

BALDUR'S GATE: DESCENT INTO AVERNUS

# A COLD DAY IN HELL



An adventure for Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus  
Chapter 3: Avernus

# ABOUT THE ADVENTURE



THIS ADVENTURE IS DESIGNED FOR USE with *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus*, although it can be used in any hellish setting. It features challenges and encounters tailored to a party of four 8th-level adventurers, but includes advice on how to balance it for other parties.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A particularly nasty bearded devil named Nichozal, or simply Zariel's Claws, is working on a diabolical plan. After finding a powerful artifact – an amulet called the *Heart of Agathys* – left behind on the battlefield, Nichozal was imbued with chilling powers. Thus emboldened, Nichozal has devised a devilish plan to secure his ascension in the ranks of Zariel's legions.

Channelling the power of Agathys, Nichozal has created a dome of ice around a ruined fort on a small isle in the middle of a lake. Within the dome, Nichozal has set to work transforming imps into sentient children's toys made of snow and ice, which he plans to send to major cities on the Material Plane, such as Baldur's Gate, Waterdeep and Neverwinter. From within their frozen prisons, the imps are tasked with corrupting the children who stumble upon them and ultimately get them to sign away their souls to Nichozal – either by convincing them that their precious toys will melt away if they don't, or by luring them with promises of gifts and sweets. To ward off meddling devils and roaming demons, Nichozal has conjured a powerful and ever-expanding snowstorm around his 'gift factory'.

Not all the imps involved were aware of the specifics of the arrangement – indeed, most were caught, lured, or tricked by Nichozal, and transformed against their will. One such malcontent, Phlodur, managed to escape the ice dome before its transformation was completed. Coincidentally, a group of unlikely heroes have wandered into the snowstorm that surrounds the *Heart of Agathys*, and soon spot Phlodur's brightly shining red nose in the heavy snowfall. The adventurers must put an end to Nichozal's evil plans – if not for the children (or the imp, who wants its transformation reverted!) then to get themselves out of the cold before it's too late!

### ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE

A Cold Day in Hell features references to Christmas and iconic characters such as Santa Claus and Rudolph. If you prefer to run the adventure with less attachment to Christmas, you can do so by changing the devils' names, and removing Phlodur's red nose.

The adventure is meant to be run as part of the *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus* campaign, which means it is situated in Avernus, the First Layer of Hell. It is, however, possible to insert the adventure into any campaign, by changing a few things around. Instead of imps, the creature's caught by Nichozal can be pixies, tiny beasts, or even halflings, and instead of a devil who happened upon the Heart of Agathys, he can have been sent from one of the Nine Hells – the frigid Cania, ruled by Mephistopheles would work well – specifically to acquire children's souls with his snowtoys.

## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

This adventure follows a fairly simple outline, separating it into three chapters, which should play out over a span of a single adventuring day. Depending on your group's pace, the adventure should take between 3-6 hours to play through.

**Chapter 1: A Nose So Red.** While travelling across the plains of Avernus, the adventurers find themselves enveloped by a terrible snowstorm. After suffering the terrible cold for an hour, they run into the red-nosed imp Phlodur and the frost worm that chases it. When the worm has been dealt with, Phlodur offers to lead the adventurers to Nichozal, so they can foil the devil's evil plans, saving the imp, the children, and themselves.

**Chapter 2: On Thin Ice.** On their way to Nichozal's frozen factory, the adventurers must not only weather the snowstorm once more, but also survive a trap on a frozen river and an ambush by frosty devils.

**Chapter 3: Coldhearted.** Arriving at the infernal gift factory, the adventurers must use fire to create an entrance into the dome of ice. Once inside, they must deal with Nichozal – either figuratively or literally – before they can continue on with their infernal journey.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The basic premise of this adventure is fairly simple – while travelling in Avernus, the adventurers are caught in a snowstorm. In order to continue toward their destination, they must first destroy the *Heart of Agathys* or strike a bargain with Nichozal. Thus, A Cold Day in Hell can be easily inserted into any session that involves travelling the plains of Avernus.

If you prefer intertwining the adventure with the story, you can use one of the hooks below instead.

### A WARLORD'S WORRY

Any infernal warlord the party comes across – but most likely Mad Maggie of Fort Knucklebone – may have reason to want to investigate the weird snowstorm that is encroaching on their territory. The task of heading into the dangerous storm, find its origin and put an end to it, can be given by Mad Maggie as a requirement for performing her ritual, or with the promise of reward (such as a dozen soul coins) by any warlord the characters meet on their journey.

### ON THE QUEST FOR THE SWORD

You can insert this adventure into one of the 'paths' leading to the Bleeding Citadel and Zariel's Sword, described in Chapter 3: Avernus of *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus*. Possible options include:

- **Mirror of Mephistar.** Instead of damming the River Styx to gain Mephistopheles' aid, the party must retrieve the *Heart of Agathys* for the archdevil.
- **Monument to Tiamat.** Instead of bargaining with an innocent's life, Arkhan wants the *Heart of Agathys*, which he hopes can make him immune to the corruption of his flesh caused by the *Hand of Vecna*.



## CHAPTER 1: A NOSE SO BRIGHT

**C**HAPTER 1 STARTS AS THE CHARACTERS ARE travelling across the desolate plains of Avernus. During this chapter, the heroes will have to contend with a snowstorm, parley with a frantic imp and survive the assault of a frost worm – an enormous monstrosity wielding deadly weapons!

### LET IT SNOW

As the adventurers – by chance or design – come within a few hours journey of the *Heart of Agathys*, their surroundings change dramatically. The snowstorm summoned by Nichozal is expanding rapidly, and soon overtake the characters. Read or paraphrase the following text:

In the span of a few minutes, the air around you becomes noticeably colder, and the frigid wind picks up pace. Before long, crystals of snow are falling on the ground around you, quickly increasing in both size and ferocity, until you're enveloped in a full-blown snowstorm. Snow is falling in droves now, the howling wind is making it hard to hear anything, and you can barely make out your surroundings through snowy mist.

The adventurers are caught in a snowstorm (see the description under 'Snowstorm'), quickly losing most sense of direction, except that the storm seems to be moving toward the direction they came from. A character that succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Nature) check realizes that the storm isn't natural. It moves too fast – outpacing any character with a move speed less than 40 ft. – and shows no sign of slowing down. It is unlikely the characters would be able to get out of the snowstorm by backtracking.

Regardless of whether the characters forge ahead or try to find shelter – a tough task in Avernus – they will travel for an hour without finding anything (prompting a Constitution saving throw against exhaustion, as described under 'Snowstorm'). If the adventurers shelter by magical means (such as with *Leomund's tiny hut*), they will find the storm still raging when they reappear.

### A GLOWING GUIDE

After an hour – or when you see fit – the party happens upon Phlodur. Read or paraphrase the following text:

A faint metallic clinking, like chiming bells, rises above the wind's howling. Turning toward the noise, you can make out a small, red glow, growing brighter as it moves toward you. "Mortals! Aid Phlodur, and Phlodur shall aid you in turn!" a shrill, panicked voice exclaims in relief.

Phlodur becomes visible soon after: A deformed mix between an **imp** and a clown made of snow and ice. Its nose is large, round and shining red, while oversized feet of ice keep it from getting far off the ground in the snowstorm. A vest of snow fitted with bells of ice produces a chiming sound whenever the imp moves. Phlodur's transformation has halved its speed and robbed it of its ability to shapeshift or cast *invisibility*, but it otherwise has the statistics of an **imp**.

Before any further introductions can be made, the source of the imp's panic bursts through the ground!

### SNOWSTORM

The fierce, magical snowstorm has the following consequences for creatures that try to brave it:

- Disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls.
- Disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing, sight or smell. Objects and creatures further away than 60 ft. are heavily obscured.
- Strong winds make flight nearly impossible. Flying creatures must land at the end of their turn or fall.
- A creature exposed to the cold must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures wearing cold weather gear (thick coats, gloves, and the like) and creatures naturally adapted to cold climates.
- Creatures can only gain the benefit of a short rest if they are unaffected by the extreme cold of the snowstorm as described above, and can only gain the benefit of a long rest if also sheltered from the wind.

## COLD RECEPTION

Just moments after the dishevelled imp's arrival, a **frost worm** bursts out of the ground near the adventurers, already using its Trill-feature. The near-mindless beast has slipped through from Agathys, and is motivated only by hunger. Eyeing bigger prey, the worm ignores the imp and instead focuses on the party, first using its Frost Breath against paralyzed targets to devastating effect, before swallowing up the tastiest morsel. When it has swallowed a creature, or when reduced to less than 50 hit points, the worm will try to burrow away.

While the party deals with the frost worm, Phlodur hides in a snowdrift, offering helpful advice and shouts of encouragement, but not interfering in the battle.

## SPEAKING WITH PHLODUR

Once the danger has passed, Phlodur crawls out of the snowdrift it has hidden in and introduces itself: "Phlodur greets you, mortals. Thanks for your service!" While speaking with Phlodur, the party can take a well-earned short rest near the pit of lava on the battlefield (see the 'Frozen Avernus Encounter Map').

## PHLODUR'S STORY

Phlodur's story is simple: drawn in by promises of souls in abundance, he and a pack of other imps answered the summons of a bearded devil named Nichozal. After they arrived by a mysterious icy globe, Nichozal began transforming them into snowtoys. Phlodur managed to flee before his transformation was complete, evading spined devils commanded by Nichozal, but unable to outrun the snowstorm.

Phlodur's primary motivation is to survive and revert its transformation. In order to do so, the *Heart of Agathys* must be destroyed. Phlodur will do all it can to convince the party to destroy the heart. If the party seems disinterested, Phlodur will use arguments such as: "Think of the children!" or "you'll never be able to outrun the storm, you have to stop it!"

Phlodur, although self-important and abrasive, readily answers any questions the party has:

- **"The snowstorm?** That bully Nichozal created it with his 'Heart of Aga-what-now... Agathys! Said he didn't want any demons interfering in his business."
- **"Nichozal?** Strong, red armor, big ol' frosty beard with icicles in it. Zariel's Claws, they call him!"
- **"His plan?** He catches imps and puts us inside toys made from snow. Wants to drop us over your cities to be picked up by your filthy offspring. Says we have to gain the little buggers' affection and convince them that they have to sign over their souls to Nichozal to keep us from melting, or to get more presents and sweets!"
- **"Why Phlodur fled?** Eh, Phlodur ain't looking to become some little piss-ant's toy, having to grovel for a soul or melt to a puddle. Doesn't sound fun to me. Slipped out when Nichozal made an entrance in the dome for his damned spined devils, but was slowed down by these stupid feet and this damned storm."
- **"Where is Nichozal?** He and the Heart are inside an ice dome on a frozen lake not far from here. Come, Phlodur shows you, so you can help Phlodur transform back and you can get on with your business!"

Phlodur's transformation to a snowtoy is complete mere minutes after his meeting with the party, rendering the imp completely inanimate, but still able to communicate telepathically. He asks the party to bring him with them to Nichozal, but reluctantly accepts being left behind in a snowdrift, if that's what the party prefers.

## DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters accept his offer, Phlodur leads the party toward a frozen river, which feeds into the frozen lake where Nichozal's ice-dome-toy-factory is located. The journey to the frozen river takes an hour, once more prompting unprotected adventurers to make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against exhaustion in the extreme cold (see 'Snowstorm on the previous page').

The defeated frost worm possesses no treasure, but its hide can be used to fashion improvised winter clothing by a creative character that succeeds on a DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

## FROST WORM

*Huge monstrosity, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 161 (14d12 + 70)

**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	4 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Str +12, Con +9, Wis +4

**Damage Immunities** cold

**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** –

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Death Throes.** When the worm dies, it turns to ice and shatters in an explosion. Each creature within 30 ft. must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) cold damage and 17 (5d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

**Tunneler.** The worm can burrow through solid rock at half its burrow speed and leaves a 10-foot-diameter tunnel in its wake.

## ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft. *Hit:* 24 (3d10 + 8) piercing damage and 10 (3d6) cold damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the frost worm can't bite another target.

**Swallow.** The frost worm makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits, that creature takes the bite's damage and is swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the frost worm, and it takes 17 (5d6) cold damage at the start of each of the frost worm's turns.

If the frost worm takes 25 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the frost worm must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the frost worm. A creature inside the worm when it dies is released by its Death Throes, taking no damage in the process.

**Frost Breath (Recharge 6).** Each creature in a 30-foot cone must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw as the worm exhales frozen air. A creature takes 28 (8d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Trill.** The frost worm emits a noise that forces prey to stand motionless. Each creature within 60 ft. that can hear it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, and whenever it takes damage, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, it is immune to the frost worm's trill for the next 24 hours.



## CHAPTER 2: ON THIN ICE

**C**HAPTER 2 FEATURES A DANGEROUS TRAP, and a deadly encounter with Nichozal's helper, a **frosty barbed devil** called Rupert, and a pack of **frosty spined devils**. This chapter begins when the adventurers have travelled for another hour through the storm after meeting Phlodur.

### THE FROZEN RIVER

After about an hour of trudging through the unforgiving, howling snowstorm, the party – guided by Phlodur – arrives at a frozen river. Following the river is easy at first, but it soon snakes between tall cliffs and rocky outcroppings, until it is in a virtual canyon, with cliffs on each side reaching beyond how far the party can see in the heavy storm. Blessedly, the tall cliffs provide a measure of protection from the strong winds, making it possible to fly at a normal pace and to make ranged weapon attacks without disadvantage.

The characters must make a choice here: walk on the frozen river or follow a narrow, snowy trail that snakes alongside the river 20 ft. above its icy surface. If consulted, Phlodur has little aid to give: he flew above the ice when he travelled through here, and has no idea which path is safest.

### DEVILISH TRAPS

When the adventurers have decided how to proceed, they'll not travel long before walking into a trap set by crafty devils in Nichozal's employ. Which trap is sprung depends on how the characters are travelling – a snow avalanche hits characters travelling by the trail, while characters on the river walk onto a deviously disguised patch of sabotaged ice. Make sure to know the characters' marching order and how they are travelling. If the characters split up – some walking on the ice, while the rest take the mountain path – the traps are sprung simultaneously.

### SNOW AVALANCHE

A snow avalanche is set off by spined devils further up the mountainside. It comes roaring down to flatten a 150 ft. long section of the trail, and is set off when it can hit as many characters as possible.

Creatures on the trail must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw (creatures with passive Perception 15 or higher hear the avalanche coming, gaining advantage on this save), or be hit by the avalanche, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

A creature hit by the avalanche must also make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, the creature is thrown down to the frozen river. It takes another 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the 20 ft. fall, and is restrained in a pile of snow. A creature can use an action to pull itself or another creature free from the pile of snow with a successful DC 10 Athletics check.

### THIN ICE

The barbed devil Rupert has cleverly melted a 15 ft. square section of ice, weakening it so that it collapses when two or more creatures – or a single heavy creature – move onto it. The snow blanketing the ice makes the sabotage nearly undetectable before it's too late.

A creature standing on the thin ice when it breaks must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw (creatures with passive Perception 15 or higher have advantage on this check, sensing that the ice is weak), or plunge into the icy water, taking 10 (3d6) cold damage.

A creature that starts its turn in the water must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or suffer a level of exhaustion. A creature can use an action to pull itself or another creature free from the icy waters with a successful DC 10 Athletics check.

### DEVELOPMENTS

Immediately after the trap – or traps – have been sprung, a host of devils descend upon the party. Characters that are buried in snow or have fallen into the frigid water start the combat there, making very tempting targets to the bloodthirsty devils.

## FROST DEVIL AMBUSH

Rupert, a **frosty barbed devil**, attacks from a hiding spot 30 ft. in front of the party, while a **frosty spined devil** for each character in the party (i.e. a party of five adventurers and Lulu the Hollyphant would face six frosty spined devils) come diving out of the snowstorm.

### DEVIL TACTICS

Rupert faces the party head on, using Piercing Shriek and Snowball Swarm to hit clusters of foes, and its grappling tail to take hold of the easiest target available. If it can't get in range, it uses its Hurl Flame ability to strike targets at a distance.

The spined devils get just close enough to attack the party with Tail Spines, but remain airborne. They go for weaker targets first, but otherwise use their abilities to aid the **frosty barbed devil**, such as diving down to use Shaking Cold before flying off again, or using Tail Spines to slow down targets as appropriate.

### DEVELOPMENTS

Rupert, who has been ordered to defend the river with its life, fights on until destroyed. The spined devils flee toward Nichozal's ice dome when the barbed devil is destroyed. They disappear from sight if they can manage to get more than 60 ft. away from the party in the heavy snowstorm, forcing any chasing characters to make DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) checks with disadvantage to keep up the chase.

If the characters manage to capture and interrogate a devil, it knows little more than what Phlodur has already told them: Nichozal and the *Heart of Agathys* is about a mile further up the river, where the bearded devil is hard at work turning more imps into snowtoys. They have one important piece of information, however: To enter the icy dome that envelops Nichozal's factory on the lake, one has to either be allowed inside by Nichozal, or burn a temporary hole through the dome, which constantly regenerates burned-away ice (Rupert can do this with his Hurl Flame-feature).

## FROSTY SPINED DEVIL

*Small fiend (devil), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d6 + 5)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** cold, fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

**Flyby.** The devil doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

**Limited Spines.** The devil has twelve tail spines. Used spines regrow by the time the devil finishes a long rest.

**Magic Resistance.** The devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

### ACTIONS

**Multiaction.** The devil makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its fork or two with its tail spines.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

**Fork.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

**Tail Spine.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/80 ft. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage, and the target's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of its next turn.

**Shaking Cold.** The devil shakes itself, showering nearby creatures with freezing spine-splinters. Each creature within 10 ft. of the devil must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, it takes 10 (3d6) cold damage, and it can't take reactions until the start of its next turn.

## FROSTY BARBED DEVIL

*Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 110 (13d8 + 52)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +7, Con +7, Wis +5, Cha +5

**Skills** Deception +5, Insight +5, Perception +8

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

**Damage Immunities** cold, fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Barbed Hide.** At the start of each of its turns, the devil deals 5 (1d10) piercing damage to any creature grappling it.

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

**Magic Resistance.** The devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

### ACTIONS

**Multiaction.** The devil makes three melee attacks: one with its tail and two with its claws. Alternatively, it can use Hurl Flame twice.

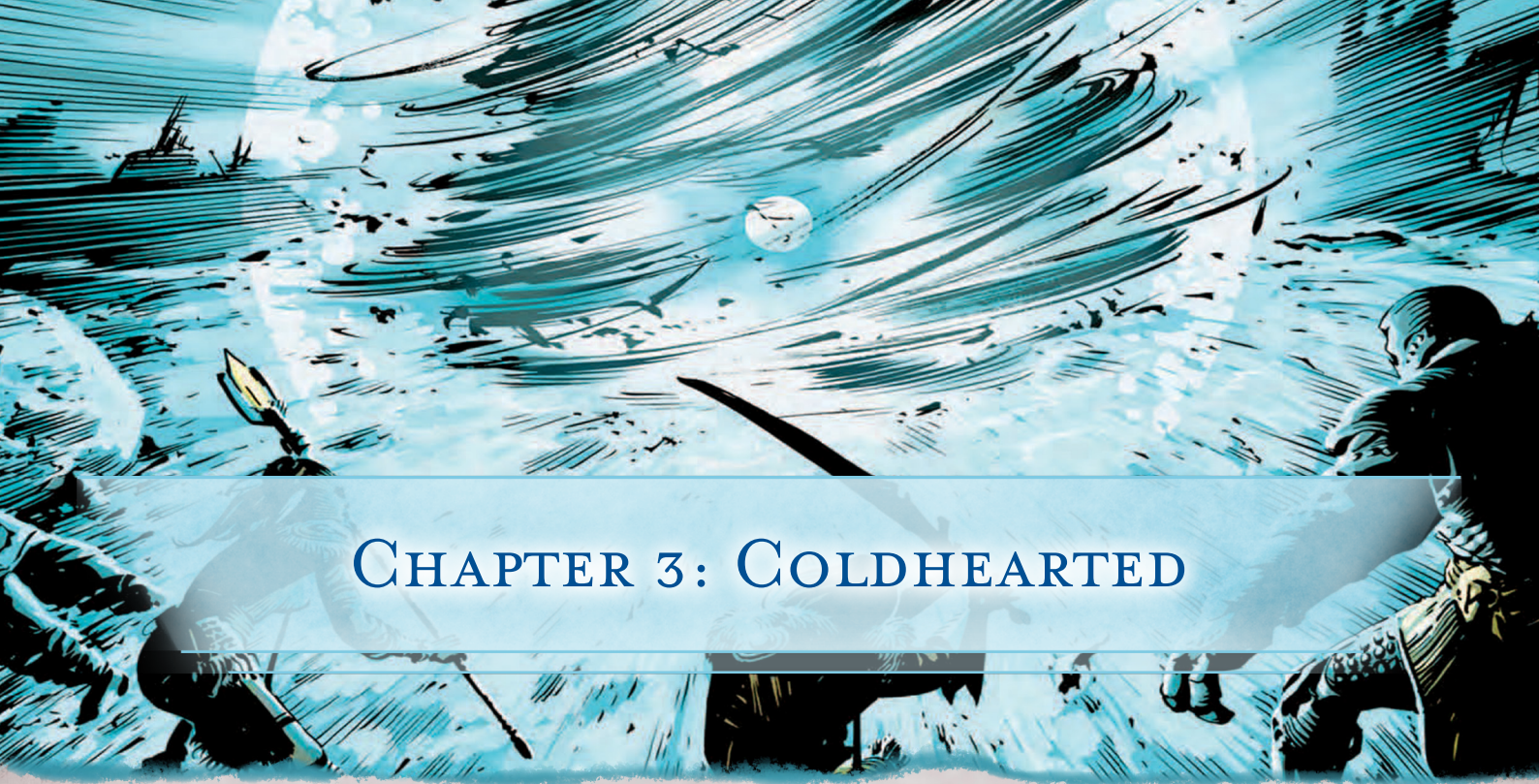
**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

**Tail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage and the barbed devil can attempt to grapple the target.

**Hurl Flame.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 150 ft. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage. If the target is a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried, it also catches fire.

**Piercing Shriek (1/day).** The devil flares its spikes in a terrible display and emits a horrible shriek. Each creature of the devil's choice within 30 ft. who can see it must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 13 (3d8) psychic damage and is frightened of the devil until the end of its next turn.

**Snowball Swarm (1/day).** A flurry of magic snowballs erupts from a point within 90 ft. Each creature in a 5-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 17 (5d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



## CHAPTER 3: COLDHEARTED

**C**HAPTER 3 IS WHERE THE CHARACTERS finally arrive at the *Heart of Agathys* to stop Nichozal's evil plan. Here they will first have to get inside the icy dome that surrounds the factory. Inside, they have an opportunity to bargain with Nichozal, or – more likely – fight a battle to the death with the evil devil.

### THE GIFT FACTORY

Nichozal's 'factory' is in fact a decrepit fort on a small isle in the middle of the frozen lake. Here Nichozal transforms imps into infernal gifts by briefly submerging them in the river's frozen water, while casting dark spells on them through the *Heart of Agathys*. Both island and fort is surrounded by an immense dome of opaque ice, preventing both prying eyes and attacks from afar from disturbing the rituals.

When the characters come within a 100 ft. of the ice dome, read or paraphrase the following text:

Before you rises a luminescent dome of thick ice, reaching from the lake's frozen surface to a height of 50 feet and stretching out to a diameter of 200 feet. The snowstorm seems to emanate from the enormous dome, blowing fiercely cold winds toward you, almost as if trying to physically keep you away. Whatever lurks within the dome is hidden by its thick, opaque walls, and there appears to be no door or entrance of any kind.

The dome looks the same from every angle and also extends underneath the water's frozen surface.

### ENTERING THE DOME

If the characters are still carrying Phlodur, the imp informs them that it doesn't know how to enter the dome. It only managed to escape when Nichozal used the Heart's magic to open up the sphere so that spined devils could enter with more captured imps. In other words, it's up to the characters to find their own way in.

Luckily, getting into the sphere is quite simple. The magic of Agathys continuously regenerates the icy dome, but if at least 25 fire damage is dealt to a section of the sphere in a single round, the ice melts away for

long enough to allow the characters to slip in. A spell like *fireball* might do the trick on its own, or several characters can use cantrips such as *firebolt* or *produce flame* simultaneously to create an entrance. If the characters don't have access to such magic, they can also create an entrance by building a natural fire next to the sphere's walls, and waiting for a few minutes.

The characters should be able to realize how to enter the dome through trial and error – seeing how the dome isn't indestructible but quickly regenerates if they try to damage it. If they don't, or have no way to produce fire, you can allow other creative solutions to work – as long as the players feel clever and expend resources, any mode of entry can work. Characters can also gain entry by simply calling for Nichozal (or Nichozal notices them, if they've been trying to enter fruitlessly for a while), who can magically create a temporary entrance using the *Heart of Agathys*. Nichozal gladly invites the characters inside, hoping that he can convince them to deliver his infernal gifts for him (see 'Speaking with Nichozal').

### INSIDE THE DOME

When the characters enter the dome, read or paraphrase the following text:

Coming from the storm outside, the inside of the dome is almost eerily calm. Snow drifts calmly down – seemingly from nowhere – to land softly on the lake's icy surface. The pearly luminescence of the dome's walls casts the interior in a dim light, revealing simple ruined walls covered in gleaming ice. Amidst the ruins and near holes in the thick ice are cages each holding several imps in various stages of transformation. In the dome's center, four icy pillars beset with glowing runes curve inward toward each other, a beautiful amulet suspended in midair between them – the *Heart of Agathys*. Near the pillars stands a hulking devil with a frosty, white beard and wearing crimson plate mail.

Unless the characters have somehow managed to get inside the dome without damaging it, Nichozal is immediately aware of the characters' arrival.

## NICHOZAL

Nichozaal was once an 'ordinary' bearded devil, which, in the infernal hierarchy, is one of the least of the lesser devils. By a stroke of luck, however, Nichozaal came upon the *Heart of Agathys*, which had been left behind on the battlefield after an intense battle between fierce demons and Zariel's devil legions. Nichozaal claimed the powerful artifact as his own, and quickly devised a particularly devious plan. Tapping into the power of the Heart, the devil froze the lake, created the sphere, and went to work transforming imps into magical toys, so he could trick young mortals out of their souls.

### SPEAKING WITH NICHZOZAL

Since one of the only ways to gain entry to the dome is by burning a hole, it will be very difficult for the party to enter without Nichozaal noticing. Luckily, Nichozaal is more interested in striking a bargain than fighting. When the characters enter, he'll be standing ready before the *Heart of Agathys*, giving them his pitch:

The bearded devil notices you, offering a jovial smile and spreading his massive arms in welcome. "Ho-ho-ho, what do we have here! Splendid work, mortals, splendid work – you must be quite the heroes to have made it this far. Such resourcefulness! I assume you have come out of some misguided sense of justice or moral objection to my enterprise? Fortunately for you, I see no wisdom in needlessly destroying you, when we can instead aid one another. I offer you safe passage through my storm and the blessing of Agathys" – the devil points to the amulet suspended between the pillars – "and ask in return only that you deliver a few gifts for me. Each of you must take a single of my toys back to your world and give it to a child, who seem like they could use a friend. What do you say?"

If the characters seem interested in bargaining, Nichozaal magically produces an infernal contract inscribed on a tablet of solid ice. The deal is as Nichozaal says, but a character that reads infernal and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds an important clause in the fine print. If the character's actions – exemplified by giving a snow toy to a child – does not result in another mortal signing over their soul to Nichozaal, the character's own soul is forfeit to Nichozaal upon their death. In essence, each character that signs the contract owes a soul to Nichozaal.

Nichozaal brooks no refusal and has zero patience for extended negotiations, so if the characters begin squabbling over terms, or act with aggression or impudence, the rotund devil laughs heartily and resigns himself to convincing the characters with force.

### FIGHTING NICHZOZAL

A fight with Nichozaal should be both tough and exciting. You can use the *Ice Dome Map* (see 'Ice Dome' for more about the ice dome's terrain features).

Nichozaal has a wide array of action options available to him, but regardless of which he uses, his overall plan is the same: control the battlefield, stay out of harm's way, and methodically eliminate the characters. He uses Wall of Ice and Cold Feet to shape the battlefield to his liking, and then Frosty Beard and Frost Ray to slow characters so they can't easily escape those areas. Cone of Cold comes in handy against clusters of foes, and the strong Armor of Agathys should be used whenever Nichozaal runs out of temporary hit points.

If the characters manage to destroy the pillars around the Heart (see 'Heart of Agathys' below), Nichozaal loses his legendary actions, so he'll often put himself at risk to draw attention away from the heart. Fully dedicated to his evil plans, Nichozaal fights until destroyed, refusing to suffer the indignity of surrender.

### HEART OF AGATHYS

The amulet *Heart of Agathys* hangs suspended between four pillars of ice. The amulet itself is indestructible and immovable – both magic and mundane strikes are simply absorbed. In fact, a creature that touches the *Heart of Agathys* or hits it with a melee attack, takes 17 (5d6) cold damage.

However, if all four pillars around the heart are destroyed, it falls to the ground, abruptly ending all magical effects created by it, including the snowstorm, ice dome, and any **ice golems**. Each pillar has AC 13, 30 hit points, immunity to poison, psychic and cold damage, and is vulnerable to fire damage. Damage dealt by spells or effects that target an area (such as *fireball*) is divided between all pillars it hits. Each time a pillar is destroyed, the Heart pulses with increasingly erratic light.

During a fight with Nichozaal, you should make it clear that the pillars around the *Heart of Agathys* empowers Nichozaal. You can describe how rays of frost charge from the pillars to then streak out from the Heart against a target when he uses Frost Ray, and how cold energy is siphoned from the pillars to Nichozaal when he uses Armor of Agathys. If the characters still don't catch on, you can have NPCs such as Phlodur, Lulu or Gargauth in the *Shield of the Hidden Lord* point it out to them.

### BALANCING COMBAT

By himself, Nichozaal should be a hard challenge for a party of four 8th-level adventurers, who have already spent some of their resources. Depending on the strength of the characters – their numbers, level and remaining resources – there's various ways you can increase or decrease the encounter's difficulty.

First, it's up to you to decide if any devils that survived the 'Frost Devil Ambush' fled back to the dome or vacated the area entirely. If you think Nichozaal needs additional aid, you can also add 2-4 **ice golems** – simple monsters who are mainly there to soak up damage and obstruct characters. Created by the *Heart of Agathys*, Nichozaal uses these constructs to dip the imps in the river, chain them up and stick them in their cages.

You can also balance the encounter on the fly by having the *Heart of Agathys* create an ice golem each round if the fight seems too easy for the characters, or limit Nichozaal's use of Legendary Actions if the characters are having difficulties.

### ICE DOME

Nichozaal's gift factory has several terrain features that can impact combat, as noted below.

**Ice Holes.** A creature that starts its turn in the frigid water must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or suffer a level of exhaustion. A creature can use an action to pull itself or another creature out of an ice hole with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Ice Walls.** Walls are 10 ft. tall, have AC 10, 15 HP, and immunity to cold, poison and psychic damage.

**Snow.** Snow-covered squares are difficult terrain.



## NICHOZAL, ZARIEL'S CLAWS

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 18 (plate)  
**Hit Points** 152 (16d8 + 80)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +9, Con +9, Wis +7  
**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered  
**Damage Immunities** cold, fire, poison  
**Condition Immunities** poisoned  
**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13  
**Languages** Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.  
**Challenge** 11 (7,200 XP)

**Armor of Free Action.** Nichozal isn't slowed by difficult terrain, and magic can't reduce his speed or cause him to be paralyzed or restrained.

**Devil's Sight.** Magical darkness doesn't impede Nichozal's darkvision.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Nichozal's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

1/day each: *cone of cold*, *wall of ice*

**Magic Resistance.** Nichozal has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Steadfast.** Nichozal can't be frightened while he can see an allied creature within 30 feet of him.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Nichozal makes three attacks: one with his beard and two with his glaive.

**Frosty Beard.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) cold damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned in this way, the target can't regain hit points, its move speed is halved, and it can only take an action or a reaction on its turn, not both. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

**Glaive.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage plus 13 (3d8) cold damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead or a construct, it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or lose 9 (2d8) hit points at the start of each of its turns due to an infernal wound. Each time the devil hits the wounded target

with this attack, the damage dealt by the wound increases by 9 (2d8). Any creature can take an action to staunch the wound with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check. The wound also closes if the target receives magical healing.

**Cone of Cold (1/day).** Each creature in a 60-foot cone must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw as a blast of cold erupts from Nichozal's hands. A creature takes 36 (8d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature killed by this spell becomes a frozen statue until it thaws.

**Wall of Ice (1/day).** Nichozal magically forms an opaque wall of ice on a solid surface it can see within 60 feet of it. The wall is 1 foot thick and up to 30 feet long and 10 feet high, or it's a hemispherical dome up to 20 feet in diameter. When the wall appears, each creature in its space is pushed out of it by the shortest route. The creature chooses which side of the wall to end up on, unless the creature is incapacitated. The creature then makes a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 35 (10d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The wall lasts for 1 minute or until the devil is incapacitated or dies. The wall can be damaged and breached; each 10-foot section has AC 5, 30 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to acid, cold, necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. If a section is destroyed, it leaves behind a sheet of frigid air in the space the wall occupied. Whenever a creature finishes moving through the frigid air on a turn, willingly or otherwise, the creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 17 (5d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The frigid air dissipates when the rest of the wall vanishes.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Nichozal 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. Nichozal regains all legendary actions at the start of his turn.

**Frost Ray.** A ray of frost shoots from the *Heart of Agathys* against a target within 60 ft. of it. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 cold damage for each Pillar of Agathys still standing, and its speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of its next turn.

**Cold Feet.** Nichozal causes the ground in a 15 ft. radius around a point it can see within 120 ft. to be filled with grasping ice. Any creature of Nichozal's choice that ends its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become restrained (escape DC 15) as magic ice forms around its feet. This effect lasts for 1 minute, or until all the Pillars of Agathys have been destroyed.

**Armor of Agathys (2 actions).** Nichozal gains 5 temporary hit points for each Pillar of Agathys still standing. If a creature hits Nichozal with a melee attack while he has these hit points, the creature takes 5 cold damage for each Pillar of Agathys still standing.

## ICE GOLEM

Medium construct, unaligned

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 52 (7d8 + 21)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

**Damage Immunities** poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite  
**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** understands Infernal, but can't speak  
**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Magic Resistance.** The ice golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

### ACTIONS

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage, and the target's speed is slowed by 10 until the end of its next turn.

### REACTIONS

**Intercept Attack.** In response to another creature it can see within 5 feet of it being hit by an attack roll, the stone defender gives that creature a +5 bonus to its AC against that attack, potentially causing it to miss.

## DEVELOPMENTS

There are several potential outcomes to the characters' battle with Nichozal, depending on how they act.

### VICTORY

If the characters manage to kill Nichozal, the *Heart of Agathys* falls down to land in the soft snow, if it hasn't already done so. This ends everything wrought by the amulet – the snowstorm fades immediately, the ice dome quickly melts away, any ice golems fall lifeless to the ground, and all the imps revert back to their original forms. This also means that the ice covering the lake begins melting, although this process takes hours, allowing the characters to get off the ice without haste.

If Phlodur is still with the party, the imp offers its sincere gratitude and, at your discretion, offers to guide the party to their next destination. All the other imps on the isle quickly try to fly off, not particularly interested in facing off with the powerful heroes. The characters can pick up the amulet, which can't be used to quite as big effect as Nichozal did, but still holds great power. If the characters make no move to pick up the *Heart of Agathys*, you can have an imp – even Phlodur – try to sneak off with the powerful artifact. Beside the amulet, Nichozal's *armor of free action* is also a valuable prize.

When the adventurers come back to shore, the plains of Avernus look much like themselves again. The only traces of Nichozal's magic are sizzling puddles of melted ice and snow.

### A MERRY BARGAIN

If the characters have struck a bargain with Nichozal – promising to deliver a snowtoy to a child in return for passage through the snowstorm – Nichozal uses the *Heart of Agathys* to create a set of magic snowshoes for each character, along with an *infernal snowtoy* each.

Characters wearing the snowshoes have resistance to cold damage, ignore difficult terrain caused by snow or ice, and the snowstorm created by the *Heart of Agathys* is dampened in a 30 ft. radius around them, allowing them unhindered passage. Thus outfitted, the characters can continue on their journey, leaving the snowstorm in a handful of hours. Once clear of the snowstorm, the snowshoes melt away, their benefits lost forever.

Clever characters may accept the bargain and the snowshoes, only to turn around and attack Nichozal – his destruction will effectively void the contract – while wearing the beneficial footwear. This should make the fight with Nichozal a whole lot easier – which is a fitting reward for such delicious, devilish deception!

### DEFEAT

If Nichozal defeats the characters in battle, it doesn't have to mean the end of their journey. You can have defeated characters – even characters that died during the fight – awaken encapsulated in a thick layer of ice. Awake, but securely imprisoned by the magic of Agathys, the characters receive a final offer from Nichozal. If they accept his bargain – which has now increased to a debt of three souls instead of one – he will give them their freedom and free passage through the snowstorm. Like before, Nichozal gives each character that accepts a set of snowshoes and an *infernal snowtoy* and allows them to leave.

## TROUBLESHOOTING

It is with adventures as it with battle – no plan survives contact with the enemy (or, in this case, a group of creative D&D-players). Below are some possible issues that may arise, and advice on how to handle them.

### REFUSING THE HOOK

If you are running this adventure as a form of extended random encounter between locations in Avernus, the hook relies on the party realizing that dealing with Nichozal is the quickest way to get on with their journey and reach their destination. As is sometimes the case with adventuring parties, they may not see it that way. Remember that there are several ways Phlodur (or another NPC) can motivate them:

- They won't be able to outpace the storm – it will expand faster than they can move!
- Nichozal has powerful magic treasure – a crimson plate mail and the *Heart of Agathys*!
- If Nichozal isn't stopped, he will condemn the souls of hundreds, even thousands of children to eternal torture!

If the characters still aren't compelled, you can always have them run into both the 'Frost Devil Ambush' and Nichozal's dome of ice as they stumble about the magical snowstorm – or perhaps even by Nichozal's design, as he seeks someone to transport his snowtoys to the Material Plane. Granted, it's not the most elegant solution, but it gets job done.

### CHANGING PACE

Characters who've been challenged to expend resources by their encounters with first a frost worm and then a pack of frosty devils may try to find a way to take a long rest. The snowstorm makes long rest impossible without secure shelter, and since no shelter is readily available, the characters shouldn't be able to. This is by design, because being low on resources is what makes the encounter with Nichozal tense and challenging.

However, if the party can cast *Leomund's tiny hut* or similar magic, they may be able to rest regardless, thus breaking the pace. You can try to deter this by having Phlodur or another NPC emphasize that Nichozal must be stopped sooner rather than later, lest his power grows or he finds more creatures to do his bidding. If the characters rest regardless, you can compensate by increasing Nichozal's hit points and giving him some ice golems or frosty devils to aid him in battle.

### SNOW DOME

Nichozal's gift factory has several terrain features that can impact combat, as noted below.

**Ice Holes.** A creature that starts its turn in the frigid water must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or suffer a level of exhaustion. A creature can use an action to pull itself or another creature out of an ice hole with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Ice Walls.** Walls are 10 ft. tall, have AC 10, 15 HP, and immunity to cold, poison and psychic damage.

**Snow.** Snow-covered squares are difficult terrain.

# APPENDIX A: MAGIC ITEMS

## ARMOR OF FREE ACTION

*Armor (plate), rare (requires attunement)*

This crimson plate is made for a heavyset bearded devil, but magically resizes to fit any creature that attempts to attune to it.

While you wear this armor, difficult terrain doesn't cost you extra movement. In addition, magic can neither reduce your speed nor cause you to be paralyzed or restrained.



ARMOR OF  
FREE ACTION

## HEART OF AGATHYS

*Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)*

You have immunity to cold damage while wearing this magic amulet.

The *Heart of Agathys* has 3 charges, and regains all expended charges daily at dawn, or 24 hours after the last charge was used. While wearing the *Heart of Agathys*, you can cast the following spells from the amulet, expending the necessary number of charges: *armor of agathys* (at 4th-level, 1 charge), *cone of cold* (2 charges), *wall of ice* (3 charges). The save DC is 15 for spells cast using the *Heart of Agathys*.

## INFERNAL SNOWTOY

*Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)*

This small toy of snow – such as a plushy bear, or a figurine – holds the soul and personality of an imp. You can communicate telepathically with the imp inside it, which is lawful evil and has an Intelligence of 11, Wisdom of 12 and Charisma of 14.

While attuned to the snowtoy, you can use an action to cast the spell *invisibility* targeting only yourself. You can't do so again until you finish a long rest.



HEART OF  
AGATHYS

# APPENDIX B: DM'S CHEATSHEET

## BACKGROUND

- **Nichozal** found *Heart of Agathys* on battlefield
- Uses *Heart of Agathys* to turn imps in to snowtoys
- Wants imps to make children sign away their souls
- Has created a snowstorm to ward off demons
- Phlodur (**imp**) escaped mid-transformation

## CHAPTER 1: A NOSE SO BRIGHT

- Characters suddenly in snowstorm

In the span of a few minutes, the air around you becomes noticeably colder, and the frigid wind picks up pace. Before long, crystals of snow are falling on the ground around you, quickly increasing in both size and ferocity, until you're enveloped in a full-blown snowstorm. Snow is falling in droves now, the howling wind is making it hard to hear anything, and you can barely make out your surroundings.

- DC 10 Survival or Nature realizes storm is unnatural and too fast to outrun
- After 1 hour (DC 10 Con or exhaustion) sees Phlodur

A faint metallic clinking, like chiming bells, rises above the wind's howl. Turning toward the noise, you can make out a small, red glow, growing brighter as it moves toward you. "Mortals! Aid Phlodur, and Phlodur shall aid you in turn!" a squeaky voice exclaims in relief.

- Frost worm comes out of ground to attack party, tries to swallow creature, flees if less than 50 hit points
- After frost worm, party can take short rest by lava pit.
- Phlodur wants to revert transformation. Knows:
  - Snowstorm created by Nichozal with an artifact called *Heart of Agathys*
  - Nichozal is a big, bearded devil with red armor and frosty beard, also called Zariel's Claws
  - Catches imps and makes them into snowtoys, wants them to get children to sign over souls
  - Phlodur fled, slowed by storm and transformation
  - Nichozal is in a ice dome on a frozen lake nearby
- Phlodur's transformation complete soon after, is inanimate but can communicate telepathically
- If party accepts, Phlodur leads them to a frozen river – 1 hour journey (DC 10 Con or exhaustion)
- No treasure, but frost worm hide can make warm clothing with DC 10 Dexterity check using proper toolst

## SNOWSTORM

- Disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls.
- Disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing, sight or smell. Objects and creatures further away than 60 ft. are heavily obscured.
- Flying creatures must land at end of their turn or fall.
- If exposed to cold, DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. Automatic success if resistance/immunity to cold damage, wearing cold weather gear, or adapted to cold.
- Can only short rest if unaffected by the extreme cold of the snowstorm (as described above), and can only benefit from long rest if sheltered from the wind.

## CHAPTER 2: ON THIN ICE

- Party arrives at frozen river flanked by tall cliffs
- River pass protected by strong winds, making flying possible and ranged weapon attacks w/o disadvantage
- Characters can travel by river or trail 20 ft. above ice

## DEVILISH TRAPS

- Snow avalanche hits characters on trail
  - Avalanche hits 150 ft. long section of trail
  - DC 15 Dex save (passive Perception 15+ has advantage) or 3d6 bludgeoning damage.
  - On failure, DC 15 Str save or thrown down to frozen river, taking another 2d6 bludgeoning damage and restrained by pile of snow (action and DC 10 Athletics to free)
- Characters on ice walks onto sabotaged patch of ice
  - 15 ft. square breaks under 2 creatures or 1 heavy
  - DC 15 Dex save (passive Perception 15+ has advantage) or 3d6 cold damage.
  - A creature starting turn in water must make DC 15 Con save or 1 level exhaustion (action and DC 10 Athletics to get out)
- Immediately after trap, devils attack.

## FROST DEVIL AMBUSH

- Rupert (**frosty barbed devil**) and 1 frosty spined devil for each character in the party
- Rupert fights until destroyed, spined devils flee if Rupert dies (DC 14 Perception with disadvantage to keep chasing if they get more than 60 ft. away)
- Captured devils can tell party that fire can burn entrance in dome, or Nichozal can grant entry

## CHAPTER 3: COLDHEARTED

- A mile further up river, party finds ice dome

Before you rises a luminescent dome of thick ice, reaching from the lake's frozen surface to a height of 50 feet and stretching out to a diameter of 200 feet. The snowstorm seems to emanate from the enormous dome, blowing fiercely cold winds toward you, almost as if trying to physically keep you away. Whatever lurks within the dome is hidden by its thick, opaque walls, and there appears to be no door or entrance of any kind.

- 25 fire damage dealt to section of ice in one round opens entrance, or Nichozal can create entrance
- When the party enters:

Coming from the storm outside, the inside of the dome is almost eerily calm. Snow drifts calmly down – seemingly from nowhere – to land softly on the lake's icy surface. The pearly luminescence of the dome's walls casts the interior in a dim light, revealing simple ruined walls covered in gleaming ice. Amidst the ruins and near holes in the thick ice are cages each holding several imps in various stages of transformation. In the dome's center, four icy pillars beset with glowing runes curve inward toward each other, a beautiful amulet suspended in midair between them – the *Heart of Agathys*. Near the pillars stands a hulking devil with a frosty, white beard and wearing crimson plate mail.

## NICHOZAL

- Nichozal notices entrance by force and greets party

The bearded devil notices you, offering a jovial smile and spreading his massive arms in welcome. “Ho-ho-ho, what do we have here! Splendid work, mortals, splendid work – you must be quite the heroes to have made it this far. Such resourcefulness! I assume you have come out of some misguided sense of justice or moral objection to my enterprise? Fortunately for you, I see no wisdom in needlessly destroying you, when we can instead aid one another. I offer you safe passage through my storm and the blessing of Agathys” – the devil points to the amulet suspended between the pillars – “and ask in return only that you deliver a few gifts for me. Each of you must take a single present back to your world and give it to a child, who seem like they could use a friend. What do you say?”

- DC 13 Investigation notices hidden clause: characters that agree owe a soul to Nichozal
- If party argues, or acts aggressively, Nichozal attacks
- In combat, Nichozal uses Wall of Ice and Cold Feet to shape battlefield, and fights until destroyed

## HEART OF AGATHYS

- Indestructible, 5d6 cold if touched or melee attacked
- Pillars holding *Heart of Agathys* can be destroyed (AC 13, 30 HP, immunity to poison, psychic and cold, vulnerable to fire, AoE damage is split by pillars)
- If pillars are destroyed, Heart of Agathys falls to ground and magic created by it ends

## BALANCING THE ENCOUNTER

- Devils that escaped earlier can be in the ice dome
- If too easy, add 2-4 ice golems at start, or have *Heart of Agathys* create some during combat
- If too hard, restrict use of Legendary actions

### SNOW DOME

Nichozal's gift factory has several terrain features that can impact combat, as noted below.

**Ice Holes.** A creature that starts its turn in the frigid water must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, or suffer a level of exhaustion. A creature can use an action to pull itself or another creature out of an ice hole with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Ice Walls.** Walls are 10 ft. tall, have AC 10, 15 HP, and immunity to cold, poison and psychic damage.

**Snow.** Snow-covered squares are difficult terrain.

## DEVELOPMENTS

- If Nichozal or the pillars are destroyed, *Heart of Agathys* reverts back to a magic amulet, the ice dome, snowstorm and ice golems quickly melt
- If the characters bargain with Nichozal, he gives them each an infernal snowtoy and magic snowshoes (resistance to cold, ignore difficult terrain, dampening snowstorm in 30 ft. radius). Characters can get clear of storm in 24 hours and snowshoes melt
- If the characters are defeated, Nichozal traps characters in ice and offer them freedom and escape from storm in return for a debt of 3 souls



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