples include but are not limited to “gamble less,” “make more money,” “ride a griffon,” and even “slash teens.” The affirmation doesn’t have to be positive. Once the glamour is removed, you cannot come under the effect of it again until the next year. Dying or being knocked unconscious temporarily removes the glamour.

BUILD-A-GLAMOUR

Use the following tables to assign traits to the glammers characters and NPCs wear. Roll once on each table below to assemble a single glamour.

d6 Ancestry

- 1 human
- 2 dwarf
- 3 elf
- 4 halfling
- 5 gnome
- 6 half-orc

d8 Facial Feature

- 1 bespectacled
- 2 facial wound, either fresh or scarred
- 3 a neatly kempt beard
- 4 brilliantly white teeth
- 5 bags under the eyes and a runny nose
- 6 a half dozen gold piercings
- 7 a nest of long, curly hair
- 8 cherubic features

d10 Obvious Characteristic

- 1 barrel chested
- 2 a prepubescent child
- 3 caked with sand
- 4 aristocratically dressed
- 5 heavily tattooed
- 6 wearing a nightgown
- 7 draped in a sandwich board advertisement
- 8 dark, hooded clothes with a dagger on the belt
- 9 loose leather armor with hawk livery
- 10 massive, feathered headdress

INFORMATION GATHERING

Information about the holiday, Wiñol Xipantu, is unique to a single person on this continent: **Ionko Seeliche** is that resident authority and master of ceremonies at this event. Nothing short of legend lore will garner information about the holiday, rites, or practices therein without consulting Ionko.

Legend Lore. Wiñol Xipantu is an ancient rite of feytouched people. It celebrates the birth of a new sun and rebirth of the self at the end of the year's longest night. A snippet of story rings true: "The life of Sol lasts only one year and goodwill must be lashed in form to forge another. It is the Queen of Air and Darkness alone who can break such a mold."

DC 5 Wisdom (Perception) check. You are glammed.

DC 8 Wisdom (Perception) check. The townsfolk are glammed.

DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check. You look like a townspeople.

DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. That townspeople hugged another, said something, and you're sure they aren't glammed anymore.

DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. There are spiders everywhere. Very small, barely larger than a fingernail, their bell-shaped abdomen eclipses the rest of their body. A faint tinkling sound and soft light comes from the bell.

DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The glammed faces have smiles on them. Varied degrees of enthusiasm, sure, but every face has a smile on it.

DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check. None of the local denizens seem at all concerned about the abundance of spiders, the miles of silk threads that cover their city, or their owned glammed state. Quite the opposite, they seem happy to feast. Interactions with spiders have a sort of reverence.

DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check. The social dynamics of the city are still here. While you would have trouble finding an individual, finding someone filling a role, such as grandfather or brewmaster, would be a simple affair.

DC 18 Intelligence (Nature or History) check. The stars aren't familiar to you. You aren't on the material plane anymore. This is immediately obvious to those proficient with navigator's tools.

Flying high or exploring the edge of the resilient sphere gets visual confirmation that the sphere is an abdomen of a colossal spider who is walking over richly colored vegetation.

DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check. After gaining visual on the forest, you can succeed this check to know you are in the Feywild

SCENE B. FACT FINDING MISSION

The characters are encouraged to explore the space. Locals know the following information, offered freely:

Ionko Seeliche is the master of ceremonies.

He can be found in the city square gambling.

The city has been working for weeks to set up this festival, under Ionko's direction. He forewarned them about "face swapping" and the spiders.

The locals do NOT know:

They are no longer in the Anauroch desert.

They are in the Feywild.

Ionko has no idea why the rite has gotten so wildly out of control.

The space is populated from wall to wall with persons incongruous with their outer images. Children chain smoking. Middle aged folk playing hide and seek. Every individual the characters can see undermines their preconception in some way.

CITY SQUARE

The square is dense with party goers. A platform is currently being dismantled in the northern quadrant. Further questioning random passersby will give equal measure of helpful feedback and baseless guesses as to a character's identity.

One helpful nugget is Ionko Seeliche's location. Next to the currently dismantling platform is a small round table where five individuals are playing Three-Dragon Ante, replete with tall drinks and long pipes.

ROLEPLAYING IONKO

Ionko Seeliche is an elf of unknown ancestry. No subrace options available to the players would recognize his subrace, inextricably linked as it is to lands unknown.

Ionko is given much pomp and circumstance tonight and is ready to accept it. He greets visitors with warmth and is glad to wax poetic about the night's sacraments. The truth is he left his home when he was young and knows little about the reasons behind the rites.

He's lived a charmed life where his indulgent lifestyle has worked out for his travels up until now and has unshakable confidence in the festivities.

While the situation grows increasingly incongruous, Ionko will be the last to admit danger. His popularity hinges on it, of course.

What Ionko remembers, and more specifically what he doesn't, can be pried from him with a successful **Charisma (Persuasion)** or other appropriate skill check:

DC 10. Wiñol Xipantu only lasts until dawn.

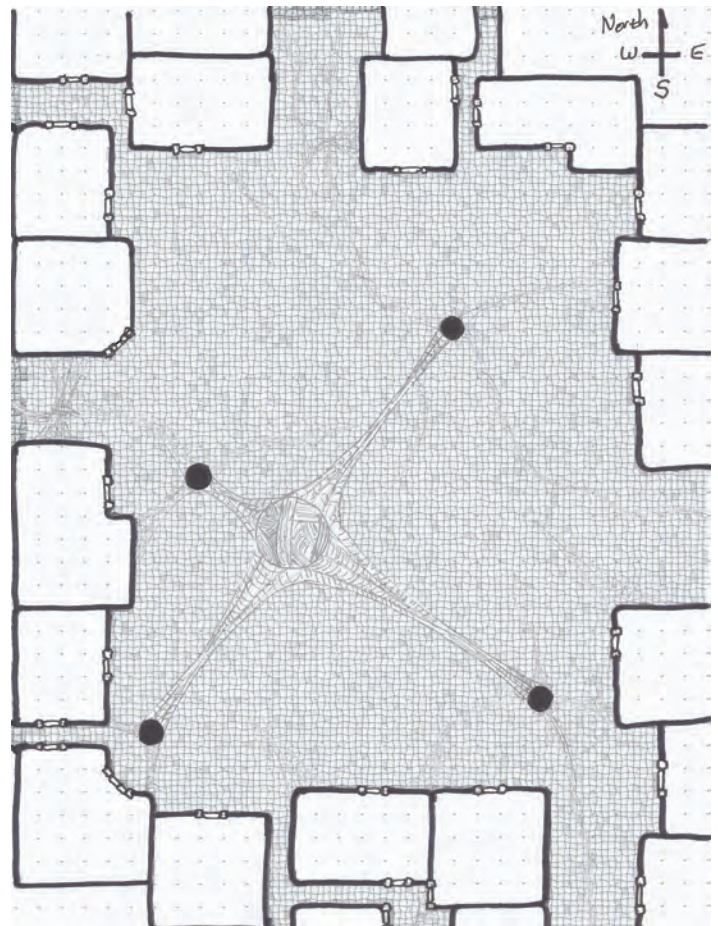
DC 12. The webs never built up like this.

DC 15. The glamour was limited to the face.

DC 18. He doesn't know what happens if you don't find your original face.

DC 20. Jingle spiders are part of Wiñol Xipantu, but he doesn't understand how they work.

If he's told they're in the Feywild. His village never strayed from the Material Plane, and will deny the claim despite evidence.



DEVELOPMENT

The city, despite being displaced, hums along. No one is panicked. Nothing is amiss or needs to be fixed. Even the aqueduct is flowing.

EPISODE 2: LONGEST NIGHT

Estimated Duration: 30 - 60 minutes

And so did he.

He kept it hid

And so did she.

They searched for blue

Their whole life through,

Then passed right by-

And never knew.

—*Shel Silverstein, Masks*

Ionko has a leisurely air about him as the party find themselves at a dead end. Shall the heroes treat this time as a festival, a hunt, or a vigil?

For the next twelve hours the party continues their residence in Arkosar. While they are encouraged by the denizens to enjoy the feast, there are a few loose threads.

The threads throughout the city, for one. Spider silk drapes the city from unknown spinnerets. Investigating this will draw the curious away from the festival and toward a shadowed figure.

The character's images are still shuffled elsewhere and no passive efforts will reveal them. Hunt for the images alone or as a party, but get it done before day break.

The night stretches on. You have heard that the whole city has planned to meet the sun, but the hours seem so far away. Some are content to eat their fill and grab a nap before dawn, while others are active, playing games and setting up small stages for impromptu concerts.

The scenes in this section of the adventure are three options to fill this twelve hour gap between Episode 2 and Episode 3. They are not written to be a linear progression. The scenes are written so the party can split up and pursue their own goals without pulling too much time and attention from a specific character.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Feywild. While not immediately apparent, the city has been transported to the Feywild, and is subject to its proclivities. See the Feywild sidebar for suggestions.

Lighting. Night deepens. Lights have faded from the edges of the city. The soft light of a jingle spiders can be seen moving across most surfaces. Main thoroughfares are brightly lit, where the alleys sink into darkness.

FEYWILD

As the city heads deeper into the Feywild, qualities native to the plane become emergent:

- For each instance of abject terror on a creature roll 1d6. On a 1, summon a meenlock (VGtM) nearby who goes to find its den.
- On a critical hit, if it would draw blood, summon a mushroom adjacent to the target. The mushroom's initiative is 0, losing ties. At the start of its third turn the mushroom becomes a **redcap** (VGtM).

Both meenlocks and redcaps should be far below what your party members would consider a challenge. The ones spawned in these circumstances have two purposes.

First, to hint to the characters they are in the Feywild.

Second, they should sow discord and threaten the lives of the citizenry, affecting the party's decision making.

SCENE A. MUCH NEEDED VACATION

There is food. There are pick up games aplenty. Plays were scheduled long before tonight, some put on by actors in facades, few done by amateurs in actor's guise.

Characters that spend six hours or more relaxing and awake in this space of time gain inspiration.

Characters can also gamble during this time. Every hour a character may attempt a contested gambling check with the locals in a game of their choosing (maximum bet of 100 GP). The locals have a +4 modifier to this check. Hours spent like this count as relaxing.

Example Plays. "The Undeath of a Merchant" by Artore the Former, "Midwinter Knight's Dream" by The Bard, "Spectre of the Odeon" by Gaston the Red, the old "Who Goes First" routine by Cerlic and Calliope, and "Grease (At 3rd Level)" by James Warren.

Example Revelers. An inveterate gambler, Hain Gutbower, is an elder halfling that heads aquifer maintenance (see Dry Country under Plot Hooks). They insist that theinsist the aquifers are working fine and refuse to leave the betting table.

Krotia Donton is a young silver dragonborn minstrel starring in many plays this evening. Between plays she rouses impromptu concerts and is a local celebrity in Arkosar.

Jenna DaTerros, a human guard, is wrapped up in the festive mood. She's capable of splitting up the street brawls that pop up, but would rather eat and chat with the townsfolk.

YOU'RE A RIOT

This is a time for the characters to explore the space. By and large the peaceful townsfolk will get on with their celebrations without input.

However, should the characters want to alert the town they are currently in the Feywild, a panic will rise, and eventually a riot will break out.

Lonko will use the glamour to his advantage to avoid the ire of a mob. The massive egg that was seen as a novelty is now to receive the brunt of the riot's fearful violence. Jingle spiders struggle to spin the shell of the egg against fire and steel wielded by the townsfolk. Redcaps will be spawned by the hundreds, meenlocks by the thousands. An enterprising local mage may think dispelling the resilient sphere holding them hostage is a good idea.

SCENE B. WEBBY WELCOME

Researching the webbing can have the following results:

DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The silk doesn't stick to any surfaces.

DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The source of the filament are the jingle spiders.

DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Rivers of silk converge on the tops of four buildings around the main square.

With nine hours remaining, a medium sized **giant spider** approaches the adventurers. On its back is a **spindle** named **Lord Dixely**. They introduce themselves with a flourish and are glad to talk to the party. Attempts to murder Lord Dixely find that they seem to be made of taffy that reshapes after a moment, unharmed. This is part of their nature as a native of the Feywild.

Lord Dixely knows/boasts/taunts about how jingle spiders can find the illusory you, being a lord of the Gloaming Court, and how the city is lost. Other information is held as secret. Each one of the following pieces of information can be learned by making a successful **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion)** check. Alternately the characters may make a deal with the fey for one answer each.

How the jingle spider's Illusion Dowsing feature works.

The city is currently in the Feywild.

The city has an audience with the Queen of Air and Darkness and is bound to the Gloaming Court.

They motion toward the sky above the market square, telling the party that the egg will be done soon.

At the conclusion of the conversation other things can be further investigated.

DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. You see a faint outline, almost spherical, hovering 40 feet above the market square stretching 30 feet across. Every hour is gets more solid. Every hour that passes the DC lowers by 2.

DC 20 Intelligence (History or Religion) check. The Gloaming Court and its only ranking member, the Queen of Air and Darkness, are evil fey. They oppose the Seelie Court, which houses the well-known fey, good or otherwise.

Lord Dixely assumes the egg will make it to dawn to finish the ritual. Breaking or preventing the egg's construction is met with laughter and enthusiasm from Lord Dixely. They appreciate how crazy the idea is and have no idea what would happen.

JINGLE SPIDERS

The jingle spider uses the statistics for spider with the following changes:

Its creature type is fey.

- **Illusion Dowsing.** When a creature holds a jingle spider, they may concentrate on an illusory image that they can see. The jingle spider can sense an illusion of identical shape within one mile, and jingles more frequently when moving toward the target.
- **Quick Invisibility.** As a reaction, the jingle spider magically turns invisible until it attacks or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Once a creature kills a single jingle spider, other jingle spiders will avoid being within 30 feet, using their Quick Invisibility reaction if encroached upon.

A character can intuit how Illusion Dowsing guides them by making a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check or a **DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check.

DEVELOPMENT

Over the course of the night, the egg continues to be constantly built by thousands if not millions of jingle spiders. Trusses are seen stretching from the buildings surrounding the market square and going to meet the egg. If the characters prioritize breaking these while being built, start the trusses with half their maximum hit points in Episode 3.

SCENE C. FACE HUNT

The size of the city makes finding a character's face difficult. The fact the images shuffle at irregular intervals makes it nearly impossible.

At the beginning of each hour, follow three steps for each search party. More than one doppelganger can be hunted, but keep in mind the images will always be far from each other. If two characters are together and searching, only the higher result finds their doppelganger.

The steps are as follows:

1. Characters attempt a **DC 25 Wisdom (Perception)** check. While using a jingle spider's Illusion Dowsing ability this is a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check.
2. If successful, the DM rolls on the Doppelganger table below to find their secret location.
3. **Simple Skill Challenge.** The DM may use the location to guide a skill challenge for the character(s). The rules are:
 - a. The character must succeed at a relevant DC 16 skill check of the player's choice two out of three times. On a second failure, the glammers shuffle.
 - b. A character cannot use a skill twice.
 - c. **Fight (Optional).** Roll initiative. At the end of the third round glammers shuffle, as detailed in the Glammered City sidebar.

DOPPELGANGER

d6 Where is your Doppelganger?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Busy doing light pickpocketing. |
| 2 | A belligerent drunk (berserker) in a bar who will fight you for it. |
| 3 | Stargazing on a roof of a three story building. |
| 4 | On the highest platform of an obstacle course. |
| 5 | Farthest reaches of Arkosar. |
| 6 | In a bed, restless. Impossible without Illusion Dowsing. |

Succeeding in finding a character's doppelganger is half the battle. The person whose image is on the target must hold them and make an affirmation of the year to come. Hesitation at this step may mean the glammers shuffle despite finding the doppelganger.

TREASURE & REWARDS

While not resplendent with ancient treasures, the festival has ways to reward an individual seeking riches.

- **Know When to Hold' Em.** Every hour a character may attempt a contested gambling check with the locals in a

game of their choosing (maximum bet of 100 GP). The locals have a +4 modifier to this check. Hours spent like this count as relaxing for Scene A. Much Needed Vacation.

- **Jingle All the Way.** Succeeding at a DC 17 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check allows a character to gain a jingle spider as a pet. Statistics can be found in the Jingle Spider sidebar.

EPISODE 3: EGG DROP

Estimated Duration: 60 - 90 minutes

Give a man a fire and he's warm for a day, but set fire to him and he's warm for the rest of his life.

—Terry Pratchett, *Jingo*

What is that sphere in the sky? Is it a grim portent that needs to be broken sooner rather than later? Should it be safeguarded? Who's to say.

SCENE A. INCURSION

The final hour is here. Read or paraphrase the following:

The egg is complete and has a glow inside of it now. Most revellers have been exhausted and have found a place to curl up and sleep. A few have woken up in preparation for the end of the vigil, ready to greet the sun. The people begin to congregate in the market square.

As the decorations are being fixed and adjusted after the night's party, there is a tearing sound. Like parchment being ripped apart, but on the scale of giants. From the banks of spider silk massive portals open, filled with a roiling miasma of dank air.

A large, polyped hand reaches out, grips the edge, and pulls out a hunched and towering foe. Scurrying from around its feet come figures which look like these town folk, but are no doubt glamoured.

Lighting. The darkness is lit solely by alien stars. Even the jingle spiders have dimmed noticeably. A colossal egg illuminates the city square below. The square, and the square alone, is brightly lit.

Four portals open around the market square directly linked to a cavern in the Underdark. From each steps out a great axe wielding **fomorian** and four **ettercaps** glamoured as townsfolk. They are here on a mission to destroy the egg. They will go about their work and ignore the party unless they attack. The fomorians are there to physically destroy the egg while the ettercaps keep the spiders and townsfolk at bay.

Having giants in a packed market square will lead to collateral damage. Loss of life is immediate and unavoidable. The terror spawns a whole battalion of meenlocks who also harass the residents of Arkosar.

The four supporting trusses are the fomorians' first target. A **truss** has the following stats:

Its base is a large trunk with a 5 foot radius.

- It has 100 hit points.

- it has the following resistances: radiant.
- It has the following damage immunities: fire, poison and psychic.

It has the following vulnerabilities: slashing.

Once the egg is no longer supported, it falls 40 feet onto the market square. Creatures caught underneath the egg when it falls take 70 (20d6) bludgeoning damage. The egg has the same stats as the truss above, but with the following modifications:

- It is a gargantuan sphere with a 15 foot radius.
- It has 200 hit points.

On rounds three and five, at initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), another fomorian and 3 (1d4 + 1) ettercaps join the fray from the open portals.

On round seven, at initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), **Graph the Fair** emerges. Graph is a **fomorian** with the following modifications:

- He has 250 hit points.
- He has an AC of 18 due to patchwork metal armor.
- He has a Strength score of 27 (+8).
- He wields a giant-sized greataxe instead of a great club. As an action, he can make two melee attacks with the great axe. Each attack has a +11 bonus to hit and deals 27 (3d12 + 8) slashing damage on a hit.

Graph has no words to spare for this incursion. Only if forced to stop and talk will he tell of his motivations. Fomorians and ettercaps are both cursed by the fey to adopt a twisted form. Be it jealousy or indignation, Graph pulled together a force to intercept this yearly tradition. Graph believes breaking this egg will simultaneously weaken the Seelie Courts and lead to an all-out war among the fey lords, Seelie and Gloaming alike.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

This encounter is an extended marathon of waves designed to be weathered rather than outright won.

- **Very Weak.** Subtract 2 **fomorians** and **ettercap** group at battle start.
- **Weak.** Subtract 1 **fomorian** and **ettercap** group.
- **Strong.** Add 2 **fomorians** at battle start.
- **Very Strong.** A new **fomorian** and 1d4 + 1 **ettercaps** come from a portal at the end of every round.

If the egg is broken at any point, continue to Scene B. Flashpoint.

DEVELOPMENT - SCENE A ONLY

With the egg intact at the end of the eighth round, the giant spider that carries Arkosar enters a cave that houses the Queen of Air and Darkness and the Gloaming Court. Some of the attackers retreat into the nearest portals. Unlucky fomorians and ettercaps

are snared in banks of silk, grappled and restrained inside a cocoon.

While the egg remains intact, the party is successful. Read or paraphrase the following:

The stars are swallowed, the night sky turning to pitch black. Lanterns still lit about the city have their flames pulled into the egg, points of light squirming underneath.

Yellow light illuminates the sky and you can see the heavens covered entirely by hair. To the east you see a pale hand break through, reaching out as if to cup your cheek. It grows larger and larger as you get closer, impossibly large. As it dips underneath the horizon and lifts the city to a pallid face that emerges from the sky.

“My queen,” announces Lord Dixely, appearing at your elbow.

The woman larger than the sky plucks the egg from the city between two colossal, spindly fingers. The Queen of Air and Darkness breathes on the egg, kicking up a hard gale to the onlookers below and stoking the egg to burn its silk chrysalis.

One moment you clearly see the Queen of Air and Darkness holding a flaming orb and the next moment, with no perceptible change, you see a sun greeting the new day on a familiar horizon. The rite completes and the year starts anew.

The city has been returned to its original place in the material plane, though the damage from the altercation remains.

SCENE B. FLASHPOINT

A crack forms in the egg and heat ripples the air around it. Four trunk sized legs spring from the crack and push it wider. As the silken shell folds back, four spiders as big as boats and made of light are pushed out from the center.

The flames coming off the central figure strip the moisture out of the air. Heated gusts come off two massive wings, like being hit with a fist.

The phoenix is free and it looks for a nest.

Inside the egg are two **sun spiders** and a **phoenix**. Creatures within 120 feet must succeed at a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 22 (4d10) fire damage. At this moment the conflagration seems to have killed any bystanders and ettercaps still in the area. The fomorians are retreating and closing their portals.

ADJUSTING THIS ENCOUNTER

This is a direct extension of the previous encounter

- **Very Weak.** The sun spiders busy themselves with the fomorians. The phoenix loses its Legendary Actions.
- **Weak.** The sun spiders busy themselves with the fomorians.
- **Strong.** Add 2 sun spiders.
- **Very Strong.** Add 4 sun spiders.

The phoenix seeks to raze the city to glass and cinder and claim it for it's new nest. Its attempts to leave are thwarted by the resilient sphere surrounding the city. The sun spiders seek to aid in the phoenix's goal.

At the end of the tenth round the city is brought into the Gloaming Court.

DEVELOPMENT - SCENE B ONLY

While the phoenix lives. The Queen of Air and Darkness is enraged at the sight of the phoenix and casts Arkosar back to its original location in the Anauroch Desert. The phoenix uses this chance to get away.

The predawn glow is still there. After a few hours it gets dimmer. The sun never came back. It seems there was more to that rite than even Ionko knew.

If the phoenix is felled. The queen of Air and Darkness reaches her massive hand to pick up the phoenix egg, and stokes it into the sun. Feel free to read Development following Scene A. Incursion.

SCENE C. CONCLUSION

Be it sunrise or the dim light the world can look forward to for the next year, Arkosar sleeps. Ionko, shaken but unharmed, thanks the adventurers for their role in saving the city. Goodwill gained will last at least through the day and doors are open to the party.

Despite the wreckage of the market square, the largest clean up seems to be the miles of food laden tables that now must be cleaned and put away.

Curse of the Faceless. Characters and townsfolk who did not find their doppelganger by sun up have a curse put upon them. While the glamour fades at dawn the character feels unshorn and is compelled to cover their face. If in daylight and not wearing a mask, the curse gives disadvantage on attacks and skill checks. This curse may be removed with remove curse or similar effects.

TREASURE & REWARDS

The surviving denizens of this wrecked city are glad for your help. While an effort needs to be made to fix the city, they know it would have been worse without the adventurers, and they collect a purse for the party's reward: a chest with 960 GP and 120 PP.

In a quiet moment following dawn, a small figure returns to the party with two packages on their back. Lord Dixely bows low, and offers them to the party "with the regards of the Queen".

Magic Items. Gain a *Cloak of Arachnida* and a *Driftglobe*.

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party **non-combat experience** awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Fomorian	3,900
Ettercap	450
Phoenix	15,000
Sun Spider	1,800

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Finding Ionko Seeliche	500
Meeting Lord Dixely	500
Finding Your Face	1,000
Winning at Gambling	50 / win

TREASURE

Characters receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item	Value
Arkosar's Thanks	960 GP & 120 PP
Jingle Spider	Priceless

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

CLOAK OF ARACHNIDA

Wondrous item (very rare)

A finely woven robe that seems to float on its own accord. The spider silk that makes up the cloak is darkened to black, as if burned. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

DRIFTGLOBE

Wondrous item (uncommon)

A tight ball of the slick webbing found in Arkosar during the festival. Inside comes a soft, shifting glow that naturally builds and fades over time. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Wiñol Xipantu (also known as We Tripantu) is a real holiday practiced by Mapuche, an indigenous people to Chile. It does in fact celebrate the return of the sun and the beginning of a new year. Ionko Seeliche's name means "Chief of the people of the Seelie" in Manudungun, an allusion to the fey courts they worship.

Other inspiration came from Inti Raymi, an Incan holiday with similar and better documented practices.

Also, read *Hogfather* by Terry Pratchett. It puts an interesting spin on what belief is as a resource and how a different point of view can change everything.

AUTHOR BIO

Joseph Avery is a founder of Sip 'n' Strut Productions (@SipnStrut on twitter) and author of other titles such *Saint Flora's Grounded Circus* and a 1-Page Encounter series available on DriveThruRPG. For more fun with Lord Dixely, check out *Humble Beginnings* on DMsGuild.



APPENDIX A: CREATURE STATISTICS

SPINDLE

Tiny fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 5 (2d4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)	17 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, Perception +4, Stealth +7

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 1/2 (50 XP)

Magic Resistance. The spindle has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. The spindle's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At-will: animal friendship

1/day each: confusion, conjure animals (2 giant spiders or 4 swarms of spiders), detect thoughts, dispel magic, sleep

ACTIONS

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 40/160 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.

Superior Invisibility. The spindle magically turns invisible until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the spindle wears or carries turns invisible with it.

SUN SPIDER

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 60 (8d12 + 8)

Speed 50 ft., climb 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Damage Immunities fire, radiant

Languages none

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brilliant Body. The spider sheds bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet. A creature that touches the spider or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) radiant damage.

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

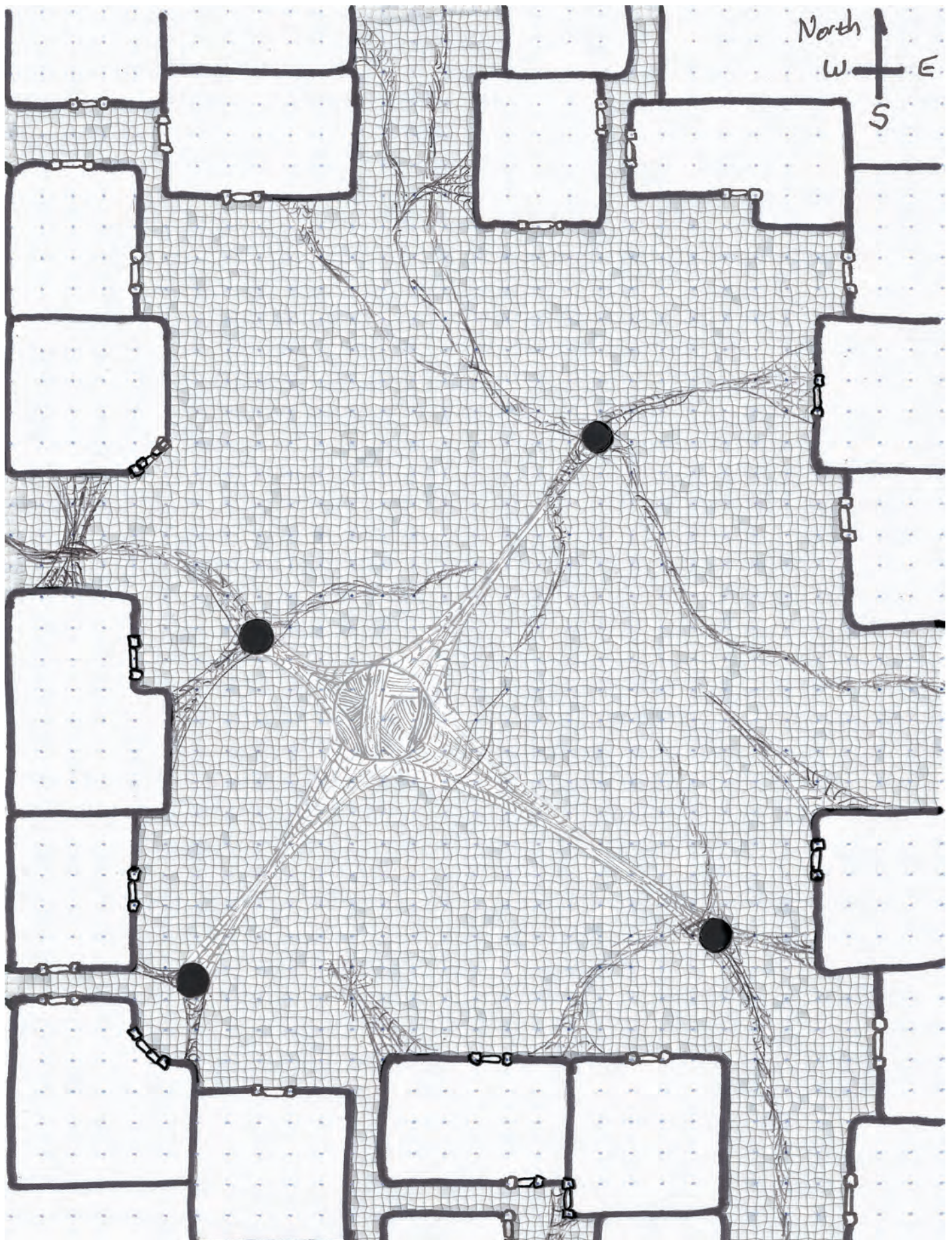
Multiattack. The spider makes two bite attacks.

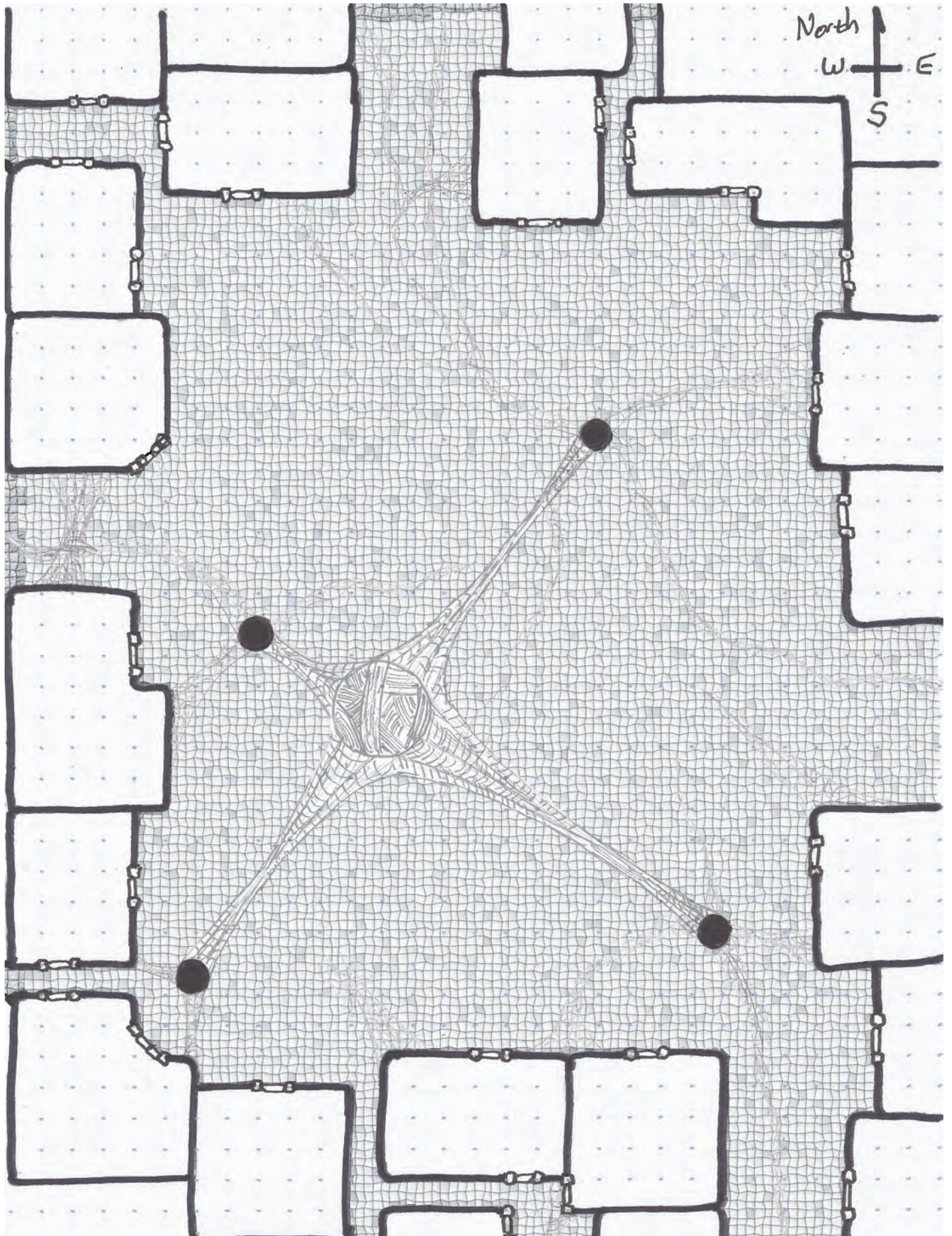
Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Flash Step (Recharge 5-6). When hit, the spider moves to a space it can see within 60 ft. and each creature within 10 feet of the space the spider left must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute.

At the end of each of its turns, the target can repeat this saving throw, ending the condition on a success.







DIVINE ICE & HOLY FIRE

12 FROZEN HALFLINGS

Introduction: When temperatures spike in the northern reaches of Faerûn, adventurers must travel to investigate a palatial ice spire that appeared over the northern pole. What they discover is much more than a change in climate, as they are called on to intervene in a divine war between Ice and Fire, before the world is thrown out of balance and Midwinter is ruined forever.

A 4-6 HOUR ADVENTURE FOR 17TH - 20TH LEVEL CHARACTERS.

BY EMILY SMITH



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

This section provides the adventure's background, a list of prominent NPCs, an overview of the adventure in play, and hooks that you can use to introduce your players' characters to the action.

BACKGROUND

At the northern pole of Faerun lives an ancient chronomancer named **NIKOLAI VREMYAR**. Nikolai resides in a workshop hidden beneath the earth, where he and his halfling tinkers protect the **CHRONOMANCY ENGINE**, a powerful mechanical contraption capable of controlling reality itself.

The chronomancy engine draws its power from a magical nexus, resting directly at the northernmost pole. The nexus and chronomancy engine have been contested for thousands of years, most recently by the god of winter **AURIL** who seeks to use the power of the nexus to amplify her powers across all of Faerun, encasing the world in unending winter.

Over the last several months, Auril tested the magical protections of Nikolai's village, until she opened an unprotected crack in the North Pole, the magical entrance to the village. She slipped freezing air through, slowly corrupting the magic protecting the village and sickening Nikolai over time.

One tenday ago, Auril forced her way into the village through the crack in the pole and attacked Nikolai, who was weakened by her magic. During the battle, the chronomancy engine was damaged, sending out a shockwave, freezing time in a 1-mile radius, and sucking both Auril and Nikolai into the engine itself.

Auril's nemesis **KOSSUTH**, the god of fire, immediately felt her absence and began expanding his territory. Over the last tenday, Kossuth has been traveling North, transforming the world from a winter wonderland into a balmy summer paradise. With Auril out of the way, Kossuth plans to seize control of the chronomancy engine and bathe the world in an unending summer.

EPISODES

The adventure's story is spread over 5 **Episodes** that take approximately 4 total hours to play.

Episode 1: Northward Bound. After reports of unbelievably hot weather and catastrophic storms in the Northern reaches of Faerun, characters are called upon to investigate and find the source. This is the **Call to Action**.



Episode 2: The Village. The characters arrive at the North Pole, find a way inside the ice spire, activate the pole, and investigate Nikolai's village.

Episode 3: Into the Workshop. Characters investigate Nikolai's workshop, repair the chronomancy engine, and enter a portal to the Weave to save Nikolai from Auril.

Episode 4: Into the Weave. Characters pass through the portal, where they find Auril and Nikolai locked in combat. They must choose a side before all is lost.

Episode 5: The Final Battle. The characters escape from the Weave, only to find Kossuth waiting for them. With Auril weakened, the balance of elemental power has been thrown off, and characters must intervene before the world is wreathed in eternal summer.

Epilogue. With Nikolai too ill to bring toys to the children of Faerun, the fate of Midwinter lies in the hands of the characters.

EPISODE 1: NORTHWARD BOUND

(CALL TO ACTION)

Estimated Duration: 45 - 90 minutes

In the depth of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.

— *Albert Camus*

The characters arrive in Luskan, where they gather information and start their trek north.

SCENE A. GATHERING INFORMATION

During the dead of winter, on Hammer 20, characters are contacted by Livira Brimerth, a priestess of Chauntea in the Northern city of Luskan. She provides the following details:

- A tenday ago, Luskan began experiencing incredibly hot weather seemingly overnight.
- The unnatural rise in temperatures caused crops to sprout out of season, adversely affecting farmers.
- Fishermen fear the temperature changes will affect the migration routes and breeding of key fish, such as Luskan Salmon
- Massive hurricanes and tornados have begun battering the city, with rain flooding the streets.
- Reports from the wildlands to the North speak of similar weather, with temperatures increasing further North as time goes on.
- An ancient guardian, Nikolai, is known to protect a powerful source of magic at the farthest northern pole, 10 days' journey from Luskan. An enormous ice spire has appeared where he is rumored to be, causing concern.

Livira asks characters to travel north, investigate the strange heat, and check on Nikolai, offering characters a reward of 2,000 gp. Livira offers the party a large dogsled, big enough to carry all party members, as well as 9 trained sled dogs (**Mastiffs**): Runner, Caper, Romper, Siren, Starlet, Floofer, Pupper, Batten, and Randolph. The mastiffs have a 40 ft movement speed and are not affected by difficult terrain caused by snow.

TRAVELING NORTH

As characters travel north, they experience several random encounters, including Encounter A and at least 1 other encounter. If you wish to extend play, characters may have additional encounters. Encounters can occur in any order. If characters travel at a normal pace, they arrive at the North Pole on Midwinter's Eve.

ENCOUNTER A. NORTHWARD BOUND

A farmer's cart, drawn by two donkeys and loaded with large burlap sacks, hobbles along the road ahead of you. A hunched human form, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat, whistles a merry tune while loosely holding the reins.

Kossuth has disguised himself as a human farmer named Jebediah, ("Jeb for short"), to douse suspicion as he travels North. He has heavily tanned, leathery skin, a shock of red hair, and emerald eyes. Kossuth's godlike powers prevent any magical intervention from determining his identity.

If questioned, Kossuth claims that he is a farmer from Hillmark, a farming village to the south of Luskan, who is traveling North to take advantage of the unseasonably warm weather to sell goods to normally-inaccessible markets. He speaks favorably of the warm weather, becoming irritated if characters disagree with him.

After a brief conversation, Kossuth bids the characters farewell, as they are able to travel much more swiftly than he is (his farmer's cart moves at a speed of 20 ft).

TEMPERATURE CONTROL

The regional temperature changes are centered on Kossuth. As characters approach Kossuth over several days, the temperature climbs from 80 to 100 degrees. As characters travel ahead of Kossuth, temperatures slowly fall.

ENCOUNTER B. RESTING REMORHAZ

A 100-ft radius cloud of steam rises from the snowy hills ahead. 3 **Remorhaz** are napping in a valley near the side of the road, melting the snow around them. When characters approach, they attack.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove 1 **Remorhaz**.
- **Strong:** Add 1 **Remorhaz**.
- **Very Strong:** Add 2 **Remorhaz**.

ENCOUNTER C. SNOWNADO

Emerging from behind the mountain ahead, an enormous swirling tornado of snow and ice speeds towards you.

Allow each player 1 action, bonus action, and free action before the tornado hits them. An action can be used to shield a dog, the sled, or the equipment on the sled (rations, clothing, etc.), or for the character to take cover.

If necessary, a character may roll an appropriate DC 15 check to see how effectively they complete their action. If they fail, that item is lost to the storm. Grant players advantage for creative thinking and allow players to work together for more beneficial effects. Spells and abilities may be used to shield multiple creatures or items.

If a character does not take cover when the storm hits, they take 30 points of cold damage and 20 points of slashing damage and are thrown 100 ft in a random direction. Unprotected items and dogs suffer the same effect (resulting in items being destroyed and otherwise lost to the storm).

ENCOUNTER D. ARE WE THERE YETI?

While characters pass through a mountain valley, a herd of 3 territorial **Abominable Yeti** descend from the cliffside to attack.

One of the yetis has a pouch made of its own tangled fur, containing a black steel dagger with red, blue, green, black, and clear gemstones, arranged to resemble the scales of a dragon, worth 1,500 gp.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove 1 **Abominable Yeti**.
- **Strong:** Add 1 **Abominable Yeti**.
- **Very Strong:** Add 2 **Abominable Yeti**.

EPISODE 2: THE VILLAGE

Estimated Duration: 30 - 120 minutes

“Eternity is a glorious word, but eternity is ice.”

- *Dejan Stojanovic, The Sun Watches the Sun*

The characters arrive at the North Pole, find a way inside the ice spire, activate the pole, and investigate Nikolai’s village.

SCENE A. THE NORTH POLE

A spire of glistening ice, several hundred feet tall, rises sharply from the horizon ahead of you. Overhead, green and blue lights shimmer in the night sky, like rivers of fluorescent glass frozen among the stars.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

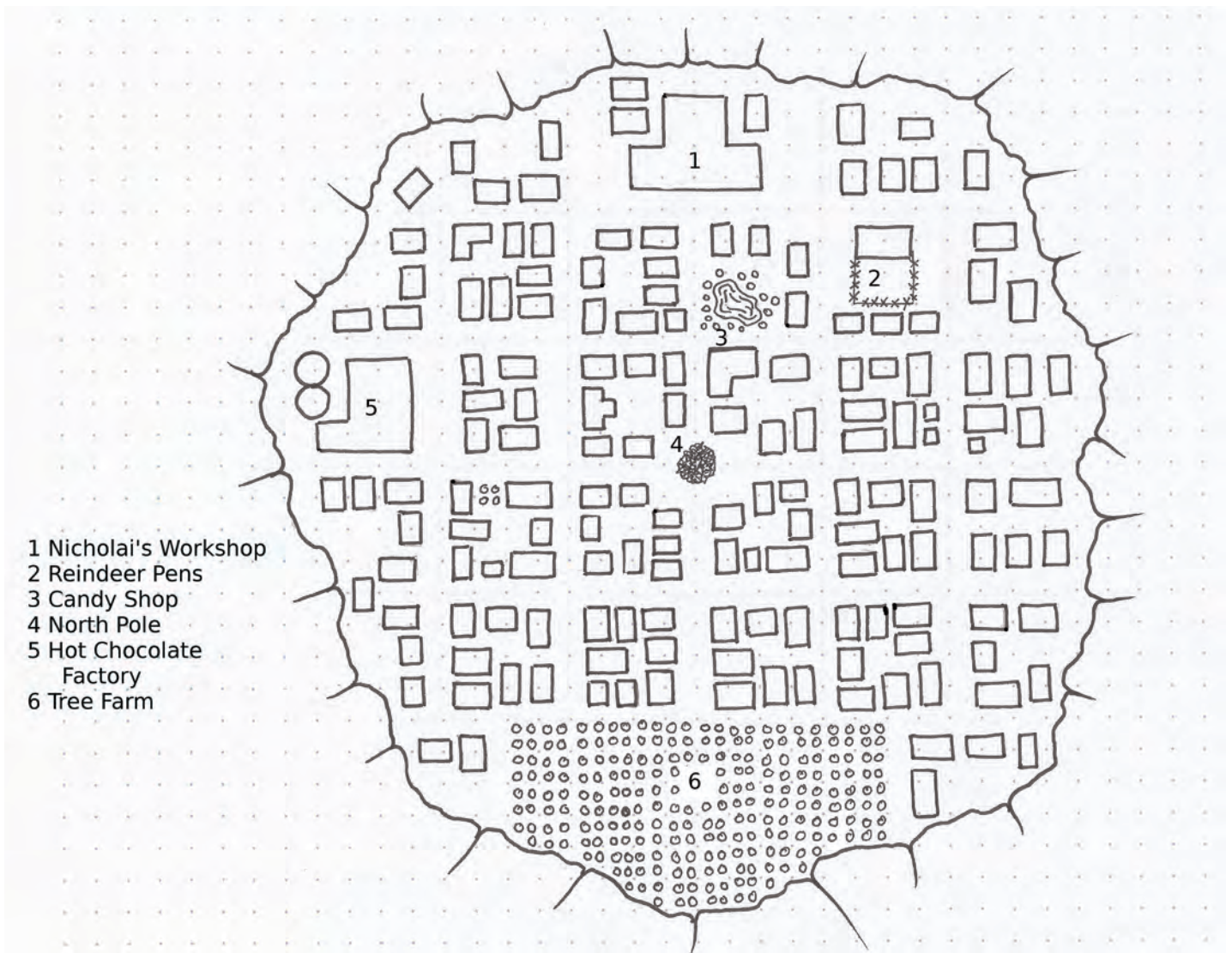
Dimensions & Terrain. A 500 ft tall ice spire surrounds the North Pole in a 100 ft radius. It is formed by thousands of sharp icy spikes that erupted from the earth, which came together to form a peak. Medium-sized creatures can squeeze through the spaces between the spikes.

Inside, the ice spire is hollow, with a 100 ft radius of bare snow marked with shallow snowdrifts.

- A **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival)** check reveals a set of humanoid footprints in the snow, which travel from the main road into the ice spire and to the center of the area. The footprints are from a tenday ago, when Auril arrived at the Pole. The ice spire sprang up after she entered the area, to protect the entrance.
- A white and red striped pole is buried in the ground. A **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation)** check locates the top of the pole, which is a rounded ball. The pole emits an aura of conjuration magic. The pole has been partially cracked open, with a narrow fissure filled with ice shards. The ball can be twisted 90 degrees clockwise, causing the pole to magically rise out of the ground, to a height of 4 ft, and begin to flicker with light. Any character that touches the glowing pole is transported into Nikolai’s workshop, which occupies an enormous cavern 1,000 ft below ground.

SCENE B. THE VILLAGE

An enormous cavern stretches overhead, with snowflakes seemingly falling from the stony ceiling. A miniature village, fitted with tiny homes, shops, and avenues fills the area. A 30 ft pine tree grows from the center of the village, bedecked in bright baubles, tinsel, and magical lights, which stands next to a white and red striped pole. Despite the quaint nature of the town, the streets are eerily silent and barren.



- 1 Nicholai's Workshop
- 2 Reindeer Pens
- 3 Candy Shop
- 4 North Pole
- 5 Hot Chocolate Factory
- 6 Tree Farm

During this section, characters can explore the village for clues which will lead them to Nikolai's Workshop.

THE VILLAGE

This village was built by Nikolai and his halfling tinkers, to protect the Chronomancy Engine and magical nexus. They have lived here for thousands of years, and the area is imbued with magical protection from its proximity to the nexus. The village features classic shops found at the North Pole, such as a candy factory, reindeer stables, a post office, and Nikolai's Workshop.

The Chronomancy Engine was damaged 2 tenday ago during the battle between Auril and Nikolai, releasing a time-stopping shockwave which has stopped time throughout the entire village. Most halflings are frozen in the workshop, but characters may discover reindeer unmoving in the stables, birds frozen mid-chirp, or the odd halfling frozen while going about their daily duties in the village.

After Auril defeated Nikolai, she dragged him through a portal created by the Chronomancy Engine. Meanwhile, Auril's forces have populated the village, with orders to protect the Chronomancy Engine at all costs. The area is influenced by Auril's powers, with below-freezing temperatures and thick ice frosting over the windows and ground.

Suggested clues are listed below, though you may choose to add more as is appropriate.

- A **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** check notices that the snowflakes are hung in midair (frozen in time).
- A **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival)** check reveals dozens of large and huge footprints leading away from the pole. Halfling and reindeer footprints are found throughout the village. Giant footprints lead to the Candy Shop.
- A **DC 20 Wisdom (Survival)** check reveals a set of humanoid footprints (from Auril) leading from the pole at the center of the village directly to Nikolai's workshop.
- A **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation)** check unearths a lone carrot buried in the snow near the North Pole. This carrot is a **Snoughmin's Snoot**: a petrified carrot which

can be used to summon a snow elemental (See *Adventure Rewards* and **Appendix C** for details).

AURIL'S MINIONS

If characters interrogate any of Auril's minions, they know the following:

- They arrived here two tenday ago.
 - Their master, Auril, attacked Nikolai to gain control of the Chronomancy Engine and the magical nexus at the North Pole.
 - Once Auril fully controls the nexus, she can freeze the entire world and turn it into her domain.
- The minions may have more location-specific information or be able to direct characters to specific scenes within this section at your discretion.

SCENE C. THE CANDY SHOP

A candy factory, filled with life-sized candy ornaments, trees, and decorations, has been taken over by a **frost giant everlasting one** and **five frost giants**, who are ripping licorice trees out of the ground and throwing them into each other's mouths like popcorn, swimming through a gumball pool, and otherwise destroying the building.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove 3 **Frost Giants**.
- **Weak:** Remove 1 **Frost Giant**.
- **Strong:** Add 1 **Frost Giant Everlasting One**.
- **Very Strong:** Add 1 **Frost Giant Everlasting One** and 2 **Frost Giants**.

EXPLORING THE TREE FARM

The candy shop is a two-story-tall structure, with a forest of candy canes, green licorice trees with malt ball ornaments, a pool of gumballs, butterscotch boulders, and more. Each of the different types of candy can be harvested by characters and treated as different potions. Roll the appropriate number of dice to see how many of each type of candy is intact and available:

- 2d6 **candy canes of heroism** (functions as a **potion of heroism**)
- 4d4 **licorice of invisibility** (functions as a **potion of invisibility**)
- 2d8 **malt balls of longevity** (functions as a **potion of longevity**)
- 3d8 **gumballs of diminution** (functions as a **potion of diminution**)
- 2d4 **butterscotch bites of speed** (functions as a **potion of speed**)

SCENE D. SALAMANDER PATROL

Two **Ice Devils** mounted on two **Frost Salamanders** are patrolling the village. They attack the characters on sight. A group **DC 13 Group Stealth Check** is needed to avoid the patrol. The Ice Devils carry two Blue Agate gemstones, worth 200 gp each.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove the 2 **Frost Salamanders**.
- **Strong:** Add 1 **Ice Devil**.
- **Very Strong:** Add 1 **Ice Devil** and 1 **Frost Salamander**.

SCENE E. HOT CHOCOLATE FACTORY

This hot chocolate factory features 2-story-tall indoor silos full of different varieties of hot chocolate. Small, labelled gift boxes are prepackaged and displayed on a table near the door. The building has not been infiltrated by Auril's forces. A small beverage station with cups, hot water, and a seating area with plush cushioned couches sits at the back of the room. This area is ideal for a Short or Long Rest.

There are several flavors of hot chocolate available, including white chocolate, candy cane, snickerdoodle, gingerbread, dark chocolate, blood orange, and mint. The first cup of hot chocolate that each character drinks functions as a **potion of supreme healing** (10d4+20). Each time a character drinks another cup within a 24 hour period, the type of healing potion decreases in effectiveness (from **supreme**, to **superior** (8d4+8), to **greater** (4d4+4), to a normal **healing potion** (2d4+2)). After 24 hours have passed, the cycle resets.

There are several tons of each type of hot chocolate here, and each cup of hot chocolate requires approximately 100 grams of powder to function as a healing potion. Each prepackaged box contains 4 doses of hot chocolate, with 2d10 prepackaged boxes of each type of hot chocolate available.

SCENE F. THE TREE FARM

The southern portion of the village is filled with a Midwinter tree farm, where hundreds of finely decorated trees are cared for by an attentive halfling named Prune. Since Auril took control of the village, her minions (**Arboreal Golems**) (See **Appendix 1**) have infiltrated the Tree Farm, where they lie in wait for unwary travelers.

The golems look like every other pine tree, but their decorations have been haphazardly placed: they can be spotted with a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check. Near the front of the forest, a passive Perception 10 notices a female halfling (Prune), wearing a red plaid shirt, suspenders, and a jaunty cap is being used as a tree topper (atop an Arboreal Golem).

If characters rescue Prune and remove her time-stopped condition, she can provide information on the layout of the village, allowing characters advantage on Stealth checks for the remainder of this adventure. She can also give characters background information on the nature of the village, the halflings, and Nikolai. Removing the *time stop* condition requires a *wish*, 7th level *dispel magic*, or Divine Intervention.

ROLEPLAYING PRUNE

Prune is a boisterous, bisexual halfling woman who tends to the Tree Farm. She is quick-to-the-point, with a hearty laugh and a love for good cider. In her spare time, she has taken up mapmaking and is proficient with Cartographer's Tools.

EXPLORING THE TREE FARM

Dozens of ornaments have fallen into the snow throughout the forest, including 2d4 Arboreal Seraphs, which can be spotted with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

TREASURE & REWARDS

Magic Items. Arboreal Seraph. Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement). (See *Adventure Rewards*)

SCENE G. REINDEER PENS

A well-maintained wooden enclosure houses Nikolai's 9 reindeer (**deer** with 80 ft fly speed), all but 1 of which are frozen in time. Rudolph's shining red nose contains magical properties, including innate Truesight in a 120 ft cone as well as an Antimagic Field, which protected him from the spell's effects.

Rudolph is hiding from Auril's forces inside his pen. A **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion)** check is needed to calm him and convince him to speak with the characters. This check is made at advantage if the characters offer to help Nikolai. Rudolph knows the following information:

- The layout of the village and location of the workshop, what the Chronomancy Engine and magical nexus are, and what the purpose of the village is.
- Nikolai is a kind man. Every year, he uses the Chrono-

mancy Engine to slow time all over the world, so they can deliver toys to children in a single night, for Midwinter.

- Nikolai has been sick for the last several tenday.
- Something bad happened two tenday ago. A scary ice-coated woman went into the workshop. A minute later, there was a huge explosion, and everything froze in time. The ice creatures arrived when the woman did and have been here ever since. He hasn't seen the ice woman again, or any of the halflings.

EPISODE 3: INTO THE WORKSHOP

Estimated Duration: 30 - 60 minutes

Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing.

—*The Santa Clause*

Characters investigate Nikolai's workshop, repair the chronomancy engine, and enter a portal to the Weave to save Nikolai from Auril.

SCENE A. THE WORKSHOP

A toy workshop, filled with tinkered toys and painted dolls, is in disarray. At the center of the room, an enormous clockwork machine has been crumpled on one side. A dozen halflings, with colorful green uniforms and pointed hats, are frozen in midair, posed as if they were thrown back from an explosive force.

The workshop is in disarray, after Auril overpowered Nikolai two tenday ago in an epic battle, before disabling the Chronomancy Engine, using its power to open a portal to The Weave, and dragging Nikolai inside (where their battle continues) (See **The Chronomancy Engine** for more details).

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The workshop is 60 ft square. Small workbenches covered with toys in all manner of assembly fill the room. A large wooden counter near the center of the room says "Days To Midwinter: 20". The chronomancy engine dominates the center of the room, with the ring of twelve halflings surrounding it, frozen in midair. The room is in disarray, with workbenches falling over from the explosion and large ice spikes lining the ground from Auril's entrance.

Lighting. Large, frosted-over windows allow dim light to filter in. Unlit sconces line the walls, with small gas lamps on each workbench.

Trinkets. While characters investigate the workshop for clues, they find a variety of toys and trinkets scattered throughout the room. Roll on the **Midwinter Trinkets Table (Appendix B)** to see what characters discover.

THE HALFLINGS

The halflings (**commoners**) are frozen in time, trapped in midair, due to a mechanical failure of the Chronomancy Engine when Auril and Nicholas opened the portal and traveled inside. A Wish, 7th level dispel magic, or Divine Intervention can release

them from the effect of the timestop magic. Repairing the chronomancy engine also ends the effect. When the effect is ended, the halflings fall to the floor, dazed and confused.

The lead elf, Bernard, is a sarcastic but good-hearted halfling that has been in charge of toyshop operations for over 300 years. He can tell characters how to fix the chronomancy engine, as well as the details of the fight. He saw Auril open up the portal and drag Nikolai inside, just before the shockwave erupted and they were frozen.

THE CHRONOMANCY ENGINE

The Chronomancy Engine is a magical mechanical device, 10 ft in diameter, which is capable of controlling reality itself. The chronomancy engine draws its power from a magical nexus, resting directly at the northernmost pole. The device can be mechanically manipulated to open a gateway into the Weave, the extradimensional plane which is the source of all magic.

After Auril overpowered Nikolai, she opened the gateway to The Weave and dragged Nikolai inside, closing the passageway behind them and damaging the Chronomancy Engine so that no one could follow them. This caused the Chronomancy Engine to let out a pulse of energy, knocking back the halflings and casting Time Stop on the entire village (see Chronomancy Engine Effect Table: Roll 1).

To repair the Chronomancy Engine, characters must succeed on three **DC 15** checks using either **Intelligence (Arcana)**, **Tinker's Tools**, **Smith's Tools**, or another applicable skill. If characters have the assistance of Bernard, he instructs them on how to repair the machine, and these checks are made at advantage.

Once the machine has been repaired, it takes 10 rounds to power up. Each round, roll 1d100 and apply the appropriate effect from the Chronomancy Engine Effect Table. After it powers up, the characters must succeed a **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana)** check to manipulate the engine controls to open the portal to The Weave.

Chronomancy Engine Effect Table

d100	Effect
1	<i>Time's top</i> emits from the Chronomancy Engine 1 mile horizontally and 500 ft vertically. This effect lasts for 1d4 tenday or until it is dispelled with a 9th level <i>dispel magic</i> , <i>wish</i> , or a Divine Intervention, or until the Chronomancy Engine is repaired. The Chronomancy Engine breaks down.
2-8	Arcs of white light play across the surface of the engine until the end of its turn. The engine emits a bright flash of white light. All player characters are transported back in time, as they are now, to the moment when the adventure began.
9-10	The engine makes a loud "WHAAA" sound until the start of its next turn. For as long as the sound lasts, the engine projects an <i>anti-magic field</i> (as the spell) around itself.
11-15	The hollow interior of the engine flickers with crimson light until the end of its turn, whereupon one dead character or NPC of the DM's choice is restored to life, as though subjected to a resurrection spell. The revived creature appears in a safe, unoccupied space within 120 feet of the engine.
16-19	The engine spews slippery goo that splatters across its outer surface. Saving throws to avoid being knocked off the engine and ability checks made to climb the engine have disadvantage until the engine's next turn.
20-22	The engine crackles with lightning. All creatures within 30 feet of the engine must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 10d6 lightning damage. A target made primarily of metal or wearing metal armor has disadvantage on its saving throw.
23-27	The engine hums until the end of its turn, at which point a green slaad appears in a safe space within 120 feet of the engine. The slaad rolls initiative and, on its turn, attacks any other creature it sees.
28-32	The engine groans loudly and turns each creature within 120 feet of it invisible. A creature's invisibility lasts until it attacks or casts a spell.
33-35	Loud whispers emanate from the hollow interior of the engine. Each character in direct contact with the engine can increase one ability score of his or her choice by 2, to a maximum of 24.
36-39	Multicolored arcs of light play across the surface of the engine, which casts a polymorph spell (save DC 18) on each creature within 20 feet of it. Any creature that fails the saving throw is polymorphed into a flying snake.
40-43	The engine spits out 50 multicolored gemstones worth 500 gp each.
44-48	The engine emits a flash of yellowish-white light. A randomly determined magic item appears in a safe location within 120 feet of the engine. Roll on Magic Item Table G in the Dungeon Master's Guide to determine what appears.
49-52	The engine emits a flash of green light. Each creature in direct contact with the engine must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 10d6+40 force damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, it is disintegrated. A disintegrated creature and everything it is wearing and carrying, except artifacts, are reduced to fine dust.
53-57	The engine flickers with blue light and casts faerie fire, targeting all creatures within 20 feet of it (save DC 18). The spell's effect has a duration of 1 minute.
58-60	The engine spews harmless, multicolored sparks until the start of its next turn.
61-66	The engine emits a flash of violet light. Each creature within 20 feet of the engine must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be petrified until the engine's next turn.
67-70	The engine plays jingle bell music. The next time this result is rolled, the music stops.
71-76	The engine makes a horrible grinding noise. All lawful creatures within 30 feet of it regain all of their hit points.
77-80	The engine emits a flash of violet-white light. All extraplanar creatures within 100 miles of the engine instantly return to their native planes of existence.
81-99	A wave of sparkling purple energy washes out from the engine. All creatures within 20 feet are affected by a permanent <i>Blessing of Protection</i> (see the Dungeon Master's Guide).
00	

EPISODE 4: INTO THE WEAVE

Estimated Duration: 45 - 60 minutes

I'm Mr. White Christmas

I'm Mr. Cool.

I'm Mr. Icicle

I'm Mr. 10 below

Friends call me Snow Miser

Whatever I touch

Turns to snow in my clutch!

I'm too much

—*Jules Bass, Snow Miser*

Characters pass through the portal to The Weave, where they find Auril and Nikolai locked in combat. They must choose a side before Nikolai is defeated and the world falls into an endless winter- forever.

SCENE A. FIGHTING AURIL

Swirling, multicolored light fills your vision, with no discernible landmarks, sky, or even floor to speak of. As you float amongst the lights, you see two shapes in the distance: a frail old man in tattered red robes shoots bolts of radiant energy, his long white beard, thick with icicles, flying wildly around his face. A sharp female figure, encased in armor made of icicles, sprays shards of ice at the figure, slicing deeply into his shoulder and spraying blood into the air.

AREA INFORMATION

This area features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Weave is an otherworldly plane formed entirely of magic, which contains no surfaces on which to stand. Instead, characters can move themselves any direction through space at twice their normal movement speed. The space stretches on as far as the eye can see, with no discerning features or landmarks.

Wild Magic. Because of The Weave's inherently magical nature, any spells cast while inside of the plane trigger Wild Magic effects. See **Appendix A** for a Midwinter-themed Wild Magic table.

Lighting. Multicolored lights provide bright light throughout the area.

Time passes more quickly inside of the Weave: while Auril and Nikolai (a **rchmage**) have been locked in battle for only a few hours, two tenday have passed in Faerun.

If the battle continues without the characters' intervention, Auril will destroy Nikolai. Otherwise,

Auril turns to fight characters when they intercede. She fights until defeated, at which points her avatar dies and her power is weakened (but the Goddess is not destroyed).

If Nikolai survives combat, he thanks the characters for their help and asks that they help him return to the workshop. If Auril is defeated, her body solidifies into ice, as her flesh and bones melt away, leaving behind icy crystal organs. These gemstones are freezing-cold to the touch and cause immediate frostbite to anyone who handles them with bare hands. The gemstones are worth 10,000 gp as a set. Additionally, characters can recover a **staff of frost** from her body.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Auril has minimum hit points (400) and does not have the Multiattack feature).
- **Weak:** Auril does not have the Multiattack feature.
- **Strong:** Two **w hite a bishai** (Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes) appear to assist Auril. Auril has maximum hit points (760).
- **Very Strong:** Two **frost salamanders** appear to assist Auril. Auril has maximum hit points (760).

TREASURE & REWARDS

Magic Items. Staff of Frost (See *Adventure Rewards*)

EPISODE 5: THE FINAL BATTLE

Estimated Duration: 45 - 60 minutes

I'm Mr. Green Christmas

I'm Mr. Sun.

I'm Mr. Heat Blister

I'm Mr. One Hundred and one

They call me Heat Miser

Whatever I touch

Starts to melt in my clutch.

I'm too much!

—Jules Bass, *Heat Miser*

The characters escape from the Weave, only to find Kossuth waiting for them. With Auril weakened, the balance of elemental power has been thrown off, and characters must intervene before the world is wreathed in eternal summer.

SCENE A. HERE COMES KOSSUTH

As you emerge from the portal, you see a familiar figure leaning against the door frame: Jebediah looks up at you, his mouth quirked in amusement. “Well, now look at what we have here. Took you long enough to clean all this up, didn’t it?”

Kossuth seeks to gain control of the chronomancy engine and magical nexus, especially now that Auril and Nikolai are too weak to stop him.

If Auril or Nikolai are alive, Kossuth politely asks the characters to finish them off. He then asks characters to step aside so that he can claim the nexus. Kossuth is especially cocky, and will gladly tell characters about his clever plan to wait until Auril and Nikolai were weakened, and then take the nexus for himself, as well as how he has ridden north, transforming the icy tundra to a summer paradise along the way.

He may offer characters additional rewards if they are willing to join his side, such as warlock or cleric patronage.

Characters may attempt to convince Kossuth to back down. The character must present a compelling argument and succeed on a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion)** check. Other characters can’t help on this check; it is made with advantage, however, if the character sufficiently strokes Kossuth’s ego, chooses to enter his service (similar to a warlock or cleric), or sufficiently convinces him that they have enough power remaining to defeat his avatar. At least 3 successful checks (preferably from different party members) are required to convince Kossuth to leave the nexus peacefully.

If characters steadfastly refuse to relinquish the nexus and fail to convince Kossuth to back down, Kossuth attacks. Kossuth fights until defeated, at which points his avatar dies and his power is weakened (but the God is not destroyed). If Kossuth is defeated, characters can recover a **Flame Tongue Whip** from his body. As Kossuth dies, his body turns to ash, which is magically crushed and compounded until it forms a single, perfect diamond, worth 5,000 gp.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Kossuth has minimum hit points (400) and does not have the Multiattack feature).
- **Weak:** Kossuth does not have the Multiattack feature.
- **Strong:** Two **bone devils** appear to assist Kossuth. Kossuth has maximum hit points (760).
- **Very Strong:** Two horned devils appear to assist Kossuth. Kossuth has maximum hit points (760).

TREASURE & REWARDS

Magic Items. Flame Tongue Whip (See *Adventure Rewards*)

EPISODE 6: EPILOGUE

Estimated Duration: 5 - 10 minutes

All I know is, every Christmas, Santa comes through for me and you and everybody we know. And now that he needs my help, I'm not gonna let Santa down. I'm gonna go find the North Pole. You'll come with me, right?

—Darby, *Pooh's Super Sleuth Christmas Movie*

With Nikolai too ill (or potentially deceased) to bring toys to the children of Faerûn, the fate of Midwinter lies in the hands of the characters. Now that the chronomancy engine has been repaired, the reindeer and halflings are unfrozen, and the halflings begin to load the toys and hitch the reindeer to the sleigh. Bernard approaches the characters and asks them to deliver toys on Nikolai's behalf and save Midwinter.

If the characters agree to help, you may choose to have them describe what they do to help deliver the toys, the locations they visit, and the children they meet along the way. You may also take this opportunity to build on the adventure further, creating random encounters that characters face along the way, or using this as a jumping point into your own story.

When the characters return, Bernard offers to let them keep the **satchel of the dual saint** as a reward for their help. Additionally, each of the characters receives **The Magic of Midwinter** epic boon.

If Nikolai is deceased, Bernard may also ask one (or more) of the characters to stay behind at the North Pole and take his place.

TREASURE & REWARDS

This section has the following rewards:

Magic Items. Satchel of the Dual Saint(See *Adventure Rewards*)

Special Rewards. The Magic of Midwinter (Epic Boon). (See *Adventure Rewards*)

Adventure Rewards

The characters earn the following player rewards for completing the adventure:

EXPERIENCE

Total up all combat experience earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For non-combat experience, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party non-combat experience awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Abominable Yeti	5,000 XP
Arboreal Golem	20,000 XP
Archmage	8,400 XP
Auril	90,000 XP
Bone Devil	5,000 XP
Commoner	10 XP
Dee	10 XP
Frost Giant	3,900 XP
Frost Giant Everlasting One	8,400 XP
Frost Salamander	5,000 XP
Horned Devil	7,200 XP
Ice Devil	11,500 XP
Kossuth	90,000 XP
Mastiff	25 XP
Remorhaz	7,200 XP
White Abishai	2,300 XP

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Creature	Experience
Befriend Rudolph	500
Save Nikolai	5,000
Deliver the Toys/Save Midwinter	10,000

TREASURE

Characters receive the following treasure, to be divided evenly amongst the party.

Item	Value
Draconic Dagger	1,500 gp
Blue Agate Gemstones (2)	200 gp each
Auril's Frozen Organs	10,000 gp
Kossuth's Diamond	5,000 gp

MAGIC ITEM UNLOCK

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Magic Items. Satchel of the Dual Saint. Wondrous item, legendary (attunement optional). This wide, red bag feels hefty and partially filled, even when empty. It functions as a bag of holding with an opening 4 feet in diameter at the mouth and 8 feet deep. The bag can hold 1,000 pounds, not exceeding a volume of 128 cubic feet.

When the bag is attuned to a creature, it also offers one of two properties depending on the creature's alignment:

The Giving Saint. Good aligned character can, as an action, reach into the bag's opening and retrieve any mundane item with a value of 2 gp or less. You can retrieve up to 10 gp worth of items from the bag each day; the bag resets at dawn. Items are created by the beneficent magic of the bag and is not taken from elsewhere in the multiverse. If you use the bag for selfish reasons, as decided by your DM, your attunement to the bag ends indefinitely.

The Taking Demon. If you are of evil alignment, attuning to the bag transforms you into a beast-like demon with chains and bells lashed to your wrists, ankles, and horns. While in this form, you have the statistics of a barlgura (MM 56) with the following changes: your size is medium and your intelligence is 10 (+0). As long as you are in this form, you have an unnatural, unavoidable desire to collect creatures of non-good alignment and stuff them into the Satchel of the Dual Saint.

Arboreal Seraph. Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement). This tiny brass angel has a small bell clutched within its hands. When you shake the angel and jingle its bell you teleport to the top branches of the nearest tree within 100 feet of you. So long as the angel remains in the tree with you, each of the bottom branches act as an alarm spell, alerting you of small or larger trespassers (See **Appendix C: Magic Items**)

Snoughmin's Snoot. Wondrous item, rare. While this petrified carrot is touching snow or freshwater, you can use an action to speak its command word and summon a snow elemental, as if you cast the conjure elemental spell. The carrot cannot be used this way again until the next dawn. The carrot always appears as the elemental's nose (See **Appendix C: Magic Items**)

Staff of Frost. Staff, Major, Very Rare (Requires Attunement by a Druid, Sorcerer, Warlock, or Wizard). You have immunity to cold damage while you hold this staff. The staff has 10 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC: cone of cold (5 charges), fog cloud (1 charge), ice storm (4 charges), or wall of ice (4 charges).

The staff regains 1d6+4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff turns to water and is destroyed.

While attuned to this weapon, the wielder's skin is covered with a thin layer of frost regardless of the temperature, their lips and fingernails turn a pale blue, and physical sensations are numbed.

Flame Tongue Whip. Martial Weapon, Melee Weapon, Major, Rare (Requires Attunement). This item appears to be a whip hilt. While grasping the hilt, you can use a bonus action to cause a whip of pure fire to spring into existence, or make the whip disappear. These flames shed bright light in a 40-foot radius and dim light for an additional 40 feet. While the whip is ablaze, it deals an extra 4d6 fire damage to any target it hits. The flames last until you use a bonus action to speak the command word again or until you drop or sheathe the sword.

When a creature is reduced to 0 hit points with this weapon, they are instantly consumed by flames and reduced to ash. When wielding this weapon, the user experiences sensations of the creatures that have died in this way, including the crackling of their burning skin, echoing screams, and the scent of scorched flesh.

Special Rewards. The Magic of Midwinter (Epic Boon). Each character gains the *Wild Magic* trait, per the Wild Magic Sorcerer class (See the Player's Handbook):

Immediately after you cast a spell of 1st level or higher, the DM can have you roll a d20. If you roll a 1, roll on the **Midwinter Wild Magic Surge Table (Appendix A)** to create a random magical effect. A Wild Magic Surge can happen once per turn.

If the character cannot cast spells, this effect is instead triggered when they roll a Natural 1 on an attack roll.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My childhood Christmases were very “modern American”, featuring chocolate fudge, piles of presents, light dustings of Southern snow, and carrots for Santa’s reindeer. Every year, my family drove through neighborhoods to see Christmas lights, shopped at horribly overcrowded malls, and watched every single Christmas special on the Hallmark channel. I grew attached to many of those cartoon characters, from the Grinch and his faithful doggo to the Miser Brothers.

This adventure is a culmination of that childhood nostalgia, including themes from movies such as *The Year Without a Santa Claus*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, and *The Santa Clause*. Reimagining these classic tales with DnD lore added a new dimension to my appreciation of their humor, quirks, and ultimately the stories that they tried to tell.

Ultimately, DnD is about telling your own stories, connecting with your friends, and evoking emotions that you can share together. By combining these powerful, nostalgic tales, with the storytelling framework of DnD, I hope that this adventure can help you bring together the joy of Christmases past, and the power of Christmas present, where a bunch of nerds, friends, and family can gather around a table and make long-lasting memories together.

AUTHOR BIO

Emily Smith is a bestselling Dungeons and Dragons content creator for DMsGuild and Adventurer’s League. She plays Firefly in Not Quite Heroes Podcast and can be found on Twitter @emilyjeasmith. She is a freelance TTRPG editor, blogger, and streamer, and a regular Dungeons & Dragons DM and community organizer.

APPENDIX 1: CREATURE STATISTICS

ARBOREAL GOLEM

Large construct, neutral evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 210 (20d10 + 100)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	22 (+6)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +13, Acrobatics +12, Stealth +12

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities cold, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren’t adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages understands Primordial but can’t speak

Challenge 17 (20,000 XP)

Cold Absorption. Whenever the golem is subjected to cold damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the cold damage dealt.

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The golem’s weapon attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The golem makes two melee attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8+7) bludgeoning damage and 4 (1d6) cold damage.

Needle Swipe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10+7) slashing damage and 4 (1d6) cold damage.

Sap Spray (Recharge 5-6). The golem sprays sticky sap in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails the save is restrained by the sticky sap, which fills the area and creates difficult terrain. A creature restrained by the sap can use its action to make a DC 19 Strength check. On a success, it frees itself.

AURIL

Medium humanoid (she/her), neutral evil

Armor Class 23

Hit Points 580 (40d10 + 360): Half 290 (20d10 + 180)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	27 (+8)	28 (+9)	26 (+8)	27 (+8)	30 (+10)

Saving Throws Perception +2

Skills Acrobatics +16, Deception +18, Insight +16, Perception +16

Damage Resistances fire, necrotic

Damage Immunities cold, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses Truesight, passive Perception 26

Languages All

Challenge 26 (90,000 XP)

Investiture of Ice. Auril can move across difficult terrain created by ice or snow without spending extra movement. The ground in a 10-foot radius around her is icy and is difficult terrain for creatures other than her. The radius moves with her.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Auril fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Auril has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. Auril's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 26). She can innately cast the following spells (7th Level), requiring no material components:

At Will: Cone of Cold, Counterspell, Dispel Magic, Fog Cloud, Ice Knife, Ice Storm, Greater invisibility, Snilloc's Snowball Storm, Teleport, Wall of Ice

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Auril attacks twice with her longsword or with her javelins. She can substitute Winter's Embrace for one of these attacks.

Iceblade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d4 + 8) slashing damage plus 36 (8d8) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the cold damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Ice Shard. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) piercing damage plus 36 (8d8) cold damage.

Winter's Embrace (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 44 (8d10) cold damage, and the target is poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target's speed is reduced by half and they gain 1 level of exhaustion. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

REACTIONS

Cleansing Cold. When Auril is affected by an ongoing spell or effect, she can use her reaction to end that spell or effect on herself. Auril can use this ability 5 times per day.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Auril can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Kossuth regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Ice Storm (Costs 2 Actions). Auril casts Ice Storm.

Icy Step. Auril teleports to any location within 500 feet that contains ice or snow.

Iceblade. Auril attacks once with her iceblade.

KOSSUTH

Medium humanoid (he/him), true neutral

Armor Class 20

Hit Points 580 (40d10 + 360)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	24 (+7)	28 (+9)	26 (+8)	27 (+8)	30 (+10)

Saving Throws Perception +2

Skills Athletics +16, Deception +18, Insight +16, Perception +16

Damage Resistances cold, radiant

Damage Immunities fire, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses Truesight, passive Perception 26

Languages All

Challenge 26 (90,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Kossuth fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Kossuth has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. Kossuth's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 26). He can innately cast the following spells (7th Level), requiring no material components:

At Will: Counterspell, Dispel Magic, Fireball, Firestorm, Greater invisibility, Wall of Fire

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Kossuth attacks twice with his longsword or with his javelins. He can substitute Horrid Touch for one of these attacks.

Flame Tongue Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (2d10 + 8) slashing damage plus 36 (8d8) fire damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) piercing damage plus 36 (8d8) fire damage.

Horrid Touch (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +16 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 44 (8d10) necrotic damage, and the target is poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target is also blinded and deafened. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Teleport. Kossuth magically teleports, along with any equipment he is wearing and carrying, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space within range.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

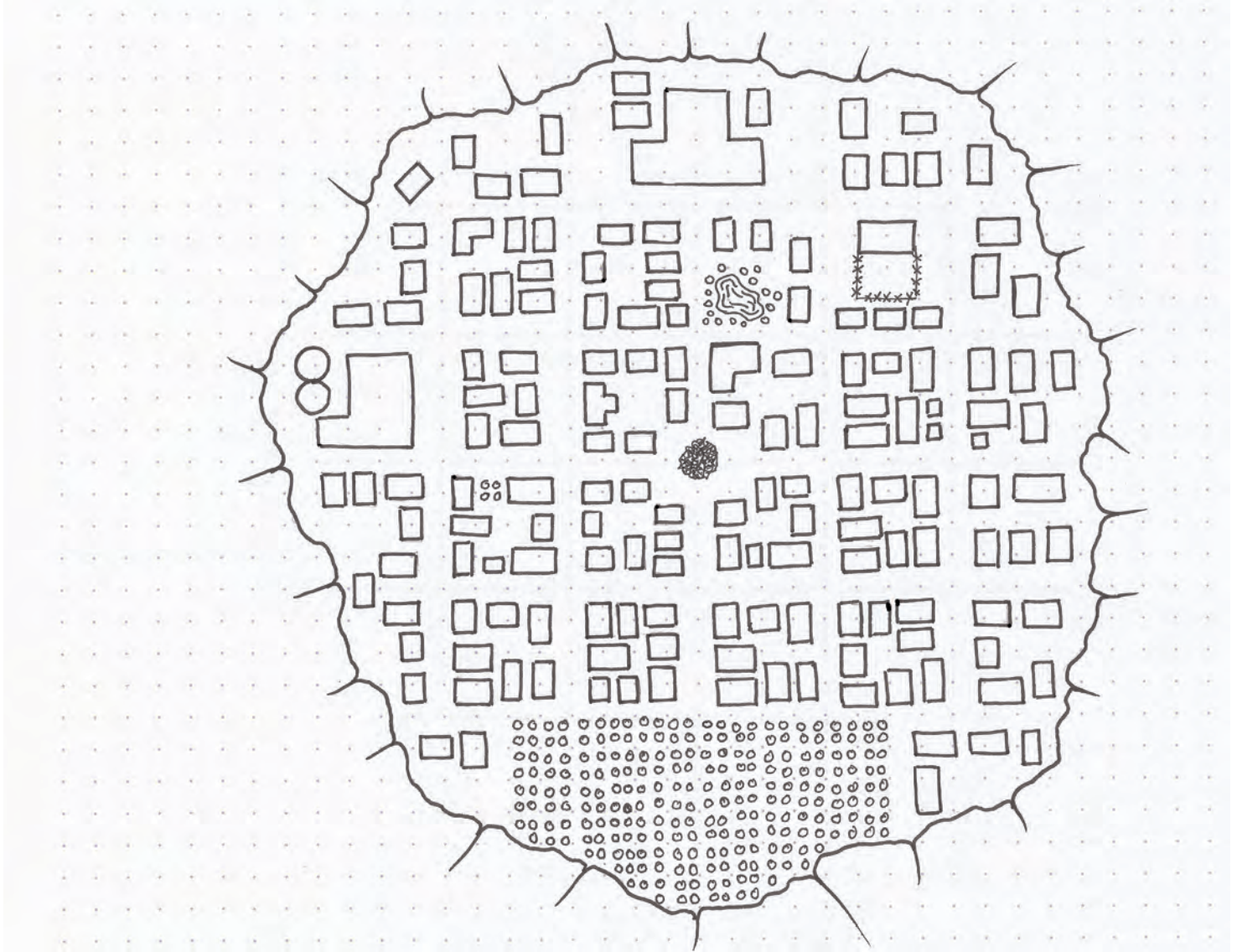
Kossuth can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Kossuth regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Volcanic Eruption. Kossuth chooses a point within 60 ft. Creatures within a 10 ft radius must make a DC 19 Dexterity Saving Throw or take 35 (10d6) fire damage, or half on a success, as molten lava erupts from the earth.

Flame Tongue Whip. Kossuth attacks once with his flame tongue whip.

Teleport. Kossuth teleports to any location within 60 ft. When he teleports, a cloud of brimstone heavily obscures the area in a 20 ft radius in the location where he teleported from and the location he teleported to. These clouds dissipate after 1 round or if a strong wind or similar effect disperses them.

THE VILLAGE MAP



APPENDIX A: MIDWINTER WILD MAGIC SURGE TABLE

d100	Effect
01-02	Roll on this table at the start of each of your turns for 1 minute, ignoring this result on subsequent rolls.
03-04	Roll 1d10. Your height increases by that many inches.
05-06	One random creature within 30 feet of you is entombed in a block of ice until the end of your next turn.
07-08	Mistletoe grows from your head, hat, helm, or horns.
09-10	Your skin turns snow white. <i>Remove curse</i> can end the effect.
11-12	Your eyes grow three sizes for the next minute, giving you Advantage on Perception checks.
13-14	Until you finish a short or long rest, you can no longer see or hear Elves or Half-Elves.
15-16	Harmless snakes made of snow follow in your wake for 1 hour.
17-18	Regain 1 expended sorcery point. If you cannot, take 1 point of cold damage.
19-20	For the next hour, when you walk, you are accompanied by cheery holiday music.
21-22	A white-gloved Bigby's Hand appears 60 feet behind you. At the end of your turn, the hand becomes hostile toward only you and attempts to chase you down and tickle you. The hand disappears after 1 minute.
23-24	Light is cast on your teeth for the next 24 hours.
25-26	one random weapon within 30 feet of the caster deals an additional 1d6 cold damage on hit for 1 minute.
27-28	You cast Polymorph on yourself. If you fail the saving throw against the spell, you turn into a goose for the duration.
29-30	The sound of sleigh bells accompanies your every movement for the next minute.
31-32	You and the nearest creature affected by your last spell swap places. If you are the only creature that was affected, you may teleport up to 100 feet to an unoccupied space you can see.
33-34	You glow with an unnaturally warm light for the next minute, casting bright light out to a distance of 30 feet. Any creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of you takes 2d6 radiant damage.
35-36	1d10 inches of snow immediately falls in a 30-foot-radius around you.
37-38	You know the alignment and a one word summary of the emotional state of any humanoid that you see for the next 8 hours.
39-40	Your Strength score is increased to 20 for the next hour and creatures can hear your heartbeat out to a distance of 15 feet.
41-42	A red sack filled with 100 pounds of berries made by the goodberry spell appears on your back.
43-44	The nearest creature you can see falls prone.
45-46	the 60 foot area surrounding the caster becomes difficult terrain as icicle caltrops litter the ground.
47-48	A fluffy white beard appears on your face and lasts until you curse. While the beard remains, your voice is unrecognizable and oddly reassuring.
49-50	For the next hour, you have a fly speed of 10 feet and do not provoke attacks of opportunity while flying.
51-52	You have thermal vision for the next minute or until you eat snow.
53-54	Roll 1d10. Your height decreases by that many inches.
55-56	For the next minute, when you are hit with a melee attack, the attacker takes 5 cold damage.
57-58	Grease is cast centered on yourself, appearing as a sheet of black ice.
59-60	All armor within 60 feet of you is covered with a troublesome frost for 10 minutes.
61-62	A vine of holly appears at your feet and thrashes about wildly, dealing 2d4 slashing damage to creatures within 10 feet of you. The vine disappears at the end of your turn.
63-64	You transform into an Elk for the next minute or until you are dropped to 0 hit points.
65-66	Hallucinatory terrain transforms the 600 foot area surrounding you into frozen tundra.
67-68	Other creatures see your face as cherubic and jolly for 24 hours.
69-70	A magical talking flower grows from top of your head and whispers insults to anyone who misbehaves. If you pluck the flower, you take 2d10 psychic damage.
71-72	You know the exact time, down to the second, until the winter solstice and shout it immediately.
73-74	You cast command on every creature within 30 feet that can see and hear you. You may only issue one command that effects them all.
75-76	the caster is lifted 60 feet into the air upon a white marble pillar.
77-78	You regain your highest expended spell slot.
79-80	You swap clothes with a random creature within 30 feet of you.
81-82	For the next 24 hours, you can speak and understand every language.
83-84	A box wrapped in colorful paper containing a random Uncommon potion appears at your feet.
85-86	the caster casts fog cloud each time they exhale. Lasts 1 minute.
87-88	Snilloc's Snowball Swarm is cast centered on a point you choose within range.
89-90	For the next 24 hours, tiny beasts are friendly toward you and bring you small treats and trinkets.
91-92	You may take one additional action this turn.
93-94	If you die within the next 1d10 hours, reincarnate is cast on you.
95-96	An illusory winter wolf is summoned within 30 feet of the caster points dutifully at the nearest Evil creature within 100 feet.
97-98	You cast a level 6 sleep centered on yourself. (15d8 hit points)
99-00	A white portal opens above you and 8 Giant Elk with a fly speed of 40 feet come to your aid. The elk understand common, are friendly toward you, and remain for 8 hours or until told to leave.

APPENDIX B: MIDWINTER TRINKETS

d100 Trinket

- 1-2 A small box filled with multi-color buttons
- 3-4 A tiny mechanical gnome that marches circles inside a glass dome.
- 5-6 A glass jar filled with red and silver glitter. When opened, the jar appears empty.
- 7-8 A tiny chest with little hooves carved into the bottom and antlers carved into the top.
- 9-10 An onyx gemstone that looks like a lump of coal to neutral and evil creatures.
- 11-12 A small metal container that houses a single piece of peppermint candy, which reappears each day at dawn.
- 13-14 An unnaturally life-like toy soldier.
- 15-16 A perpetually cold copper orb covered in snowflake motifs.
- 17-18 A circular silver locket with an image of the last person to wear it inside.
- 19-20 An IOU written in elvish from a noble family in the Feywild.
- 21-22 A short copper can with no opening; something can be heard skittering around inside.
- 23-24 A whistle made of antler.
- 25-26 A pipe that when used to smoke lifts your voice an octave.
- 27-28 A wooden cup attached to a tiny ball with a string.
- 29-30 A coin-sized disk made of pearl.
- 31-32 A ball of white cotton covered in soot that never washes off.
- 33-34 A pocket notebook that records the last ten things you said.
- 35-36 A 1-inch cube of perfectly smooth wood.
- 37-38 A pair of spectacles that turn blue 4 hours before it rains or white 4 hours before it snows.
- 39-40 A red linen stocking that stands upright when empty.
- 41-42 A fist-sized carved wooden bear wearing a stovepipe hat.
- 43-44 Two gold coins that squeak when rubbed together.
- 45-46 A coin sized star that glows like a candle when placed atop a plant or staff.
- 47-48 A branch of holly that points towards the nearest fireplace.
- 49-50 A nutcracker shaped like an owlbear.
- 51-52 A pair of walnut dice that strongly smell of honey.
- 53-54 A silver moose the size of a grape.
- 55-56 An list of names that changes every day, some crossed out in red ink.
- 57-58 A glass door knocker that's sticky to the touch.
- 59-60 A bolt of red cloth that cannot be soiled.
- 61-62 A small silver bell that chirps like a bird when rung.
- 63-64 A brass bangle that sheds dim light when in darkness.
- 65-66 A sheet of music that when played causes nearby birds to chirp for 10 seconds.
- 67-68 A clear glass vial containing a miniature, living pine tree.
- 69-70 An ornamental brooch of gnomish design that whistles in the wind.
- 71-72 A tin of rouge that uplifts the spirits of those who wear it.
- 73-74 A thin ring of platinum that makes bubbles when blown through.
- 75-76 A tooth carved to look like a snowman.
- 77-78 A small red cap with an N embroidered on the rim.
- 79-80 A small pouch full of snow that never melts.
- 81-82 A satin and lace festival mask that smokes when it's cold
- 83-84 A gold coin that always lands on its edge and rolls away.
- 85-86 A deck of playing cards that remains in order even after it's shuffled.
- 87-88 A tiny scroll tube that plays a midwinter melody when opened.
- 89-90 A square of blue cloth that does not burn.
- 91-92 A drinking mug that makes any liquid poured in it slightly sweet.
- 93-94 A small red berry that stains anything it touches pink.
- 95-96 A 2-inch long loaf of bread laden with fruit, which weighs 5 pounds and never molds.
- 97-98 A white horse hair mustache that, when worn, looks and feels real.
- 99- A metal tube that distorts anything you see through it.
- 100

APPENDIX C: MAGIC ITEMS

Throughout the multiverse, any number of artisans may gain inspiration from any number of sources. In the dreary winter months, enshrouded in frost and gloom, magical artisans may reflect aspects of the season in the items they produce.

MAGICAL WEAPONS

Springtime is war time. Too much strain is put on those intent on war in the icy days surrounding the end of the year. As such, winter themed magical items are quite rare, but occasionally they are made to serve a vital purpose, such as a storied tradition of tending to family grave sites, or a flight of fancy, like making a cudgel that doubles as a treat.

CANDY CRUNCH

Weapon (club), uncommon

A polished length of rock-hard red and white candy, this club tastes of refreshing mint and cherries and never seems to diminish. When you score a critical hit with this magical weapon, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of their next turn.

PURE BRIGHTNESS

Weapon (quarterstaff), very rare (requires attunement)

The head and heel of this iron quarterstaff is decorated with intricate, connected, swirling designs that glow faintly in areas of darkness.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. While holding it, you can use an action to cast the speak with dead spell from it at will.

In addition, you can cast the hallow spell from the staff without the need of material components. Once used, this spell cannot be cast again until 30 days have passed or you spend 24 hours tending to and caring for grave sites.

WEARABLE ITEMS AND ARMOR

Commonfolk struggle to protect themselves from winter's harsh bite and even the most powerful beings in the multiverse can be laid low by the inescapable grip of the icy months. Magical items made to be worn are often crafted to deny what winter would

have wither away or to cut through the uncaring burden brought on by its chill.

AURIL'S CAP

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

Often appearing as a black top hat or white knit cap, this accessory is rumored to be a gift from the goddess of winter to the mortal world. While wearing this cap, you gain resistance to cold damage and are comfortable in temperatures as low as -40 degrees Fahrenheit.

Shroud of Winter. As an action, you can speak the cap's command word and cause it to wreath you in a clear shell of primordial frost. You gain 40 temporary hit points. While the temporary hit points remain, you have immunity to cold damage and a creature that touches you or hits you with a melee attack while within 5 feet of you takes 2d8 cold damage.

Once used, this property cannot be used again until the next dawn.

Frostmaiden's Splendor. As an action, you can speak the cap's command word and summon forth an echo of Auril's power. The DM determines in which way the power manifests: a cone of cold, fog cloud with a radius of 120 feet, snowball swarm, ice storm, or other magical effect.

Auril is fickle by nature. Each time you use this property in a given day, there is a cumulative 20 percent chance the cap instead casts a 6th level freezing sphere centered on you.

EVERGREEN MAIL

Armor (scale mail, ring mail, or splint), rare

This fragrant armor is made of interlocking sections of bark, plant fiber, and hardened sap. While wearing this armor, your Armor Class cannot be less than 16 and plant creatures don't regard you as hostile unless you harm them.

In addition, you can move through living trees as though they were difficult terrain. As long as you are in contact with a tree or shrub, any damage taken by the plant is taken by you instead.

HARVESTER'S KAFTAN

Wondrous Item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This vibrant, colorful tunic is breezy and comfortable despite being made of layers of heavy cloth. While wearing the kaftan, you can use an action to cast the speak with plants spell from it at will.

In addition, you can cast the plant growth spell from it as an action, granting the 8-hour casting effect

of the spell. Once used, this property cannot be used again until 7 days have passed.

SNOWFALL

Armor (shield), very rare (requires attunement)

This shield appears to be made of fused, crystallized snowflakes and remains cool to the touch. While carrying this shield, you can walk upon snow and ice without leaving a trace. Such terrain is not difficult terrain to you and cannot cause you to fall prone. In addition, whenever a creature hits you with a melee attack while you are wielding this magical shield, the attacker takes 5 points of cold damage.

WONDROUS ITEMS

Many take solace in their fellows to persevere the cold months. Holidays are made to bring cheer, gifts are given to show care, and all the while, the magic of the world is manipulated and used to showcase the moments of joy in the darkness and cold – some even powerful enough to be icons of long-held traditions or folk stories.

ARBOREAL SERAPH

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This tiny brass angel has a small bell clutched within its hands. When you shake the angle, and jingle its bell, you teleport to the top branches of the nearest tree within 100 feet of you. So long as the angel remains in the tree with you, each of the bottom branches act as an alarm spell, alerting you of small or larger trespassers.

DASHER'S DANCERS

Wondrous item, rare

These red cotton stockings come in a set of four, are incredibly durable, and sized to fit over the hooves of a horse or similar creature. As an action, you can speak the stockings' command word to cause the creature wearing them to polymorph into a giant elk for 1 hour or until they are reduced to 0 hit points. Once used, this property cannot be used again until the creature finishes a short or long rest.

GNAUTY'S LUMP OF LIGNITE

Wondrous item, very rare

This fist-sized piece of lumpy coal reeks of soot, but leaves no dust or residue behind. When a character of Good alignment speaks its command word and places the chunk of lignite on a surface or in a container, it begins to radiate transmutation magic.

Mundane items with a value of 25 gp or less that remain within 1 foot of it for 1 hour are turned into solid coal.

LA QUEMA EFIGIE

Wondrous item (consumable), rare

As part of the creation of this small effigy, substances taken from a particular evil creature are imbedded within it. When this straw and twig effigy is lit aflame, a bestow curse spell is cast on the creature who was tied to the effigy. The spell lasts for 24 hours or until dispelled, and the effect of the bestow curse is chosen at the time of the effigy's burning.

Such effigies are made to resemble the target as closely as possible, such as a small white dragon covered in its saliva or the hunched visage of a hag with bits of its hair or fingernails woven into the straw.

A non-evil creature is unaffected by the burning of such an effigy and the one who created it is afflicted by a random effect of the spell instead, which lasts until dispelled by a remove curse.

LANTERN OF TRIUMPH OVER EVIL

Wondrous Item, rare

These delicate paper lanterns are stained with warm colored dyes and are carried by a rapid-burning candle that burns for 1 hour. When lit, the cylindrical lantern fills with hot air and rises to 20 feet above the ground, where it stays perfectly in place until the candle is snuffed out.

Undead and fiends who can see the lantern must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be stunned. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Lantern of Triumph for the next 24 hours.

RED GUIDE'S NOSE

Wondrous item, uncommon

This fluffy ball fits securely onto the nose of a large or larger beast, such a horse or dire wolf. While in areas of dim light or darkness, the nose sheds red light out to a distance of 10 feet. In addition, it hedges out vapor, gas, and fog in a 20-foot radius sphere around it.

SACHEL OF THE DUAL SAINT

Wondrous item, legendary (attunement optional)

This wide, red bag feels hefty and partially filled, even when empty. It functions as a bag of holding with an opening 4 feet in diameter at the mouth and 8 feet deep. The bag can hold 1,000 pounds, not exceeding a volume of 128 cubic feet.

When the bag is attuned to a creature, it also offers one of two properties depending on the creature's alignment:

The Giving Saint. Good aligned character can, as an action, reach into the bag's opening and retrieve any mundane item with a value of 2 gp or less. You can retrieve up to 10 gp worth of items from the bag each day; the bag resets at dawn. Items are created by the beneficent magic of the bag and is not taken from elsewhere in the multiverse. If you use the bag for selfish reasons, as decided by your DM, your attunement to the bag ends indefinitely.

The Taking Demon. If you are of evil alignment, attuning to the bag transforms you into a beast-like demon with chains and bells lashed to your wrists, ankles, and horns. While in this form, you have the statistics of a barlgura (MM 56) with the following changes: your size is medium and your intelligence is 10 (+0). As long as you are in this form, you have an unnatural, unavoidable desire to collect creatures of non-good alignment and stuff them into the Satchel of the Dual Saint.

SNOUGHMIN'S SNOOT

Wondrous item, rare

While this petrified carrot is touching snow or fresh water, you can use an action to speak its command word and summon a snow elemental, as if you cast the conjure elemental spell. The carrot cannot be used this way again until the next dawn. The carrot always appears as the elemental's nose.

SNOW ELEMENTAL

Large elemental, neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 113 (12d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Aquan

Challenge 5 (1,800xp)

Ice Form. The elemental can move across water or other freezable surfaces as though it were normal terrain. A creature that touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) cold damage. In addition, the elemental can extinguish nonmagical flames within 20 feet of it as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The elemental makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 4 (2d4) cold damage.

Ice Spray (Recharge 4-6). The elemental spits out a 15-foot cone of freezing slush. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 13 (3d8) cold damage and its speed is reduced by 10 until the end of their next turn. It takes half as much damage on a successful save and its speed is not reduced.

STRANGLER'S SCARF

Wondrous item, uncommon

While wearing this scarf you have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to grapple or escape a grapple.

Curse. The first time you put on this scarf and each time you fall unconscious, it attempts to suffocate you. You are grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, you are restrained, blinded, and at risk of suffocating. At the start of each of your turns, you take 2d6 (6) bludgeoning damage. The scarf can only make this attempt once per day.

