BOOK OF SEASONS

Solstices



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Solstices

A COLLECTION OF 20 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES
FOR 5TH EDITION DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

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Foreword

There's something magical about the changing of the seasons. The natural ebb and flow of color and climate have inspired writers and artists for centuries. We're lucky enough to experience this in our real world, but exploring this concept through the lens of fantasy is a real treat for any creator. Such is the case with this book. Anthologies are one of my favorite ways to read and experience creative work. Collections like these are a harmony of unique voices that have united around a central theme, and these creators have embraced the catalyst of seasons — the solstice — to form this beautiful euphony of storytelling. As always, I'm delighted when esteemed creators collaborate. I look forward to being among the many gamers and readers whose gaming tables will be enchanted by this collection.

Ashley Warren
Founder and Producer of the Uncaged Anthology

Producer's Note

It's incredible what can happen when a few driven people find each other. When Uncaged: Volume 1 was released, many of us involved wanted to continue to collaborate with one another. Ideas began flying in the discord: a book of diverse NPCs (Friends, Foes, and other Fine Folk), a collection of anticapitalist adventures (Eat the Rich) and...something with seasons? Maybe the fey rule the seasons...or a warlock who has a patron that IS a season... or something celebrating a certain mood, festivity, or vibe from a season? That was the beginning of Book of Seasons. Building on the values of inclusivity, feminism, and ingenuity of the Uncaged quartet, Book of Seasons is a two volume collection of Solstices and Equinoxes created by an international team of hard-working writers, artists, and editors. I'm so proud of what we have accomplished and hope we help to fill your seasonal celebrations with wonderment, fantasy, and adventure.

Jessica Marcrum
Producer
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Introduction

Welcome to Book of Seasons: Solstices, a volume of twenty adventures featuring summer and winter themed adventures.

Volume Overview

Book of Seasons: Solstices features adventures designed for every tier. The adventures are not connected, but some feature crossovers of characters or locations. Game Masters are encouraged to weave them together into a longer campaign. Each adventure is designed to be a one-session module, playable in 1-5 hours.

General Notes and Safety

DMs/GMs will need the Dungeon Master's Guide (denoted as DMG) and the Monster Manual (denoted as MM) to run these adventures. Some adventures feature items or creatures found in Volo's Guide to Monsters, Mordekainen's Tome of Foes, and Xanathar's Guide to Everything; these are denoted with VGtM, MTF, or XGtE. Creatures/monsters that are bolded are found in the MM. Items that are italicized are found in the DMG. Stat blocks are included for new or reskinned creatures. See Appendix A, pg. XX, for a list of creatures in this volume.

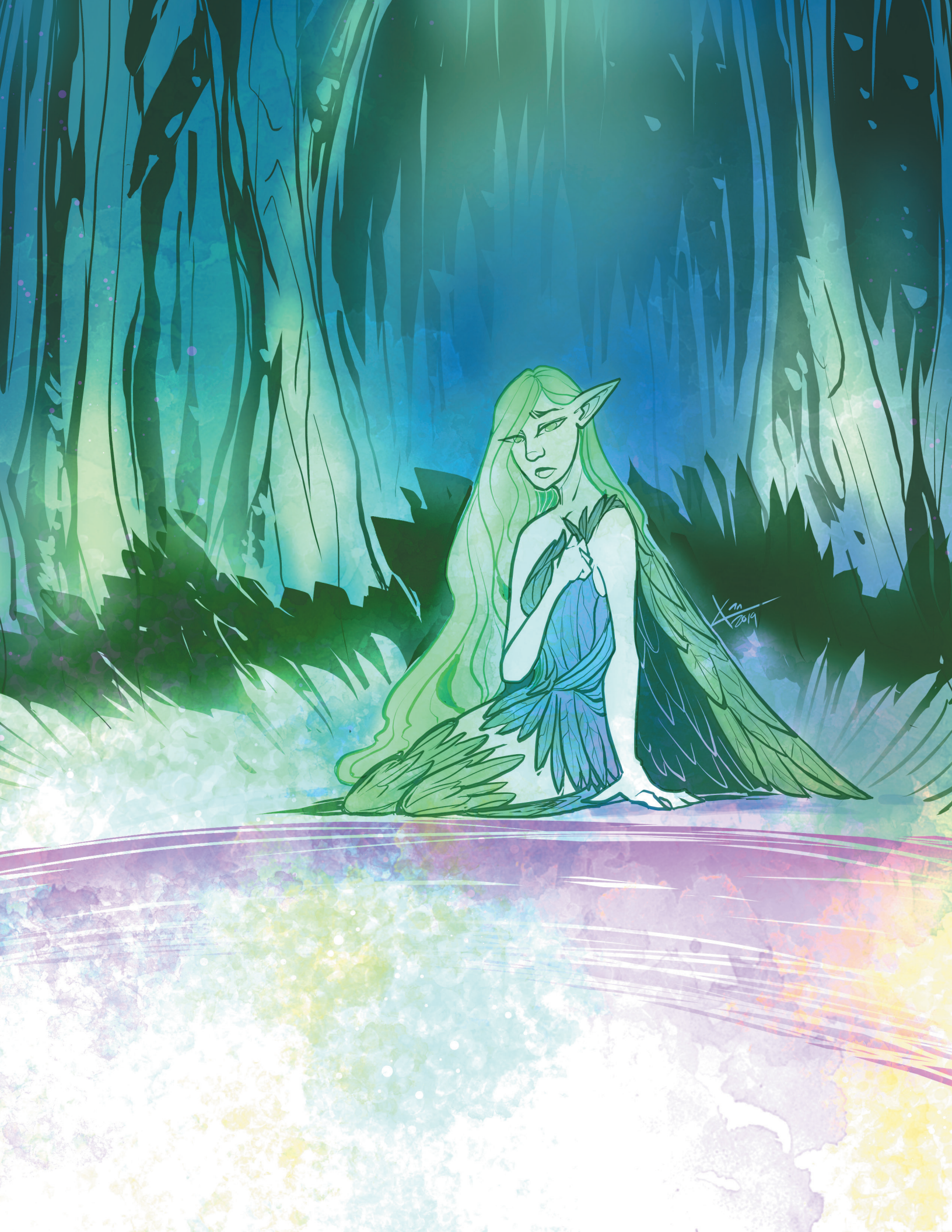
Due to the nature of the anthology, some adventures are preceded with a relevant content warning. We encourage you to set clear boundaries and expectations at your gaming table, ensuring that our hobby remains inclusive and inviting to all. Whether you utilise the X card, lines and veils, or another tool, keeping everyone safe while playing is paramount.

Most of the adventures in this anthology rely on "theater of the mind" and do not include maps. Blank player maps are found in Appendix B(?).

> Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased.



Summer



Without Rain

Written by A. Kelly Lane

Levels: 1 - 3 Content Warnings: Forest Fires, Tornadoes, Bigotry

SYNOPSIS

The farming town of Britleberg has been undergoing major weather changes. A drought has caused the river to run dry, fires to start, and tornadoes to appear at an alarming rate. When the dryad Pryola tried to escape a fire in the woods, the residents of Britleberg kidnapped her, hoping that she would provide answers. However, Pryola has none to share. The Mayor of Britleberg, Tye, is at their wits' end trying to manage the mob of townsfolk and is offering a great reward to anyone who can bring back the rain. Adventurers must contend with formidable weather, monsters who lurk in the woods, and the bigoted anger of fearful people to learn what is causing the climate to change. Without Rain is intended for 3-5 characters of levels 1-4.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Word of Britleberg's misfortunes has reached far beyond the town. When adventurers stop at a local tavern, they may hear of Britleberg's troubles and choose to head to town on their own. Alternatively, Mayor Tye has ordered postings placed at job boards declaring a reward for anyone who can bring the water back to Britleberg. Finally, should they be traveling on the open road, the adventurers may be forced to shelter in Britleberg to wait out a tornado.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The small farming town of Britleberg is well known for its grain production; however, a major drought has struck the local area. The small river used for crop irrigation runs dry and there has been no rain for several months. Farmers' crops are withered and dying, leaving the town panicked about the fall harvest. The hot summer sun beats down from above causing those working in the fields to collapse, and the winds swirl as tornadoes tear through the dusty fields. A few days ago, a fire sprung up from the woods tearing through the outer settlements. The Mayor of Britleberg, a human named Tye, will pay a great sum to any who can bring back the water.

When the dryad Pryola emerged from the local woods seeking aid, the townsfolk captured her, thinking she would be able to provide answers. All Pryola knows is that her trees are dying. She doesn't know about the mages in the woods who are draining the reserves of wild magic for their own benefit.

Several months ago, two apprentice wizards, Stevius and Bezeol, stumbled upon a font of wild magic and began to drain it in order to create magical items to sell. They quickly made a large profit from their wares and, even though they know the damage they are doing to the local climate, they continue to drain the font. The loss of wild magic has altered the local climate causing the drought.

CHAPTER 1: THE WHIPPING WINDS

The party travels down a dusty road wide enough for multiple carriages side by side. Fields of grain stretch on either side of the road as far as the eye can see, but the grain seems dry and much too short for this late in the summer. Wandering eyes easily notice that a few fields have been burned and 100 feet off the road the ashes of a farmhouse still smolder. On a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check**, the town of Britleberg is visible over the next small hill.

Run for Cover

As you walk you cannot help but notice the sky darken with greenish clouds and the wind begin to howl. Clouds swirl in the distance and seemingly out of nowhere a tornado touches down near the road. The dust whips up from an ashen field as the tornado slowly moves toward you.

On a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check**, it is obvious that there are no ditches or low points in which to hide and the ruined farmhouse is not sturdy enough. If the check fails, it is unclear whether there are options for cover. However, on a successful **DC 14 Intelligence (History) or Wisdom (Survival) check** the character realizes that Britleberg is likely to be prepared for this kind of weather. Any creature caught in the tornado takes 15 (3d10) bludgeoning damage for every minute and is grappled by the storm. The tornado touches down 200 feet from town and moves at 5 feet per second. The tornado lasts for three minutes.

If the party chooses to make for Britleberg, they make it there before the tornado hits. Use the following to create a sense of urgency.

- Call for a **DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**: If the check succeeds, the character is able to run swiftly down the road. If the check fails, the character trips, taking one point of bludgeoning damage and slowing their speed by 10 feet
- If the party is traveling with horses, mules, ponies, etc. have every character managing an animal make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check**. If successful, they are able to calm their scared steeds. If they fail, the animal bolts down the path towards town, and the rider is thrown from the animal's back or the cart it was pulling

The Role of the Tornado

The aims of the tornado related checks are to induce a sense of urgency for the party rather than to trap them within the tornado. While running this chapter, only parties that completely ignore the danger of the storm should be caught within it since the tornado should be deadly. The tornado may angle away, slow, or speed up its movement to balance the sense of urgency with little actual danger to the party.

Lock the Cellar Door

When the party arrives in Britleberg, they are immediately ushered into one of four large cellars accessed from the town square. If the party tried to weather the tornado without running for town, they arrive as the townsfolk are making their way out of the cellars. Skip ahead to Chapter 2.

A townsperson slams down two heavy wooden doors behind the party, closing the cellar. The party finds themselves underground in a 15 foot square room lit by oil lamps. The townspeople are relatively calm as this is a regular occurrence.

Either by asking around or listening to whispers the party can discover the following information:

- The townsfolk are used to the tornadoes and these shelters were built years ago; however, tornadoes are occurring much more frequently than they ever have before and are occuring well into summer, when they should be over by the end of spring
- The river has run dry and a recent forest fire from the nearby woods caught several fields ablaze. It hasn't rained since early spring and it is now mid-summer. This is causing local fields to dry up and the farmers are afraid that their fall harvest will be more limited than normal
- Mayor Tye is willing to pay a large reward for anyone able to bring back the water

On a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check**, the party overhears whispers about a dryad. If they ask for more information the townsfolk are reticent but on a successful **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** they inform the party that there is a captive dryad in town who they had hoped would tell them the cause of the drought. The townsfolk seem ashamed about the dryad but say no more.

Description of town:

Britleberg is a small town built next to a small river about 15 feet wide, which is currently just a dry ditch. There are around one hundred residents, many of whom live on farmsteads outside of the main town. There is a single inn called Just Plain Good, a blacksmith, an herbalist, a butcher, and a general store which primarily sells farming equipment and basic supplies. These buildings are all built around the town square, which includes a small fountain that is also dry. The townsfolk seem to make a comfortable living from the local farms, either through owning them or working on them.

Development

The tornado moves onwards and while some buildings are missing shingles or thatching, the tornado missed Britleberg. As the townsfolk emerge from the cellars, one human notices the party. Mayor Tye (human veteran, MM, they/them, lawful good), a sturdy individual with shoulder-length brown hair approaches them. The mayor is desperate for help and hopes that the party has come to answer their posted requests for aid.

CHAPTER 2: MOTIVATED BY FEAR

Just Plain Good

Mayor Tye offers the party a meal at the local inn, Just Plain Good. While eating, the mayor informs them there is a reward of 100 gp each if they can figure out what has caused this drought. Tye offers an extra 400 gp to anyone who can bring back the water in the river and shares the following information:

- The townsfolk believe that this drought has been caused by magical means because most nights they see red and orange lights glowing above the forest across the river
- A dryad named Pryola recently fled from the forest during a forest fire and sought shelter in the town. Instead of helping, the townsfolk locked Pryola in a cellar hoping to gain information from her about the drought. She has said very little

Roleplaying Mayor Tye

Mayor Tye is non-binary and uses they/them pronouns. They can also be referred to by their name or title. The mayor believed that the residents of Britleberg were incapable of something as aggressive as locking up a dryad and is disappointed in the folk that live here. Tye is wracked with guilt over Pryola's imprisonment. Now, they do not know what to do about the dryad and secretly hope that the adventurers will talk to Pryola and find a solution to that problem as well.

Tye is obviously distressed and they hesitate before mentioning Pryola. On a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check**, characters understand that Tye is saddened by the townsfolk's actions towards the dryad. Tye suggests that the party speak to Pryola before heading into the forest.

I Speak for the Trees

Mayor Tye leads the party to one of the cellars and unlocks the large padlock on the front. Tye motions for the party to enter and chooses to remain outside while they speak with Pryola. The dryad is huddled in the corner, sitting on the dirt floor. When the party enters, she stands and tries to appear noble. Pryola does not use her Fey Charm on the party because it is against her personal values to force or manipulate someone into action. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check** reveals that Pryola could charm the party but chose not to try. Pryola shares the information in the boxed text below, speaking honestly. She is clearly exhausted, crying, and ranting. Read or paraphrase the following text said by Pryola:

> You aren't from around here are you? Then maybe you'll listen to me. I know just as little as these folks. The forest was burning and I had to run. I had to leave my tree behind. I came here for help to hide from the lights and the heat in the woods. But the people here… they were so scared of me. They believed all those old stories about dryads, that I must have been punished for loving someone or doing something. I chose this life. I chose to protect my forest because I love the trees and I love my sisters. I swore to protect it and there is nothing I can do from inside this box.

Pryola is aromantic and does not try to woo the adventurers in any way. She appeals to their sense of justice and offers them a gift of a wind fan if they free her, in addition to acting as a guide through the woods. Pryola knows the following information, and shares it if asked:

- The forest is dying due to the lack of rain. Pryola herself is sick because of it
- She has seen the lights which seem to be coming from deep within the woods. She could lead the party towards the lights but does not know what they will find
- Pryola is weak because her tree is dying. She does not think she could help defeat a substantial foe

If the party tries to break Pryola out, they can pick the lock with a successful **DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check** or break the door with a successful **DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check**.





Alternately, they can convince Mayor Tye to release Pryola with a successful **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. On a failure, the mayor agrees to consider it if the party finds the cause of the drought and can prove Pryola is not responsible. Tye worries that releasing Pryola will enrage the townsfolk.

Development

As night falls, the red and yellow lights shooting out above the forest look somewhat like firecrackers and are obvious to anyone looking outside. On a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check**, characters understand that the lights are a release of magical energy. The townsfolk look on nervously and anyone the party interacts with thanks them for their help even if the party has not yet decided whether to aid the town.

CHAPTER 3: FONT OF MAGIC

Traversing the Forest

If the party freed Pryola, she waits for them near the edge of the forest and escorts them to where she thinks the lights may be coming from. With Pryola as a guide, the party navigates the forest easily and does not have to make any of the rolls described below. Pryola knows the forest so well that she is even able to point out traps as they are obvious to her. They party encounters an **Awakened Tree**, but Pryola convinces the tree to let the group pass unhindered. This time can be used for roleplay and the party can voluntarily seek out a forest encounter if they choose. Continue on to Irresponsible Production.

If Pryola is not with the party, the party member in front needs to succeed on three **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) checks** to navigate the forest and eventually come across the source of the lights. For every failure, roll on the encounter table.

1d10	Encounter
1	1d6 awakened shrubs
2	1 fire snake
3	1 vine blight and 1d4 twig blights
4	10 feet deep Hidden Pit trap (DMG, Chapter 5: Adventure Environments)
5	The party has been traveling through Extreme Heat for one hour (DMG, Chapter 5: Adventure Environments)

1d10	Encounter
6	The party member in front rolls a **DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check**. On a success they hear a twig snap. On a failure, they hear nothing.
7	Fire in the woods: Each party member has to succeed on a **DC 12 Dexterity saving throw** or be trapped in the flames around them, taking 6 (1d12) fire damage before escaping.
8	The trees are dry and dying. A massive tree begins to topple over. Those who succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** avoid the falling tree. Those who fail take 1d8 bludgeoning damage. Characters who succeed on a **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check** notice the tree before it falls, and make the saving throw with advantage.
9	The party finds a broken crate containing 2d6 gp and 2d10 sp. On a successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, they are able to read the writing on the side of the box. It reads "Stevius and Bezeol's Magical Exports"
10	Another dryad appears from behind a tree. If the party immediately reveals that they know Pryola and are trying to help her, the dryad helps them traverse the forest and they do not need to make any more checks. If the party does not share that information, the dryad disappears into the forest and cannot be seen or followed.

After the party has navigated the forest, they can see a small clearing 30 feet ahead of them. Read or paraphrase the following:

> Tucked in between the trees are two humanoids in rich robes talking in quiet whispers. Surrounding them are empty crates which read "Stevius and Bezeol's Magical Exports." They are standing beside a large, natural pool of magical liquid which glows with swirls of color, and they have a pile of arrows and containers next to them.

Irresponsible Production

Stevius (human, he/him, chaotic evil) and **Bezeol** (human, he/him, chaotic evil) are both **Apprentice Wizards** (VGtM). However, they each have 25 hit points. Stevius and Bezeol initially try to bribe the party with 50 gp and a ring of fire resistance. If the party speaks to Stevius and Bezeol, they learn that the wizards have been making money by selling magical items. They do not discuss how the items are created, but they do know that it is causing the climate problems. It is clear that Stevius and Bezeol do not care about the climate issues and intend to continue with production and nothing will convince them otherwise.

If the party takes Stevius and Bezeol's deal and leave, once they are away from the wizards, the party is attacked by 1d4 dryads, enraged by the characters' abandonment of the trees. If Pryola is present, she joins the other dryads in attacking the party. The dryads have every intention of killing Stevius and Bezeol themselves if necessary.

If the party attacks Stevius and Bezeol, the wizards fight to the death, refusing to leave their money behind.

Characters who investigate the area and succeed on the relevant checks learn the following:

- **DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check**: The pool of glowing liquid is actually a pool of concentrated wild magic. It appears that Stevius and Bezeol have been syphoning off the wild magic to create magical items
- **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check** of the pool: The pool could hold more of the strange liquid, but it has been drained significantly
- **DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check**: Only time will refill the pool with wild magic, and it could be centuries before it happens
- **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** of the bodies of Stevius and Bezeol: They carried very little on them, but there are order slips for jars filled with fire elementals, two *rings of fire resistance*, and a *necklace of fireballs*. Bezeol also has a coin purse filled with 250 gp

For more advanced parties, you may wish to increase the difficulty of this encounter. Stevius and Bezeol may conjure a fire elemental (MM) with half the usual hp (51) to aid them and/or be accompanied by 1d4 thugs (MM). You can also use the encounter table in Traversing the Forest to add encounters. Encounters in the table can also have their difficulty increased by adding additional creatures to any attack.

Development

If the party survives, they can return to Britleberg to claim their reward.

CONCLUSION

If the party takes Stevius and Bezeol's offer and survives the dryad attack they return to Britleberg empty handed. If they share the information they found, Tye gives them each 10 gp for their trouble and sends them on their way. If Pryola was not already freed, Tye frees her and Pryola vows to seek vengeance on the town, the party, and the wizards and then disappears into the trees.

If the party returns victorious, Mayor Tye gives them their reward of 100 gp each; however, the water is still not flowing so they do not receive the bonus. Mayor Tye immediately frees Pryola, if she had not been freed already. Either way Tye apologizes profusely and immediately declares new laws in town regarding the wrongful imprisonment of individuals and the protection of dryads. If the party realized that the water will not come back because the damage is already done, they can share this information with the Mayor. Upon learning this, Tye rounds up the townsfolk and they begin making decisions about packing up and abandoning the town. At this time, if the party argued for Pryola's freedom or freed her themselves, she gifts them with a wind fan specially made using the bark of her favorite tree.

Rewards

Note that gold and treasure rewards may be acquired in multiple ways by the party. If the party stops Stevius and Bezeol either through combat or more creative means, they receive the XP for defeating them. If, at the end of the adventure, Stevius and Bezeol are still operating in the woods, then the party does not receive the XP.

XP Rewards

(Depending on Encounters and Party Choices)

Encounter	XP
Dryad	200 each
Vine Blight	100 each
Twig Blight	25 each
Fire Snake	200 each
Awakened Shrub	10 each
Stevius and Bezeol	100 each

Treasure Rewards

(Depending on Encounters and Party Choices)

Encounter
Wind Fan (DMG, Chapter 7: Treasure)
Ring of Fire Resistance (DMG, Chapter 7: Treasure)
50-250 gp from Stevius and Bezeol
100 gp each from Mayor Tye

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

Corporations and governments are the largest contributors to climate change. In this adventure, I wanted to play with fantasy climate change and the production of goods that might impact it and also highlight that the choices of key individuals--such as heads of companies and the people who fight for better treatment of our planet—can have major consequences. I have also always been drawn to wild magic in D&D and try to incorporate it in creative ways in my games giving it a greater purpose in the structure of the universe.

Author Bio

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





Sea and Sand

Written by Megan Irving

Level: 3

SYNOPSIS

The party's beach holiday is set adrift when the fish in the area mysteriously vanish. Urged by local fisherfolk to tackle the mystery, the players trawl through sahuagin raiders, a merfolk clan, a sea witch, and even a kraken. Can they reel in some answers, or are they destined to be fish food?

ADVENTURE HOOK

The party is having a well-deserved rest at a beautiful fishing village on the beach. Their relaxation is disturbed when the locals ask them to investigate a mystery: all the fish in the area seem to have vanished.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure takes place at a small fishing village. The residents live in relative harmony with a local sea witch and a clan of cheeky merfolk who live nearby; the merfolk live in a series of grottos along the coast, and the sea witch in a small shack on the cliffs above the beach.

At the start of the adventure, the fisherfolk are no longer able to catch any fish in the area. They suspect sahuagin magic is involved, but when the players investigate, they discover an upset kraken is the culprit. The kraken's child has been stolen by the merfolk clan, and its frantic search has scared away the fish.

CHAPTER 1: FINS & FISHERFOLK

The characters are relaxing in the small fishing village of Mulgarrie. They've been there long enough to meet the notable figures and explore the main locations.

Mulgarrie

Mulgarrie is a small village on the coast. It has a small but thriving population, mostly of fisherfolk. In warm months, some tourists visit for the beautiful, calm beach. Since the player characters arrived, the mood in town has slowly soured. People now mutter unhappily to each other on the street.

Locations of Interest

- A long beach stretches out from one end of Mulgarrie, past the harbour at the other end
- A large cabin on the cliffs above the beach
- The village, including houses, a few shops, and a small harbour where the fisherfolk keep their boats
- There are some larger houses on the beach slightly out of town. These are holiday homes for people who don't live in Mulgarrie, almost all currently empty and containing small caches of valuable art objects for enterprising thieves
    - The locks can be picked with a successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**

The People of Mulgarrie

- The townsfolk are mostly humans, halflings or gnomes. Less common are half-elves, half-orcs, and genasi

- A council of elderly halflings informally leads the town. **Angus** (halfling **commoner** (MM), he/him, lawful good) and **Moira** (halfling **commoner**, she/her, lawful good), two lifelong friends, are the heads of the council
- **Orana** (drow **mage** (MM), she/her, chaotic good) is a sorceress who lives in the clifftop cabin selling potions and charms to the townsfolk and protecting them from sahuagin raiders and pirates
- A friendly merfolk clan lives in nearby underwater grottos, led by a mermaid named Kekepania (merfolk (MM), she/her, chaotic neutral)

The Adventure Begins

While relaxing on the beach, you're approached by two elderly halflings that you recognise as Angus and Moira. They are members of the council of elders who lead Mulgarrie.

Angus wrings his hands as he nears. "Sorry to interrupt," he says sheepishly. "The last thing we want to do is interrupt your holiday. But, er, I'm afraid we must ask for your assistance, if you're willing to give it, of course..."

Moira interrupts him. "We need your help, adventurers," she says. "Plain and simple. If you can't help, you need to go."

"What Moira means to say," Angus says, "is that we love having you here, of course we do, but, er, we can't afford to have you stay in Mulgarrie anymore. We, er, seem to have run out of food..."

"There's no fish," Moira interrupts again. "Goodness knows how, but they've all just up and vanished. Poof. Like magic."

"It's those bloody sahuagin again, I'm sure of it," Angus mutters, and they share a dark look before turning to you again.

"So you see," Angus says, wringing his hands again, "we really do require your assistance. If it is those rascally raiders, we might be in serious trouble..."

Angus and Moira explain the situation to the characters in more detail. They know the following:

- The fisherfolk's hauls have slowly gotten smaller over the last week or so, and now there seem to be literally no fish in the nearby area
    - If they don't return, the townsfolk will all have to leave Mulgarrie and try to find a new home
- The townsfolk suspect sahuagin (MM) are somehow behind it, perhaps as a pre-raid tactic. sahuagin have raided Mulgarrie before, but Orana has always managed to fend them off
- If the players can solve the mystery and bring the fish back or scare the sahuagin off, Mulgarrie will be indebted to them
- If the characters agree to investigate, Moira offers them the use of her fishing boat. She'll show them how to drive it but won't come with them
    - Any characters who helm the boat while exploring gain proficiency with vehicles (water)
- They haven't approached the merfolk or Orana about the issue, hoping the characters will investigate for them
    - If the characters don't know where to start, Angus suggests they ask Orana, and Moira suggests they talk to the merfolk

Orana The Sea Witch

Perched on the cliffs overlooking the crashing waves on the beach and Mulgarrie itself is a huge, beautiful cabin. To reach it, you climb up steep steps cut directly into the cliff face; a climb that feels as precarious as the view is incredible.

At the top, a tall woman draped in veils watches you, a basket full of herbs in one elegant, blue-black hand. Orana, the mysterious drow woman who lives up here, seems surprised to see you.

"Hello again," she says, in her vague, dreamy voice. As she speaks, her eyes drift away from you towards the ocean. "Beautiful day, isn't it?"

Orana lives in the shack on the top of the cliffs overlooking the beach. She spends her days experimenting with magic in her shack and exploring the area and is always easy to find. Orana is a female **drow** (MM) who is always draped in veils and shawls, protecting her delicate skin from the sun.

Orana was once saved from an attack by a Mulgarrian, and so decided to settle here and protect them in turn. She's not exactly sure how long ago that was - Orana doesn't feel very connected to the here-and-now, which makes it hard for her to connect with other people.

Orana's Help

- Orana isn't interested in helping the characters directly
  - She understands the lack of food will impact the townsfolk but is confident that they'll solve it themselves
  - If they can't, they'll leave, and that's okay too
- She promises to help if sahuagin attack Mulgarrie directly
- She offers to let the players have some of the potions and scrolls she's created and collected, giving them free access to her house
- She can tell the characters where the merfolk live, although she doesn't know them well as she finds them too flighty

Orana's Shack

When the players investigate Orana's shack for helpful items, they might find any of the following. Orana either doesn't notice or doesn't care if they take more than they need. Players can find each item once - if the same number is rolled, nothing of interest is found.

1d6	Shack Item
1	Potion of water breathing
2	Potion of healing
3	Potion of poison
4	Scroll of water breathing
5	Scroll of identify
6	Luckstone

Development

With the boat and the water-breathing potions and spells, the characters are now able to venture into the wide ocean to explore.

Chapter 2: Mayhem & Merfolk

Make it clear to the players that they can directly approach the merfolk, or explore the ocean searching for the possible Sahuagin raiders and other clues.

The Merfolk Clan

The characters can only reach the merfolk grottos if they have some way to breathe water or hold their breath for a long time. Orana the sea witch has potions and spells they can use.

> Deep below Mulgarrie's beach is an interconnected web of grottos. As you swim down to them, you're greeted by two merpeople with colourful fins, glittering jewelry, and welcoming smiles.
>
> They guide you to the grotto entrance, where a group of merfolk are busy playing games and laughing together. The mermaid laughing loudest is covered with the most coral jewelry you've ever seen anyone wear at once and has a sea snake woven into her curly hair.
>
> Your guides introduce her to you as Kekepania, the leader of the merfolk. She invites you to stay a while, forget your troubles, and play with them.

The Merfolk Grottos

The grottos are mostly underwater, with caves and ledges here and there where air-breathing characters can rest or spend time.

The first few caverns are huge, full of groups of brightly-coloured **merfolk** (MM) playing games and gossiping. Large tunnels branch off to progressively smaller and smaller caverns where the merfolk rest. The grottos are labyrinthine, and sound echoes strangely off the slick rocks. It's almost impossible for the characters to keep track of the tunnels, but the merfolk are always happy to escort their guests around.

One brightly-lit tunnel leading off from the main cavern is the exception - the merfolk get annoyed if the characters try to explore it, and press them to stay away from it. If the characters manage to explore it, they find a small cavern blocked off with a fence made of coral. Behind the fence is a strange creature that they can identify as a baby kraken (**juvenile kraken**, Ghosts of Saltmarsh).

The Merfolk

The merfolk clan is made up of a few large family groups who live

in the same grotto system, pooling resources. The clan is led by a young mermaid named Kekepania.She has no guards or servants, as leadership is a loose concept to merfolk. Kekepania holds court in the largest grotto, but "court" to them just means an endless series of games, feasts and parties. Merfolk constantly drift in and out of the grottos, rarely committing to any source of entertainment for long.

The merfolk are all happy to talk with the characters, but they find it hard to pay attention to a conversation for long and often just drift away mid-sentence. They don't want to talk about Mulgarrie's issues, although they'll talk about how they love Mulgarrie and its inhabitants. They have a cordial relationship with Orana - she's much too serious for them.

If the characters intimidate, confuse, or charm the merfolk in conversation, they accidentally reveal they recently took a baby kraken captive to play with.

Exploring The Ocean

Ocean Encounters
While the characters are exploring the ocean in Moira's boat, they might encounter any or all of the following. As a rough guideline, roll on the table each time they explore, replacing the used entries with the sahuagin raiders and the kraken encounters.

1d6	Random Encounter
1	A young dragon flies overhead
2	A shoal of multicoloured jellyfish float past
3	Fishing boats from Mulgarrie
4	A sahuagin raiding ship with five sahuagin aboard. They don't attack unless approached
5	A quick rain shower
6	A giant shark circles the boat, then swims away

The Sahuagin Raiders

As you explore the ocean around Mulgarrie, you come across a small island just off the coast, covered in huge old trees. Tucked into a small cove is a small gathering of boats. There are no towns nearby, and they aren't fishing boats.

If there really are sahuagin raiders in the area, you're pretty sure you just found them.

There are twenty **sahuagin** here, split across the three boats and camping on the island. If the players encountered and defeated a raider ship while exploring, there's one less ship and five less sahuagin. Two sisters lead them, **Captain Blackgills** (**sahuagin**, she/her, lawful evil) and **Makani** (**sahuagin priestess**, she/her, lawful evil).

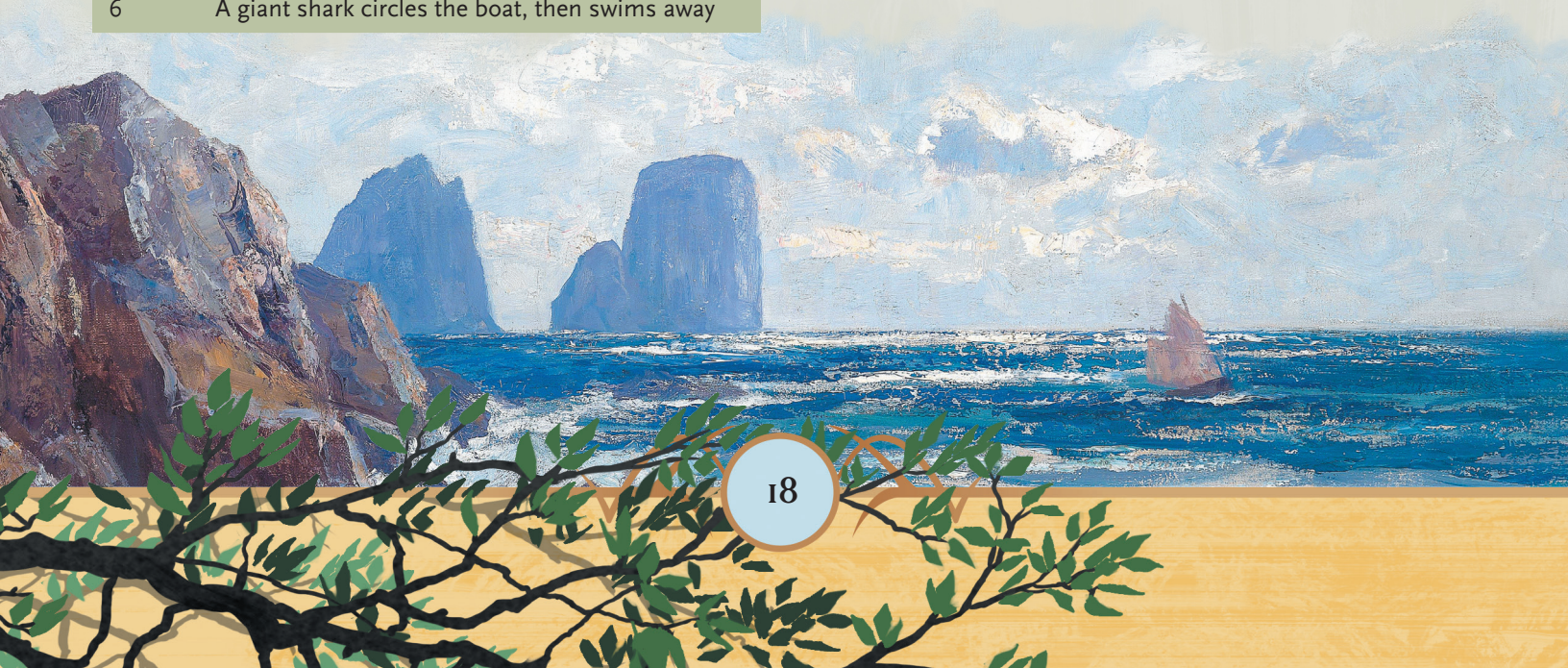
If approached aggressively, they respond in kind. Makani hangs back on the island with three sahuagin protecting her, while Captain Blackgills, wielding a longsword, and the other sahuagin attack on their boats.

If approached diplomatically, they speak to the players. Captain Blackgills and Makani can be convinced to leave - Captain Blackgills is happy to duel a player character over Mulgarrie, and Makani is happy to be bribed to leave with a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. If the sahuagin situation is resolved peacefully, the characters still get all the experience points for the encounter.

However the characters approach the sahuagin, it's clear that there are only a few of them in the area and they can't possibly have eaten all the fish.

The Kraken

After dealing with the sahuagin raiders, the characters encounter the **kraken** (MM).



It was a hot day, but a sudden chill is in the air. Dark clouds drift across the sky, and the birds have all vanished. The water has a dark tinge to it, and something very deep and primal inside you is telling you that something's coming, something bad, and you need to escape. But it's too late - it's already here.

Your boat rocks as two huge tentacles rise out of the water, one on each side. Far away on the horizon, matching tentacles splash out of the calm sea. You realise they're from the same creature - something unimaginably big that's right under your boat.

Before you can react, the tentacles sink back into the ocean. The water gets lighter as the creature sinks into the depths, and the warmth is returned to the day. A gull wheels above you in the cloudless sky.

Whatever it was, it's gone.

What's Next

- The kraken is clearly what has eaten or scared away all the fish
- Unless the characters have seen the baby kraken, they don't know why it's here
- If told about it, the townsfolk don't believe a kraken could be in the area
- Orana believes the characters but doesn't know why it would be here
    - If they tell her about the merfolk's theft, she agrees that they need to return the baby, but won't talk to the merfolk with them
    - If the characters still don't know the merfolk have the kraken, Orana pushes them to investigate the merfolk

Development

The characters have discovered the merfolk are harboring a kidnapped baby kraken. They now need to return the baby to its parent.

CONCLUSION

The players know the merfolk have the baby kraken and need to convince them to return it. As with the sahuagin, they can try either diplomacy or violence.

Although Kekepania is technically in charge, when the characters talk to her, other merfolk drift in and out, listening and offering their own opinions. However, at the end of the discussion, it's Kekepania's decision that counts.

The Diplomatic Solution

Kekepania isn't happy to be told she needs to let the baby kraken go. She demands the characters make a good argument, and then she and the other merfolk will decide.

Characters can gain advantage in the conversation by:

- referencing the kraken they've seen and how upset it was
- talking about the plight of Mulgarrie
    - the people of Mulgarrie will be upset with the merfolk
    - the people will leave if there's no food, and the merfolk love playing with the people
    - the sea witch will leave, and she protects the merfolk from the sahuagin raiders
- trading the merfolk something fun and shiny

To convince Kekepania to return the kraken, the characters need to succeed on a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

The Violent Solution

Alternatively, the characters can try to get the baby kraken back through violence. The merfolk are largely peaceful and have a pacifist society. Only Kekepania has a sword, and she's not very skilled with it. If the characters attempt to fight the merfolk, they beg for mercy and hand over the kraken immediately rather than get hurt.

What Happens Next

The characters and the merfolk return the baby kraken to its parent. How they accomplish this is up to them. The kraken won't attack them when approached, recognising that they have its child. Then they can return to Mulgarrie - and so do the fish.

The fish slowly return to Mulgarrie over the next few days. Once it's clear the problem is resolved, there's a feast in your honour. Everyone from Mulgarrie attends, even Orana. There's an abundance of good food and drink, laughter, and dancing. When the hour gets late, the party gets quiet as Angus and Moira approach you, holding a gleaming trident between them.

"We can't thank you enough," Angus says. "We almost had to leave Mulgarrie...it's been our home for so long..."

"But we didn't!" Moira cuts in. "And for that, we're forever grateful. The council of elders has agreed to give you this ceremonial trident, the symbol of Mulgarrie, to represent that gratitude."

When the party inspects the trident, whoever has the highest Arcana skill can sense magic in it. The trident is a *trident of fish command* (DMG).

After the party, the players can return to their relaxing beach holiday in Mulgarrie, or continue on with their adventures.

Rewards

Treasure Rewards

The main reward is the trident of fish command, and the friendship with Orana, the townsfolk and the merfolk. Characters might also return to Mulgarrie as a future holiday destination. They'll always receive a warm welcome in Mulgarrie, as well as room and board for a night.

Characters may also end up with treasure from the Sahuagin, and potions and spells from Orana. The characters who learned to drive Moira's boat also now have a new proficiency.

XP Rewards

Characters can gain experience from the sahuagin and merfolk. The raiders and Captain Blackgills give 100xp each if fought, and Makani gives 450xp if bribed. The merfolk give 200xp in total after being defeated or convinced to hand over the baby kraken.

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

I wanted to write a light-hearted adventure that feels like a summer holiday away from the regular doom & gloom of an adventurer's life. Mulgarrie will hopefully be a peaceful holiday destination for your party (once they've dealt with the kraken).

Thank you to my D&D group and friends for cheering me on, and Jess for organising this book.

Author Bio

Megan is an Australian software developer who writes and plays D&D adventures in her spare time. She's contributed to multiple anthologies including Uncaged, Beyond the Basics, and Friends, Foes and Other Fine Folk, as well as published more unconventional rpg zines and pamphlets on mogibear.itch.io. Her twitter handle is @mogibeargames.







500 Days of Summer

Written by Oliver Clegg

Level: 3 Content Warnings: Violence, Suicide, Mental Instability

SYNOPSIS

The town of Brightleaf is trapped in an endless recurrence of Midsummer Eve, whereupon the residents wake each day to repeat the same few hours over and over. Worse, the villagers have entered a depraved moral spiral as a result of their endless imprisonment, resulting in some unusual (or more accurately, homicidal) behaviours. As the adventurers investigate, they are snared by the same insidious curse, forced to seek out the root and solve the problem lest they spend the rest of their (endless) days suffering the same fate. This is an adventure for 4-5 characters of level 3.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The adventurers need a reason to pass through the town of Brightleaf, though this can be as simple as finding somewhere to rest. The strange happenings in town are immediately apparent, as is the sudden change in weather, unless the world outside is also in the middle of summer. Either way, once the characters step over the border into town, they are trapped in the adventure until they solve it.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The town has fallen under the spell of an androsphinx, an ancient guardian awakened prematurely from a long slumber when the unfortunate Mrs. Doris Summers attempted to tidy her cellar for the first time in living memory (or, indeed, the memory of her family tree). The androsphinx, not an unfair sort, decided to give Mrs. Summers as many chances at it took to solve a riddle. Several thousand days later, the sphinx is only just beginning to wonder if it perhaps acted a little rashly, as the cheery old woman shows absolutely no signs of impending success.

CHAPTER 1: SUNRISE IN BRIGHTLEAF

You may have to replay this section more than once. When the characters enter Brightleaf for the first time (and whenever they re-enter it as a result of the day restarting), read (do not paraphrase) the following:

> The sun rises over a small town nestled between two foothills, an idyllic picture of summertime. Birds sing to each other in the trees, and villagers open their windows to greet one another cheerily. The bustle of the day is just beginning, and the scent of fresh-baked bread drifts over to you on a gentle breeze.



The Rules of Brightleaf

Adventurers are trapped in Brightleaf until they solve the riddle of the sphinx and free the town from the creature's ire. The following guidelines apply for the duration of this adventure, until the riddle is solved at the end of Chapter Three:

Every Morning. Each day begins at 9am, progressing through to 11am when the town resets back to 9am. This reset includes the adventurers, who find themselves walking into town exactly as before, with whatever possessions and gear they originally possessed. Only memories are retained between resets; wounds, damage, conditions, or newly acquired possessions are lost each time. The adventurers, like the townsfolk, recall the previous hours/days they have spent in Brightleaf.

Leaving town. No-one can leave town. Attempting to leave by any means simply sees the adventurer walking right back over that border into town, and meeting the same cheery boxed text they heard the last time.

Death. Brightleaf is cursed to repeat the same few hours over and over again. It's possible this will result in death, purely out of boredom, an attempt to escape, or due to the maniacal attitude of the villagers (see Chapter Two). Alas, death is no reprieve. Characters who "die" simply return at the start of the next reset walking into town alongside their companions as if they were doing so for the first time.

Entering Town

Brightleaf is a tiny hamlet, which subsists largely on local produce and trade with larger settlements. There is little to recommend it other than the scenery and its distance from anything important. As such it is inhabited largely by the elderly, growing families, and those with delicate nerves. In a more exciting story, it is the kind of place where an ancient magician harbouring a terrible secret might be waiting to dole out some needlessly obscure prophecy before carking it in advance of giving actionable specifics.

A sign posted above a dirt road leading into the hamlet reads "Brightleaf - Population 14". Eight houses are spaced evenly around what passes for a market square, lined with empty stalls. The open windows, washing hanging from upper floors, suggests the town is happily inhabited. Then, with a laugh, an elderly man walks outside his house and slits his own throat with a kitchen knife.

The elderly man is called Thomas (human **commoner** (MM), he/him, chaotic neutral), and he cuts his throat every morning between 9am and 9:30am. The wound is always fatal unless he receives help or is prevented by force from harming himself. Unless someone intervenes, Thomas cuts his throat and dies in 3 rounds from blood loss. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check can stay the bleeding for a few minutes, but he remains unable to speak. Magical healing can restore Thomas fully and heal his wound, though he resists attempts to help him in this way.

Talking off the Ledge

Characters might want to help the poor people of Brightleaf, convincing them not to harm themselves - at least for long enough for the characters to figure out what is going on. A successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or possibly Intimidation) check** can give a villager pause. Helping a villager is hard, and given the suffering the villagers have been through over the months since the loop started, many of them are barely coherent. All villagers, when moved to words, have a wild look about them. They often repeat the same phrases over and over in despair, or are simply too shellshocked to be of any use tracking down the source. A calm emotions spell (or similar magic) is enough to send affected villagers into a calm trance until the next reset.

Development

The villagers proceed to figuratively and literally throw themselves off the ledge.

CHAPTER 2 – DÉJÀ VU

However the characters interact with the events below (and indeed, even if they do nothing at all, or spend a few time loops pillaging), at 11am the village resets to the beginning of the day and Chapter One begins again. Eventually the characters will probably decide to try and solve the problem.

The Timetable of Events

Each day, the following tragic events occur at roughly the same time, give or take a few minutes.

THE TIMETABLE OF EVENTS
09:00 - The adventurers walk into town.
09:10 - Thomas Avery slits his own throat in the street.
09:15 - Mrs. Summers makes breakfast.
09:15 - The Weaver family barricade themselves in.
09: 16 - The Burns family set their house on fire.
09: 30 - The Carpenter family take saws to their neighbour, Mr Brewer
09: 45 - Mrs. Summers heads down to clean out her cellar.
09:50 - The Brewer House explodes
10:30 - The Apian family arrive in town with their swarms of angry bees.
11:00 - Mrs. Summers fails her riddle and the Sphinx devours her, resetting the day once more.

The Burns House

Mr. and Mrs. Burns (human **commoners**, he/him and she/her, chaotic neutral) believe that they can save the town by destroying it all. Each time, they get a little better and faster at setting fires, which they ignite in their basement every morning in the hopes of setting the village ablaze. They used to leave the house and watch the village burn, but these days they just let the smoke take them - it's a quicker death than fire, knives, poison or the other horrors awaiting them outside the house. The state of the Burns house depends on when the characters arrive. Mr. and Mrs. Burns set the fire in their cellar (easily accessible from the ground floor) at about 9:15am each day, and die of smoke inhalation by about 9: 25am. The house is fully ablaze by about 9:35am.

Catching Fire. It's a warm day with a gentle breeze. After 9:45am, the blaze spreads to the Brewer House, sparks catching on the dry wood.

The Carpenter House

Mr. and Mr. Carpenter (human **thugs** (MM), he/him, lawful evil) have slowly realized there is nothing they can do to escape from the endless loop they find themselves in. Fortunately, they don't mind all that much, as it allows them to indulge in vicious pursuits like they'd always wanted to, with no consequences. Each day at 9:30am, they head next door to their most hated neighbour, Mr. Brewer, and decapitate him with their saws. They see this as a form of divine justice for all the years they spent having to endure his late night violin recitals. The Carpenters can be swayed by threats or bribery (though not by any appeal to their better nature, which does not exist). Though offers of gold or material gain hold little sway with the Carpenters due to their predicament, they eagerly accept offers of any substance or magic that might render them insensate.

The Brewer House

Mr. Brewer is a notorious drunk, who is at his kitchen table nursing a hangover from a late night drinking session. At 9:35am the Carpenters enter his house via the front door and take saws to him, slowly taking him apart and neatly arranging the bits on the kitchen table. After this, they sit down and enjoy Mr. Brewer's large alcohol cabinet until the day ends. The Brewer House catches fire (see The Burns House) and explodes when the fire reaches the large barrels of volatile, barely potable drink Mr. Brewer has stashed away in every corner. This occurs at about at 9:50am. The Carpenters don't bother to avoid the conflagration.

Mrs. Summers' Habit. Mrs. Summers usually comes around to make Mr. Brewer a late breakfast. If Mr. Brewer were to survive the various lethal threats that assail him, and be sobered up a little, he might be found to wonder where Mrs. Summers is, reflecting that in all the endless days since Midsummer Eve began, he's not seen her once. He can even point the way to her house.

Disaster Carnvial

The curse of Brightleaf is a terrible blight on the villagers, but has a very useful function for you as a storyteller. You can murder anyone and anything you like over and over again with almost no consequences. Allow disasters to occur and spiral into each other. Allow deaths to occur with no compunction - the people don't really die, after all. Once the sphinx works its time magic, the village is reset, and the deaths never happened. Use this as a comedic tool to stage unlikely disasters chaining into each other like dominos the first few times the characters enter town and enjoy the results.

The Apian House

Mrs. Berta Apian and her sisters Baghilda and Bogislava (human **commoners** collectively known as the Bee Sisters, she/her, lawful evil) live in a small house on the outskirts of town. They hate each other (naturally) - a poison that has only festered whilst trapped reliving the same day over and over again. The three sisters keep bees, and as the days have repeated over and over, the sisters have found it quite the game to see who can kill the most neighbours with bees. As such, the sisters don their beekeeping gear and drag the largest hive down to the middle of the hamlet at around 10:30am. By this point, some houses are usually ablaze, but the sisters don't let that deter them, taking the bulky hive to a random house and hurling it inside. The Bee Sisters unleash three **swarms of insects** (bees - use **wasp** statistics, MM) on the poor residents.



Brightleaf Houses

Houses in Brightleaf are simple wood and stone constructions.

Locks. Houses in Brightleaf have simple locks on the doors and windows. A creature proficient with thieves' tools can use them to pick a typical lock with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

Doors. A wooden door can be forced open with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, or DC 15 if the door is barred or reinforced in some other manner.

The Mason House

Mr. and Mrs. Mason (TN **commoners**) are not pleased to be trapped in this endless nightmare. They bear it with a quiet fortitude, going through the normal routine as best they can until something inevitably claims them. Sometimes they are slain by swarms of bees. Sometimes their house burns down. Sometimes the Carpenters come by and take them apart, just to make a change. They bear it all with a quiet stoicism that beggars belief. They are resigned to their fate and advise the characters to just go along with it, as this is their life now.

The Wyrd House

Mr. Wyrd is a quiet little man (human **noble** (MM), he/him, lawful good), retired from the adventuring life, where he was a medic. He places himself in a medically induced coma at the start of each day, poisoning himself at 9:20am, as soon as he's had time to make the elixir (which functions as a feign death spell lasting 24 hours). If approached before taking the potion, or drawn from his long sleep with magic, Mr Wyrd offers the same mercy to the characters, which he repeats for as many days in a row as they request it of him.

The Weaver House

Mr. and Mrs. Weaver are terrified of events unfolding in the town, and spend each morning barricading themselves in their house for fear of death by bees, saws, or fire. Every day has seen them fighting desperately for their lives against their homicidal neighbours. As good friends of Mrs. Summers, they are very worried about her, but are too scared to leave their house and find her (having met grisly deaths on every previous attempt). By 9:15am the Weaver house is shuttered and barricaded against intruders.

The Summers House

Mrs. Summers (human **commoner**, she/her, lawful good) is an elderly lady with curly white hair and piercing green eyes. She's hunched due to a back problem, and walks slowly with the aid of a stick. She cannot currently remember her own name, so her identity is not obvious unless the characters have already figured it out from talking to her neighbours. **This is important for reasons that become apparent in Chapter Three.**

Schedule. Mrs Summers awakens at 9am sharp every day. She makes breakfast, and wanders about the house blissfully unaware of the fire and screaming from the street due to her poor eyesight and hearing. She heads down to her cellar at 9:45, a cellar inherited from her father, and his mother before him, back through the generations of Summers to the ancient past. If the adventurers arrive before she descends, she thinks they are her grandchildren, and greets them as such, proving difficult to convince otherwise. She mentions often how she's going to clean the cellar today, frequently pointing out that she's been meaning to for a very long time. A character who takes the time to humour Mrs. Summers might find out about her odd "dreams" (in actuality her vague memories of the days prior).

> The old lady dodders over to her teapot and gives you a charming smile. "I've had the strangest dreams lately," she says conversationally. "I keep thinking I see a monster in the cellar which asks me questions, and then I end up right back where I started in bed again. So strange. I really think I need to clean that cellar." She chuckles to herself.

If the characters arrive after Mrs Summers descends to the cellar, they find the cellar door left wide open.

Development

When the characters finally make their way down to Mrs. Summers' cellar, move on to Chapter Three.

CHAPTER 3: RIDDLE ME THIS

The creature Mrs. Summers disturbed in the ancient catacomb under her house is an **androsphinx** (MM), a terrible and ancient guardian of hidden secrets, blessed by a god of knowledge with near-endless patience. Amongst its many gifts is the ability to manipulate the flow of time, a trait it is using to reset Brightleaf as many times as it takes for Mrs. Summers to solve its riddle.

Mrs. Summers' Basement

> You descend into the cellar, past assorted household junk that seems to have been dumped here over the decades by generations of negligent housekeeping. The stair bends at the end, leading into an immense basement full of detritus, stretching an impossible distance under an open sky full of twinkling stars. A huge quadrupedal creature with the body of a lion and the face of a man is watching you from inside.

Depending on the time of day, Mrs. Summers may or may not be alive when the adventurers descend. If they arrived before Mrs. Summers headed down to the basement, she accompanies them if allowed, broom in hand. At 11:00am, the Sphinx reluctantly eats or pulverises her due to her inability to answer the riddle, and the day begins once more. This pattern (or something like it) has been going on for some significant time. If Mrs. Summers does not appear in the basement by 11:00am for some reason, the Sphinx resets the day anyway, assuming something must have happened to her.

In Flagrante Delicto. If the characters bring Mrs Summers to the Sphinx, or arrive whilst the two are mid conversation, read the following:

> "And now, have you come with the answer to my riddle?" It almost seems exasperated. "PLEASE tell me you've come with the answer to the riddle. Oh, and it has to be the old lady. She woke me up, she has to answer it. Those are the rules." The old lady looks blissfully unaware of what's going on, blithely humming a tune to herself.



The Sphinx is interested only in getting Mrs Summers to solve its riddle, and tolerate the adventurers so far as they seek to advance this cause. If they question it and seem ready to listen, the Sphinx deviates from its usual schedule to inform them thus:

> "She disturbed my slumber," the beast rumbles, and the room shakes. "She must answer my riddle, or be bound here until the end of time. The riddle must be solved."

The Sphinx has a headache and is in a terrible mood. For the sake of hilarity, and maybe because you're just that kind of person, you may choose to have the Sphinx kill the characters out of rage/frustration/pettiness, only to have them walk right back into town again as the day resets. More than anything, the Sphinx want to return to its rest, which means the successful resolution of the riddle, one way or another. On top of that, it must be Mrs. Summers who answers the Sphinx, requiring her to be alive and able to vocalize the correct response.

The Riddle of the Sphinx

Should anyone ask to hear the riddle, the sphinx obliges.

> The creature harrumphs a bit, and a little dust is dislodged from its throat. "What," it says, in a tone of gross solemnity, "is your name?" It smiles triumphantly and rather smugly. It sees your expression and acerbically remarks "Don't look at me like that, I don't set the questions."

Mrs. Summers is nonplussed by the question, and needs to be coached to the answer, which she doesn't actually know. A character can lead her through it gently (presuming they have garnered the old lady's name from her neighbours or some other means) with a successful **DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check**.

Development

As soon as Mrs. Summers provides the correct answer to the riddle, move on to Conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The riddle answered, the Sphinx is able to return to its rest.

> "Ahhh," the Sphinx sighs. "Finally. Thank you. I return to my rest." It slowly fades away, the stars above you dwindling until only the stone ceiling remains. You find yourselves standing in a dark cellar with Mrs. Summers. "Now," she says, "would anyone like some tea?"

With the sphinx returned to its rest, the hamlet is freed from its torment, though the villagers are almost all scarred by the occurrences, and most immediately leave town unless they have already perished - any character that has died in the final loop are not restored. As to Mrs. Summers, life goes on as it always has for her, though she proceeds to live for an unusually long time for a human, perhaps a parting gift from a grateful sphinx.

Rewards

The characters are no longer trapped in a murder-hell loop. Let's not look a gift-horse in the mouth.

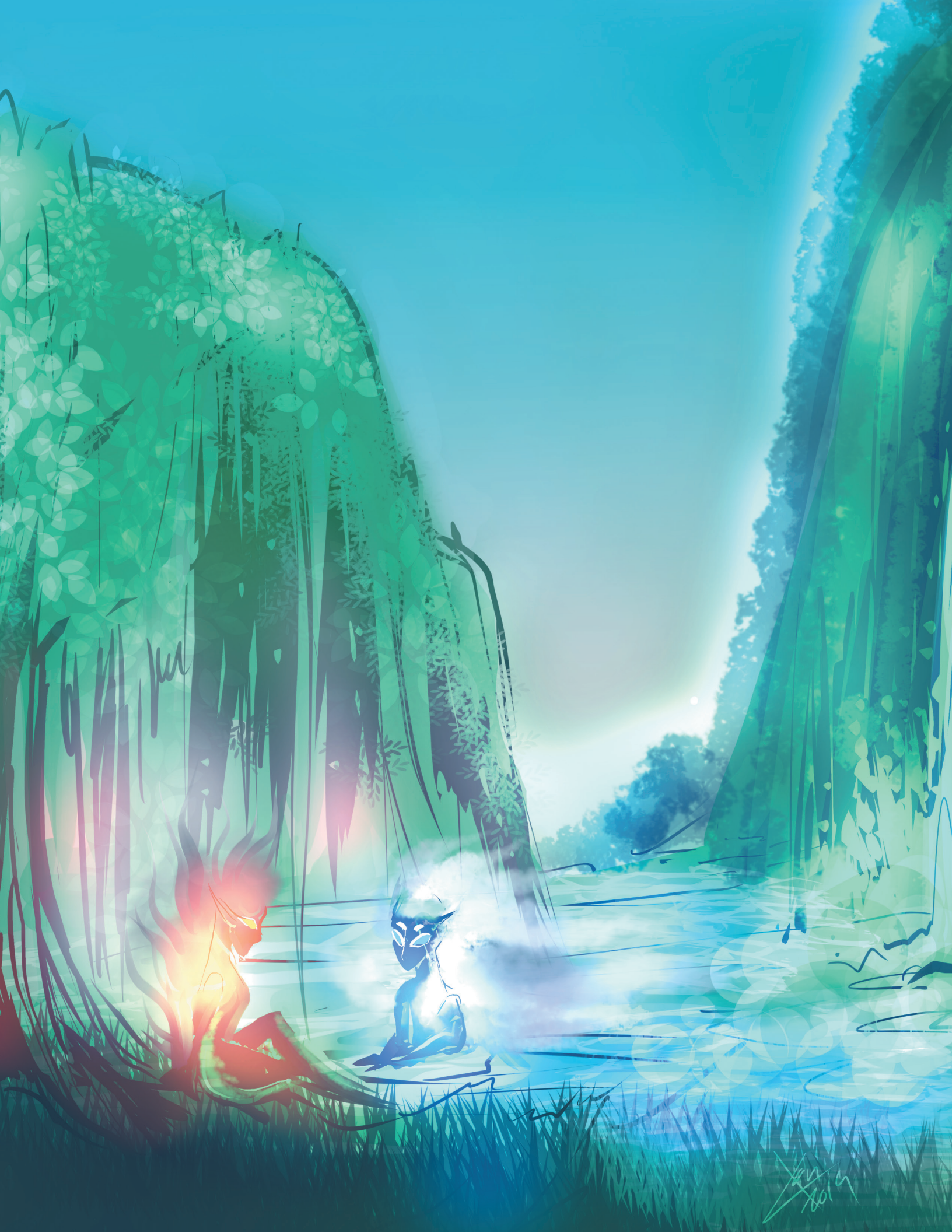
Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

I had 24 hours to write this adventure, because despite the fact that a Wizard is never late it is nonetheless true that I was cutting it fine. I spent 14 of them asleep. I spent 6 of them watching cartoons. There was an hour where I opened a whisky bottle and it needed my proper attention and I don't remember the rest but the adventure is here so let's all be grateful we got this far.

Author Bio

Oliver Clegg writes for the Dungeon Masters Guild because they let him give kobolds laser cannons and because he can get paid for writing about 50 foot bikini werewolves without any consequences. You can find him through Twitter (@deathbybadger) or through his outrageous number of publications on the guild website.





Festival of the Burning Wreath

Written by Jacky Leung

Level: 6

SYNOPSIS

The coastal town of Larrena is known for its sunny climate, friendly townspeople, wine, and tropical excursions. Near the Summer Solstice, the town is decorated with wreaths of bright flowers for their Festival of the Burning Wreath. The adventurers are invited to partake in the celebrations, but strange occurrences begin to disrupt the jubilations, including unusual weather patterns.

ADVENTURE HOOK

After the adventuring party's successful exploits, their half-elven friend, Pelas, suggests they visit the coastal town of Larrena for some deserved rest and relaxation. The half-elf remarks on the region's excellent weather, friendly inhabitants, culinary delights, and plentiful activities available.

Alternatively, the party could be recruited by Pelas to venture to Larrena to survey their hospitality and delights for an upcoming gazette the half-elf is writing. Pelas values the party's opinions and wants to treat them to the excursion as thanks for a previous favor.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The festival is a reference to a forgotten legend about the founding of Larrena, where a fire elemental duke, Pelemithras, and an air elemental duke, Sirocca, fought for dominance within the region. The fire elemental won and became an iconic figure for the town and its appealing weather. Every few centuries, the two elementals hold a contest that determines the presiding elemental force over the area, which includes Larrena. Pelemithras has been the reigning champion for several centuries, which has brought the hot, sunny climate to the region. Both of the elementals' servants and allies are gathering to the spectacle, but their arrivals are causing trouble for the residents of Larrena. If Sirocca becomes the dominant elemental force, storms and dry winds will destroy the townsfolks' livelihoods laying waste to the region.

CHAPTER 1 – LARRENA

The party arrives at the coastal town of Larrena. The weather is impeccably sunny with a cool sea breeze to keep the temperatures reasonable. The characters are greeted by passing locals and travelers as they make their approach to the town limits; the people are pleasant and exceptionally hospitable.

Festival Preparations

Once the characters arrive in the heart of the town, they find the townsfolk busy with erecting decorations for the upcoming festivities. Read or paraphrase the following:

> A bright sunny day greets you, the backdrop of the soft blue sky and cotton white clouds seem surreal and almost too perfect. An occasional coastal breeze cuts the warm tropical air and the sound of seabirds celebrate the immaculate weather.

The characters can explore and interact with the locals, who welcome newcomers and willingly educate tourists on the town's traditions concerning the upcoming festival. Many townsfolk invite the party to join in the activities at sundown. Characters with a **passive Perception of 15** or higher feel an odd presence around the town, though it does not seem malevolent.

Misfit Mephits

A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals missing decorations, food, and wooden wreaths.

A successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check** reveals a trail of decorations that leads the party to a group of four smoke and four **magma mephits** (MM) with various items stolen from the festival. Read or paraphrase the following:

Your investigation of the missing festival decorations leads you to a group of impish creatures arguing over the pile of missing items. They are focused on their squabbling and do not notice your approach.

A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) check** identifies the creatures as **smoke and magma mephits** (MM).

Any characters who speak Primordial or Auran, determine that the mephits are arguing about which items are worthy offerings, which they need before the main event at sunset. If any characters try to interact with the mephits, the creatures scatter taking whatever items they have already pilfered. This starts the skills challenge described below. Alternatively, if the characters are more combat-oriented, some of the mephits stay behind to stall the party while the rest of the pack make off with the stolen items.

Skills Challenge

Use these guidelines for running the skills challenge:

- ***Difficulty Class.*** The base DC for skill checks is DC 15.
- ***Objective.*** Capture or corner the escaping mephits and retrieve the stolen festival decorations.
- ***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 party reach or corner the runaway mephits. On each failed check, the party is attacked by four smoke or magma mephits.
- ***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, the mephits manage to outmaneuver the characters and run off with the stolen town decorations.

  If the party earns a number of successes equal to the number of players, the characters successfully retrieve the missing decorations, but the remaining mephits escape and head to one of the remote islands, not off the shore.

Running the Skills Challenge

In this encounter, the characters are passing through alleyways and small avenues in town. The mephits will use the terrain to impede and derail the party whenever possible. Any character with an impeccable sense of direction or memory of where they have traveled have advantage on their ability checks. If the party fails the challenge, a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) or Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals that the mephits absconded with the decorations to a remote island offshore of Larrena.

Development

Regardless of the outcome from the skills challenge, the townsfolk of Larrena will want to know why the mephits stole the festive decorations in the first place. They hire the party to investigate the matter. Alternatively, the mephits may have made off with an item carried by a member of the party.

Chapter 2: The Burning Wreath of Pelemithras

The townspeople of Larrena want answers and resolution of the mephit menace. They readily supply the party with a small rowing boat to allow them to travel to the remote islands just offshore.

If the characters already discerned the location where the mephits escaped, they can row the boat directly to the island. Otherwise, a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check** determines which island to track the elemental creatures. On a failed check, the party is instead direct to one of the other neighboring islands. A thorough search of these neighboring islands reveals there is nothing there. A successful group **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check** keeps the boat afloat while traveling between islands or risk capsizing.

Entourage Greeting

Once the party arrives on the island of the fire elemental Pelemithras, a large pack of twenty magma and twenty smoke mephits gather around them accompanied by a **fire elemental** (MM). Read or paraphrase the following:

As you disembark from the rowboat, a large group of mephits and a large fire elemental throw bright flares and waves banners as if welcoming you. The mephits greet you in Common, "Greetings, newcomers!"

"We finally have our new champions! Please tell us you are our new champions," they say hopefully.

The mephits speak Common with the adventurers. If the party previously attacked the mephits, the mephits are on guard and demand reparations for the unjust assault. The mephits may share any of the following information if questioned:

- The region is currently under the stewardship of a powerful fire elemental named Pelemithras

- There is another elemental plying for custody of the area: an air elemental named Sirocca
- The two elementals have been holding a contest every few hundred years to determine custody of the region
- Pelemithras has won consecutive times
- Pelemithras and Sirocca adore the region and its inhabitants but wish for different outcomes for them
- Pelemithras is the fire duke who brings countless days of sunshine and warm weather
- Due to the party's intervention, the entourage of Pelemithras is weakened and would be at a disadvantage in the upcoming contest against Sirocca's flock
- The mephits stole the town's decorations to build the arena of the upcoming contest

The mephits and fire elemental do not attack unless provoked.

Arena of the Elementals

The mephit entourage guides the characters through the forest on the island to the center. If the party killed the mephits and fire elemental, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check shows the party to the center of the island. On a fail, the party encounters eight hostile mephits (smoke and/or magma).

Once the characters reach the center of the island, read or paraphrase the following:

> Once you breach through the humid island forest, bright sunlight and a clear blue sky greet you. Your eyes are immediately drawn to a sandy clearing with some of the missing festival decorations and more. A rectangular perimeter is made out of small stones and wooden branches, a fishing net is strung up between two wooden poles to divide the terrain, and two wooden wreaths are propped up on smaller poles like rings on opposite ends of the area.
>
> You also spot a twelve-foot tall fire elemental adorned with an iron crown and several elemental creatures adjacent to it. The jovial mood stops abruptly as the tall elemental approaches you with a soft but warm glow.

The large **fire elemental** is Pelemithras (fire elemental (MM), he/him, lawful good) and he is surrounded by a large procession of mephits, fire snakes, and azers. They appear ready to receive guests, the procession is initially curious about the characters and asks them to identify themselves. Pelemithras is a fire duke of radiance.

A successful **DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals that the dukes of radiance are often good-aligned fire elementals and control the flames of rejuvenation. Pelemithras is willing to share the following information:

- Pelemithras has joint custody of the region, which includes Larrena, with an air elemental duke named Sirocca
- Pelemithras and Sirocca (air elemental (MM), they/them, lawful neutral) have fought over the dominance of the region for centuries. Pelemithras has won all of his bouts against the air elemental
- Pelemithras is the elemental force that brings sunshine and warm weather to the region
- Pelemithras finds the adventurers intriguing and wants them to join his side of the contest
- The contest consists of two teams that are split between the terrain (called the Arena). A large leather-wrapped ball must be punted from the contestants into the opposing team's wreath to score a point. The first team to score seven goals is declared the victor

If the party proves to be hostile, Pelemithras sends his entourage consisting of ten **mephits**, four **fire snakes** (MM), and four **azers** (MM) to attack and detain the characters when reduced to half of their hit points. Pelemithras will offer to spare the party in exchange for participation in the upcoming tourney against Sirocca.

Development

While the characters consider Pelemithras's offer, Sirocca's entourage arrives.

Chapter 3: Sun and Thunder

Sirocca's entourage arrives in a gust of wind. The wind duke is also curious about the party and tries to recruit them to be their champions for the upcoming contest. Each elemental offers boons to the town of Larrena but also can adversely affect the weather. The characters need to choose a side or find an alternative option.

Arrival of the Wind Duke

The wind elemental Sirocca arrives with an entourage of **dust and ice mephits** (MM), **aarakocras** (MM), and **air genasi** (EE). The display is ostentatious and sudden.

A gust of wind and the crackling of lightning announce the arrival of a procession for the wind duke Sirocca and their entourage. Sirocca is surrounded by a cyclone, obscuring their form except for two blue orbs for eyes. Pelemithras and his group arrange themselves to receive the challengers. The two elementals approach to the middle of the side of the arena, exchanging pleasantries and possibly competitive banter.

You are approached by the large wind duke with a similar curiosity as the fire elemental.

"Greetings mortals," they bellow.

Sirocca interacts with the party and convey any of the following information:

- Sirocca longs to win custody of the region from Pelemithras, but begrudgingly accepted joint custody with the fire elemental
- Sirocca believes the characters would do what's right for the people of Larrena, providing greater opportunities for trade and crops
- Sirocca's influence would bring wind streams and milder weather to the region. A successful **DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Nature) check** concludes that Sirocca's presence would also increase the likelihood of storms and adversely affect Larrena's reputation as a recreational destination
- Sirocca wants the characters to join their team for the upcoming contest to break Pelemithras's winning streak

If the party proves hostile, Sirocca attacks with its entourage of ten **ice mephits**, four air genasi **acolytes** (MM), and four aarakocra **scouts** (MM). If Pelemithras is present, the fire elemental will join with Sirocca in a united front against the party for the transgressions. When either elemental is reduced to half their hit points, they will return to their native planes of Elemental Air or Elemental Fire.

Once the characters are finished with their interactions, the contest is ready to begin.

Game, Set, Go!

The characters discover that the contest is a sports game between two teams within the divided terrain.

The adventurers have several choices available to them:

- The party may choose to side with Pelemithras's team
- The party may choose to side with Sircocca's team
- The party may decide to form their own team and challenge both elementals

Once their choices are made, the party is informed of the rules of the game:

- Two teams enter the terrain called the Arena
- Using a leather-wrapped ball, contestants punt the ball to the opposing team's wreath without the ball touching the net surrounding the arena
- If the ball successfully passes through a wreath, that team scores a point. The first to seven points is the victor
- If the ball falls out of the boundary of the Arena or hits the net, the team who last had the ball in their possession or touched it forfeits their turn and the opposing team gains the first toss
- Players can use physical and supernatural methods to deflect the ball either away from the wreath or toward the other team's wreath. Players are not allowed to place any effects on the wreaths themselves
- Teams decide which one will get the first throw of the match



Read or paraphrase the following:

> You gather together on the arena for this elaborate contest and game for the fate of Larrena. The elementals have chosen their teams carefully and seek to claim dominance over the region. Storm clouds encircle the island with a large gap of blue sky and sunshine hovering over the landmass itself.
>
> Pelemithras and Sirocca in unison stand on the sidelines before raising their hands into the air.
>
> "Let the match commence."

Development

If the party wins and joined Pelemithras's team, the weather in Larrena continues to be full of sunshine and warmth. Proceed to Conclusion A. (Alternatively, if the party loses while under this option, proceed to Conclusion B.)

If the party wins and joined Sirocca's team, the weather changes and trade winds begin to blow through the region. Proceed to Conclusion B. (Alternatively, if the party loses while under this option, proceed to Conclusion A.)

If the party chose to compete against both elementals, the characters either broker a truce between the two elementals (Proceed to Conclusion C) or banish both elementals and their influence from the region (Proceed to Conclusion D).

If the party fought against either or both elementals and forced them to return to their native planes (Proceed to Conclusion E).

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION A

Read or paraphrase the following:

> With the final ball strike through the wreath, swells of flame ignite and dance in the air to Pelemithras's honor and continued stewardship over the region of Larrena. The two elementals exchange pleasantries and Sirocca remarks that they will prevail in the next contest after some time. Sirocca and their entourage depart within a swirling nimbus, flying high into the evening sky as the sun sets and night falls on the little island.
>
> "Thank you, champions. With your aid, this region will continue to be blessed by warm weather and sunshine. Please return to the festivities with the people nearby."

Burning Wreath Ball Mechanics

The "wreath ball" game is run similar to a skills challenge. All characters are expected to participate in the tourney. Each character rolls initiative. Creatures on the opposing team use their reactions to either Pass the Ball, Deflect the Ball, or Attempt to Score.

Use these guidelines for running your skills challenge:
Difficulty Class. The base DC for skill checks is DC 15.
Objective. Score seven points to win the game.
Opposing Team Tactics. Pelemithras's team likes to display a show of force, frequently using Attempt to Score actions. Sirocca's team will use Pass the Ball actions often to boost their odds with Attempt to Score while using their nimble features to Deflect the Ball.
Making Ability Checks. On their turn, a character can make one ability check using any ability score and skill proficiency they like to perform, as long as they can explain how this check could reasonably allow them to interact with the ball or participate in the game, the following actions: Pass the Ball, Deflect the Ball, or Attempt to Score.
Pass the Ball. A character can use their action or reaction to pass the ball to a teammate. The teammate then has advantage on their Ability Check if they use the Attempt to Score action.
Deflect the Ball. A character can use their reaction to deflect the ball. The character has advantage on this Ability Check if a creature used the Attempt to Score action. On a success, the ball is deflected and no points are awarded. The DM rolls a d20 to determine where the ball is deflected. On a roll of 5 or lower, the ball is out of bounds and the ball to the opposite team. On a roll of 6 or higher, the ball is deflected to the opposing team's side of the Arena. On a roll of 15 or higher, the ball goes to a teammate and they are granted the benefits of the Pass the Ball action.
Attempt to Score. A character can use their action to attempt to shoot the ball through the opposing team's wreath.

The party returns to Larrena after the contest and continues the Festival of the Burning Wreath with a newfound understanding of its beginnings and its enduring legacy.

CONCLUSION B

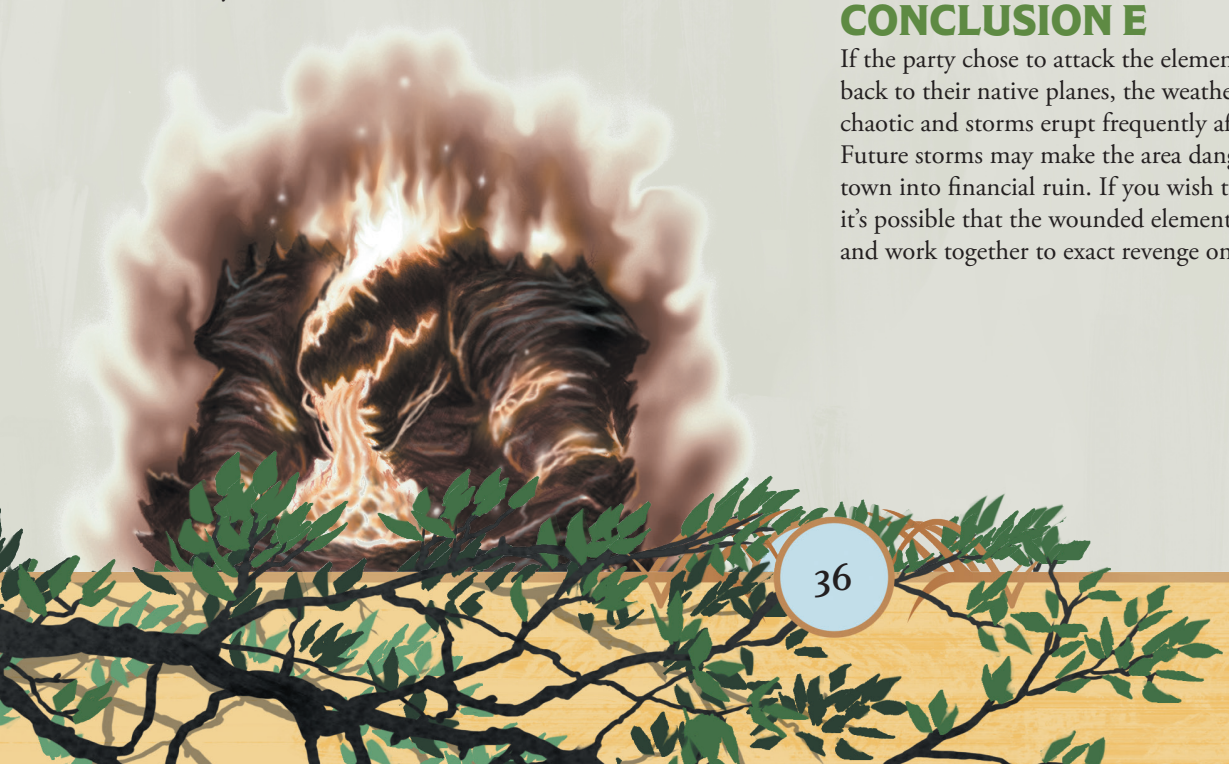
Read or paraphrase the following:

> With the last ball strike through the wreath, you hear the bellowing of howling winds and the crash of lightning in the distance. Sirocca seems pleased and excited compared to the lofty demeanor presented at the start of the game. The air elemental seems to boast substantially over Pelemithras. The fire elemental bows at the victor and departs the island. Sirocca approaches the party, surrounding them with a cooling breeze.
>
> "Thank you, my new friends. The people of this region will be blessed by prosperous winds and weather to grant them opportunities in their future. Please return to the people nearby and help usher this new era."

The party returns to Larrena after the contest and continues the Festival of the Burning Wreath with a newfound understanding of its beginnings and its enduring legacy. Sirocca's influence on the region will bring rain and strong winds to the region, granting opportunities for new crops to be grown by the townspeople and draws attention to prospective traders via ships and boats. The favorable winds still be ideal for establishing Larrena as a trade port, but the storms remove Larrena's appeal as a retreat resort town.

CONCLUSION C

Regardless of whether the party wins or loses against the teams of elementals, the party has an opportunity to broker peace between the elementals, potentially granting truly shared custody of the region between Pelemithras and Sirocca. A successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** helps streamline the deliberations. If the party won the contest, they have advantage on the ability check.



Read or paraphrase the following:

> You fought hard against both teams from the elementals and now true peace has been struck between the two elementals. Splitting their custody over one half of each year, creating a cycle of new seasons for the region of Larrena and its people. For centuries to come, bright and warm months during the summer solstice draw travelers and promote economic growth while more temperate winds and rain visit the islands in the winter solstice to allow a variety of crops to grow and develop trade ship routes.
>
> The people of Larrena will forever remember this story and even consider renaming the festival.

CONCLUSION D

If the party chose to form their own team and they win the game, they can demand that the elementals depart from the region and never return. The two elementals may argue with the party but will concede from their defeat. Once both elementals leave, the weather in the region becomes chaotic and storms erupt frequently for long after the party leaves Larrena.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> You won the match and insisted that the elementals return to their native planes. At first, they resisted, but, after further convincing, they soon left and the region would no longer know of their elemental influence. The townspeople thank you for your hard work and generosity, unaware of the changing weather that would forever reshape the area. The distant thunder clouds loom over the horizon, promising chaotic and uncertain times ahead.

CONCLUSION E

If the party chose to attack the elementals and forced them to flee back to their native planes, the weather in the region becomes chaotic and storms erupt frequently after the party leaves Larrena. Future storms may make the area dangerous to live and send the town into financial ruin. If you wish to continue this story thread, it's possible that the wounded elementals will combine their forces and work together to exact revenge on the characters.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> The elementals depart for their native planes, shouting spiteful words in their native languages. You have the impression that may not be the last you see of these elemental forces. You return to the townspeople, who thank you for your hard work and generosity, unaware of the changing weather that will plague the region. A harsh wind blows from the coast and dark clouds lurk over the horizon when you leave - a portentous farewell.

Rewards

Characters who complete this adventure may earn the following rewards:

XP Rewards

Add the total XP of the creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Encounter	XP
Misfit Mephits skills challenge	700 per character
Smoke Mephit	50
Steam Mephit	50
Fire Elemental	1800
Magma Mephit	50
Fire Snake	200
Azer	450
Air Elemental	1800
Air Genasi acolyte	50
Aarakocra scout	100
Burning Wreath game challenge	700 per character

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

This adventure was inspired by the Night of Fire (Festival of Sant Joan) in Barcelona, Spain. The name Pelemithras was inspired by the Iranian sun god Mithras and Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of fire and volcanoes. Sirocca is a derivative of a sirocco, which is a dry, hurricane-force wind.

Author Bio

Jacky Leung is a freelance writer and RPG designer who has contributed to various publications, including the Uncaged Anthology and Artifacts of the Guild on the DM's Guild. You can find his indie RPG creations at deathbymage.itch.io. Additionally, you can find Jacky's articles on D&D and other RPG inspirations, reviews, and thoughts at deathbymage.com.



Large Paw Music Festival

Written by Kristina Sisto Kindel

Level: 7 Content Warnings: Recreational Drug Use

SYNOPSIS

Adventurers attending a three-day bardic festival find themselves looking for a strange mythical creature that supposedly lives in the woods. Containing misty mountains, food carts, and...wait, were those naked fairies riding bicycles? The Great Outdoors beckons!

ADVENTURE HOOK

- Characters hear about an incredible three-day festival happening in a remote canyon
- Characters follow the raucous sounds of a party to a nearby canyon
- A caravan that the characters are travelling in make a pit stop, and they see revelers wearing elaborate outfits traipsing towards a canyon

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This module, designed for characters at 7th level, is based on a music festival in the Pacific Northwest named after a local legendary monster known as Sasquatch. The goal of this one-shot is to get your players laughing, having a good time, and embracing the chaos that comes with outdoor music festivals. Let the festivities begin!

CHAPTER 1: FESTIVAL ANTICS

Winding down a canyon path, the smell of cooking food fills the air. Aromas of highly-seasoned meats, fried vegetables, spicy noodles, roasted coffee beans, and freshly baked bread permeate the area. Portable stalls for food and drink congregate tightly in a square-shaped market, and there are three stages scattered around the canyon, each with a competing act. Bards of all stripes have turned out to the festival, and music pulses throughout the area. Stalls of merchandise line the narrow paths, and crowds of creatures shop, dance, lounge, and just wander around the natural space. Welcome to the LargePaw Music Festival! All the banners depict a large hairy creature silhouetted against conifers.

Note for the DM:
A LargePaw is a large hairy forest dweller, use **stone giant** (MM) stat block) The LargePaw Simeon (he/him)and his mate Jondal (LargePaw, he/him) are big fans of The Hedgelords, a band of Treant bards that are known for their emotional lyrics, aggressive stage antics, and bracing melodies. The LargePaws case the campsite every night for the best vantage point, but are scared to upset the other festival-goers. Simeon and Jondal just want to see the band perform, but their friend Toregal (LargePaw, he/him) has other plans. He wants the LargePaw group to storm the stage and take over a set, and he's not above kidnapping other musicians to do it!

This section is meant to build character personas and have fun exploring the festival, so there should be no body count! If the players do end up entering a fight and get caught killing an NPC, there should be consequences.

Rumors, Rumors!

The following rumors can be picked up around camp to lead the adventurers into the wild.

1. "Food has been going missing from carts all over camp! And the coffee vendor swore she brought more sacks of roasted beans with her, but she's running out quick!"
2. "I heard The Hedgelords are going to make an appearance at the final day of the festival! I'm so excited, I loved their newest set I heard at the Splintered Mermaid in Farstone!"
3. "Someone thought that they saw huge footprints in the mud by the woods this morning. Could be nothing, probably just some kids. But...what if it IS LargePaw?! He's a mythical being that guards the woods, been here for centuries. Or so they say. Big bear-like creature...or was it troll-like? The stories vary…"
4. "Has anyone seen Cassius the Lute Fiend? I heard she was on today, but no one has seen her. I want to catch her set. She's sooooo hot!"

The players can find and talk to the coffee vendor. Her name is Esperanza (she/her) and she swears to the players that she brought more coffee beans. There were strange tracks by her wagon this morning, it looked almost like a dog...but way bigger. They led off towards the woods.

Random Festival Events

Roll a d6 for a random festival event throughout the adventure. Some of these are pure flavor, others have encounters attached. You can use them all, roll for a few them or mix and match as you see fit!

Random Festival Events Table

1d6	Encounter
1	A pack of pixies fly by, alighted on two-wheeled contraptions. The pixies are naked and laughing as they fly around the heads of onlookers; some delighted, others insulted. A pair of gnomes that seem a little out of place in the festival atmosphere complain loudly, asking, "How this is possibly allowed? Between hearing things in the woods at night and having to look at, ugh, THAT, maybe this festival just isn't for us!"
2	A dwarf named Laurent (they/them) sells bottles of an aromatic bubbling brown liquid beckons, a smile on their face. As the group approaches, they attempt to sell their Elixir of Cheer for 2 sp a bottle. If the characters buy a bottle, the shopkeep pulls on a tap and the liquid pours out into a glass container. Before they can seal it, something slimy seems to shove its way out of the tap. A sentient **kombucha monster** has crawled from the barrel! Stat block is below.
3	A half-elf fortune teller, Madazzna (he/him) is seated on the ground under a tree, weaving tales of glory to come to a teen group made up of a tiefling and two humans. As the group makes a fuss over the cards, a **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals a mage hand going through the bag of the fortune teller, searching for gold! If the party confronts the thieves or follow them back to their tent, they put up a fight. Use stat blocks for a **mage** (MM) and two scouts (MM).
4	As the party makes their way around the festival, they keep running into a sharply dressed halfling with a waxed mustache who is incredibly cagey. He is selling hallucinogenic mushrooms at 5 gold a bag, and will sell to a player that can convince him they are trustworthy by succeeding on a **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. If players ingest the mushrooms, they are affected and must succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** to not be poisoned.
5	An incredibly enthusiastic air genasi named Valeria (she/her) wears her vendor booth on her back as a pack, and seemingly dripping from her body are sticks that she has enchanted to glow with a soft light. She sells the sticks 5 for 2 sp, or 150 for a gold. Each stick glows in shades of yellow, blue, pink, and purple. If a stick is broken, colored sparks fly into the air and disappear. If asked, she has had some merchandise go missing in the night. She figured it was teenagers being stupid, but the players are welcome to check her tent out. It is next to the woods on the eastern side of the camp.
6	A fight breaks out on the dance floor area of a side stage, the participants of the fight seem content in punching each other in time to the music that is playing; a brutal staccato of drum beats pecked out by a ferocious-looking aarakocra and a wailing pair of viols played by two gnolls. If the players join the brawl, the 30-odd participants all have **commoner** (MM) stats, and players take 1d10 damage every minute they spend in the pit. A player succeeding on a **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** overhears someone speculating about not being able to find Cassius the Lute Fiend, a tiefling bard (she/her). She's on tomorrow and no one has seen her today.



CHAPTER 2: INTO THE WOODS

This chapter reveals clues about the location of the LargePaw group, and a daring rescue of Cassius the Lute Fiend, a rockstar bard who was lured into the forest by a dryad and then promptly got herself lost. Cassius is twitchy; she's been hearing strange noises coming from the mountains, and an eerie rustling in the trees.

Development

If the players go check out the woods, succeeding on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals pawprints leading into the woods that ascend into mountainous terrain.

> Climbing up toward the mountain passage, pine trees soon block the sounds and smells of the festival, overtaken my birdsong and pine. Thick forest turns to rocky crags, and a thin fog begins to form on the ground as the elevation grows.

Forest Encounters

Exploring the woods can lead to interesting territory! What kind of things will the adventurers face before finding Cassius?

Rescue!

The character with the highest passive perception notices a wriggling mass covered in leaves. If the players approach, it is revealed to be Cassius the Lute Fiend, a tiefling woman bound in ropes and vines and gagged with of moss.

Forest Encounters Table

1d4	Encounter
1	Dryads singing; this is what lured Cassius into the forest, but the LargePaw Toregar was passing by, and noticed her lute. If the players investigate, they find eight **dryads** (MM) mourning the death of three of their siblings. A great beast felled a tree while they slept, killing their sisters in the process. They are looking to take three mortal lives as payment before they depart to the feywild for a more formal ceremony. They focus on three party members, and have a particular revenge-fueled interest in large characters or melee fighter characters. Drag marks near the newly created stump indicate that the felled tree was dragged up the mountainside by an incredibly strong individual: A **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check** reveals only one large set of prints. A total of 18+ reveals that these are from paws.
2	Rock trolls! Two **trolls** (MM) are trying to find a place to relocate to as the mountains have become far too noisy for their liking. They will attack the party on sight.
3	Landslide caused by a **Warlock of the Great Outdoors** seeking a return of the forest to the wilds. The warlock, Cascade (he/him/they/them) is unhappy that the LargePaw band has taken to playing music on the mountain, and that the festival has moved in. He respects the historical significance of the LargePaws holding the mountain, so they plan to take their anger out on the festival. If the players dawdle too long at the festival (eg: stay the night), Cascade attacks the festival at first light with a pack of five **twig blights** (MM) in tow. If Cascade encounters the party on the mountain, they will have only gathered two twig blights to fight with him.
4	Find ancient portals marked on trees that is an ancient magical obstacle course. The portals will take any player that enters to the treeline, then automatically speed them down towards the ground, where a portal takes them back up into the trees to a suspension bridge with a portal at the end of it, then to the top of a pine tree with a portal at its base, which the players must dive into from the treetop. This portal returns the player to the start. The **DC is a Dexterity saving throw**, and each portal scales up or down. The first is DC 10, the second is DC 13, the third is DC 8, and the final is DC 15. Going through the portal course will earn the player two luck points from the fey that built the course. The portals will close once each player has made an attempt to cross the course twice.

A dark red tiefling woman in a deep red vest and tight black leggings struggles against her bonds, and as the moss is pulled from her mouth, she spits, "Those...complete hornstickers! You're never going to believe me: LargePaw is real! He's here in these woods, and apparently hates good music!"

She spits more moss onto the ground.

"He caught me in the woods. I was supposed to go for a warmup set, but I heard this super enchanting song and there was this hot chick that was wearing leaves...well, anyway."

She sighs, wistfully frustrated.

"Took my lute too, the numbtwist. No one takes the Lute Fiend's instrument!"

She is furious, and returns to the festival if pointed the way.

"I know how to handle myself with little creatures, no need to worry. It's that beast in the mountain I'm not going to mess with! He went that way, and with my lute!"

She points up the mountainside to where a small outcropping is visible, a thick drag mark sweeping a path up the side. Someone very large has been here.

Cassius offers tickets to her concerts for life as well as a *charlatan's die* (XGtE) and 500 gp for saving her.

Development

If the players climb the mountain, they see boulders begin to get larger as they approach the outcropping. The path is made by the drag of a tree through earth. A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals bits of wood and twine strewn through the rocks. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check** of the debris reveals it to be crude attempts at musical instruments.

Chapter 3: The Larger the Paw...

This is where the characters encounter the LargePaw Simeon and his mate, Jondal, and the mastermind of the musician kidnapping, a LargePaw named Toregal. They are **Stone Giants** reskinned as hairy cryptids, covered in a thick pelt of hair, and they have been sneaking into the festival camp at night to steal instruments.

About the LargePaws

The trio is an aspiring musical act and Toregal wants them to make their debut at the festival. They have one problem: all the instruments they try to make are a mess! Simeon and Jondal were perfectly happy to just listen from the woods as their favorite bards serenade them, but Toregal just returned from a scouting mission with a real lute! The show is on!

LargePaw Encounter

After a long climb, the players see an outcropping from the mountain that juts out like a stone disc. As they approach through a rocky field, they must succeed on a **DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check** to not send boulders tumbling down the mountain and alerting the three LargePaws that inhabit this stone area.



As the group creeps nearer, the deep rumbles of the cryptids' voices begin to carry on the wind. Hearing scattered bits of conversation, the wind brings you the following in Giant…

"But what if they don't like us?"

"Fools, we should have been on stages like these for years!"

"Perhaps we didn't need to steal away the horned one…"

"Off the beat, Jondal, off the beat! No one claps on one and three!"

"Toregal, don't you think we should just listen?"

"We can get those Treant guys next, they seem like more our speed to take on…plus, their instruments might actually fit us!"

The players come upon these creatures in the middle of a band practice. One drums on the hollowed-out stump of a fallen tree, the other holds a lute in his paws, a tiny thing compared to the rest of his body. The third LargePaw warbles a melody in Giant that curls around the mountaintop and echoes down into the edges of the canyon. A bag of coffee lies forgotten; the LargePaws thought it was an instrument!

Development

Depending on decisions the players make with the LargePaw, there are a number of possible outcomes. Whether they fight and kill the group, or help them realize their dreams of stardom, the players return to the festival grounds.

Conclusion

Making their way back to the festival, the group begins to hear the thrums of music, the deep bass notes resonating throughout the canyon as the Hedgelords take the main stage. A crowd of dancing revelers draws near to the stage, moving in a mass of gleeful bodies. Limbs aloft, the dancers sing along to the emotionally charged lyrics that emit from the stage.

If the characters help the LargePaws get a slot at the festival, they will earn the eternal gratitude of the cryptids, who bestow upon them a promise that they are only a Sending away should the players need their assistance, as well as a *Belt of Giant's Strength* (DMG). The festival-goers are wowed, and a number of bards offer to buy the tale from the heroes for 3,000 gp.

If the characters defeat the LargePaws in combat and return to camp with a trophy, they are the talk of the festival. LargePaw have been a myth for centuries and to see evidence of one up close is astounding. Buyers will offer gold for any trophies collected, and the festival goes on as planned.

If the characters sneak the LargePaws in to see the show, they (as a group) make **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) checks** at disadvantage to hide the cryptids from the watchful eyes of the **guards** (MM) serving as festival bouncers.

Author Notes

I never got to go to the Sasquatch music festival in the Pacific Northwest before it closed down, so this is my ode to what could have been! Biggest of flannel-clad high fives to my Nightseers (Ashlee, Ciaran, Karla, Kim, Kelli, and Laura) for playtesting, as well as Bonnie, Elena, Isaac, Morgan, and Peter. You are all the heroes of what remains of my heart.

Author Bio

Kristina lives in Portland, OR with her husband, Isaac, and her darling corgidor, Sansa. When she is not working with data or playing or running copious amounts of tabletop RPGs, she fills her time with other creative pursuits such as singing, acting, knitting, and cooking.

Kombucha Monster

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 6
Hit Points 79 (8d10 + 30
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities acid, cold, lightning, slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages –
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Cultured Creature. Brewed from a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, the kombucha monster is an awakened SCOBY.

Amorphous. The kombucha monster can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Spider Climb. The kombucha monster can climb through difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

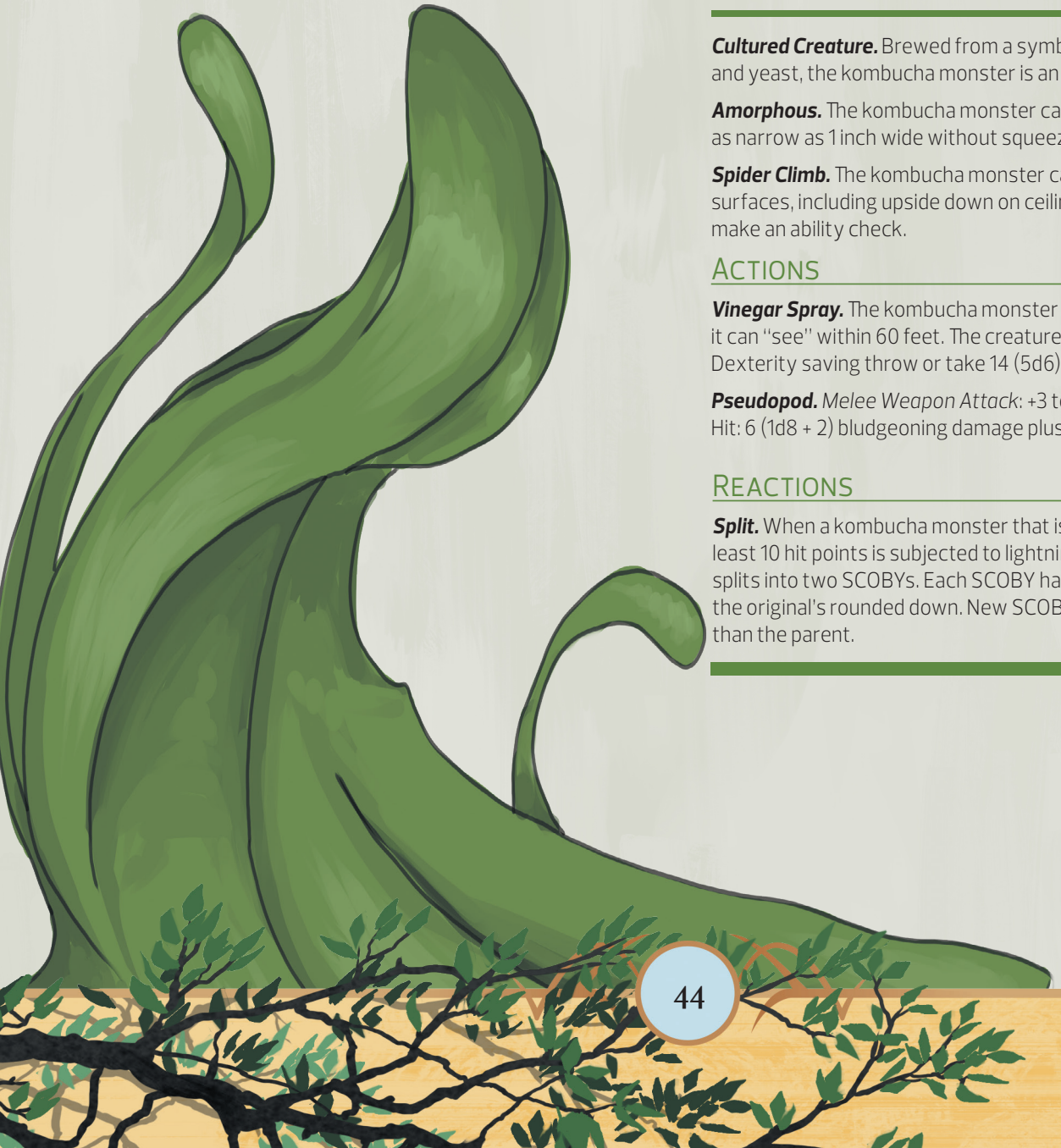
Actions

Vinegar Spray. The kombucha monster targets one creature that it can "see" within 60 feet. The creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (5d6) acid damage

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage

Reactions

Split. When a kombucha monster that is Medium or larger with at least 10 hit points is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two SCOBYs. Each SCOBY has hit points equal to half the original's rounded down. New SCOBYs are one size smaller than the parent.



Warlock of the Great Outdoors

Medium humanoid, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (15 with Mage Armor)
Hit Points 78 (10d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +7
Skills Arcana +4, Nature +4, Survival +4, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances Bludgeoning damage from any wooden weapons
Languages Common, Undercommon, Sylvan
Senses Darkvision 30 ft, advantage on Survival checks or contests, passive perception 11
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The warlock's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. They can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 16), requiring no material components:

At will: *animal messenger, cure wounds, entangle, hunter's mark, gust of wind, mage armor (self only)*
1/day each: *control weather, crown of stars, whirlwind*

Spellcasting. The warlock is a 17th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). They regain their expended spell slots when they finish a short or long rest. They know the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *create bonfire, druidcraft, eldritch blast, firebolt, gust, minor illusion, thorn whip*
1st – 5th level (4 5th level slots): *create food and water, dominate beast, insect plague, guardian of nature, purify food and drink, sanctuary, spider climb, stinking cloud, thunder step, web*

Nature's Blessing (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When the warlock fails a spell attack, it can re-roll the attack and add a d4 to the d20 roll. It can add this d4 to the next three attacks.

Actions

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.





Twisted Roots

Written by TK Johnson

Level: 7 Content Warnings: Colonialism, Ritual Sacrifice, Themes of Infanticide

SYNOPSIS

After suffering weeks of assaults by the undead, a noblewoman's young child will die on the night of the Solstice, unless adventurers intervene. This adventure is intended for a party of 4-5 7th-level characters

ADVENTURE HOOK

Lady Aralee is a childless noblewoman who has returned from Chult after a year of missionary work. While there, she found a baby nestled in the roots of a massive baobab tree and she understood this to be a reward from Chauntea for her faith and good works. She took the baby and had the tree cut down and made into its cradle. A year after she returned home to the Sword Coast, exactly one month before the Solstice, her home has been assaulted by undead and consultation with a cleric has revealed that the undead are trying to claim her child. The child is growing sickly and weak, and the noblewoman is certain that her child will perish by the Solstice, unless the adventurers intervene.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure is inspired by the Yoruba legend of the Iroko Tree, the story of Olorunbi, and the story of Isokun.

In Yoruba legend, iroko trees are trees full of malevolent spirits that must be appeased. Olorunbi promised her baby to the local iroko tree outside of her village in exchange for ending a famine, but later tricked and outsmarted the angry spirit in the tree and kept her child. In Isokun's story, a queen goes on a pilgrimage to beg the orisa for children of her own. Each of the orisa turn her away and finally she steals a baby from a poor woman and presents it to her husband when she returns home. However, she can't feed the babe and it starts to grow ill while it's birth mother desperately searches for it. The birth mother eventually finds the child and the queen flees the kingdom.

Prior to this adventure, a Chultan village gave the baby to **Uluu Thalongh** to appease it but Aralee took the baby. The village died and the possessed tree was made into the crib. Now, having traveled from Chult to the Sword Coast, the undead villagers have arrived at the noblewoman's home.

CHAPTER 1: HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTH IS

> The leaves of the shrubs lining the town center have burst into bunches of glossy-green sheaves, leaning with each lazy breath of the wind. Summer has danced into this village, beating down upon your brows and sticking your shirts to your sweat-slicked skin. The roads are rough, pitted with loose pebbles and gaping potholes, and the carts rattle and rock as they pass the stalls of the marketplace. You hear the low buzz of insects beneath the call for customers and the air is stifling, heavy with humidity as you approach the massive doors of a marble temple, blazoned with banners bearing the symbol of Chauntea, the Great Mother.

The Temple of Chauntea

Despite the exterior, the Temple of Chauntea is a modest affair, lined with streams of handmade flower garlands and delicately folded paper decorations in preparation for the Summer Solstice. It is a flurry of motion and sound as penitents and petitioners flood the pews, hoping to gain noon blessings before they return to tend the market and orchards.

The Priestess' Request

A tall figure paces the aisles, waving their hand graciously to their parishioners, and they approach the party with wide strides. This is **Mother Za**l (zAHL, half-orc **priest** (MM), she/her, neutral good), High Priestess of Chauntea, and she welcomes the adventurers to the temple for rest, relaxation, and healing. In return, she asks that they please check in on a member of her flock, **Lady Aralee Rhava** (Air-ah-lee Rah-vah, half-elf **commoner** (MM), she/her, chaotic good), who has not been seen for nearly a month.

> "It is most unusual," Mother Zal mutters, wiping sweat from the thick column of her neck with a linen handkerchief. The shelf of her chin quivers as she tries to recall the events. "I am terrified for the High Lady… but I dare not leave the temple so close to the Summer Solstice, with so many pilgrims in need of my services. Could you please look in on her and the baby, and perhaps remind her of her child's approaching nameday ceremony?

Mother Zal imparts these facts upon the adventurers:

- Lady Aralee recently complained of sleepless nights and mysterious shadows in her large manor. When Mother Zal offered to bless the baby's room, Lady Aralee refused
- Nearly a year ago, Lady Aralee returned from a mission trip to Chult, but declined to bring the baby in for a nameday ceremony
- If asked about the parentage or Lord Rhava at all, Mother Zal claims that she should not gossip. However, she says that Lady Aralee often changed the subject on the baby's father, claiming only that it was a blessing bestowed upon her by Chauntea for her good works and strong faith
- As the conversation continues, a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals Mother Zal's increasing unwillingness to go to the manor herself. Prodding her further reveals her belief that there is a genuinely malevolent force in the Rhava estate

Though Mother Zal is afraid, she is not unreasonable. If asked, she provides each adventurer with a *Potion of Healing* (2d4+4) and casts the aid spell upon the adventurers for their protection. A successful **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check** convinces her to accompany the party to the estate, though she does not engage in battle and must be persuaded once again to enter the manor.

Development

After speaking with Mother Zal, the party may rest. The next morning they are hurried to the noble quarter of the town where the Rhava Estate awaits.

CHAPTER 2: HOME, SWEET HOME

> Rhava Estate rests wearily at the end of the main thoroughfare, beyond staggering stone steps and cobblestone walkways. The sprawling tongue of its gravel drive drowsily skims the stems of tall weeds ringing an archway of grey ivy. If you didn't know better, you would swear that this is where the wilderness met the town, the precipice of civilization.

Entering the Estate

The manor is a two-story home with peeling paint and rotting boards that have been visibly worm-eaten. If Mother Zal is present, she claims that it was not in this state when she visited a month ago, however she is unsurprised by its appearance. The windows and doors are each flung wide open, and a greasy trail of muck and debris leads into the main foyer of the home. In the crumbling plaster walls and ceiling, there are pulsing black veins that are, upon further inspection, writhing tree roots.

Mother Zal is hesitant to enter, but advises the adventurers on the rooms in which Lady Aralee is most likely to reside. Use a d6 to determine which room Lady Aralee is in:



1d6	Room
1	Kitchen: The kitchen is in perfect order, beyond the roots embedded in the walls. Every silver utensil has been neatly stacked one on top of the other in a line that reaches the ceiling.
2	Master Suite: Lady Aralee has trapped a **bodak** (VgtM) in the Master Suite. This bodak pleads to be released and returned to its baby, scratching against the door and weeping piteously in an unnatural voice. If the door is opened, the bodak attacks the party immediately, ready to kill anyone who gets between her and her baby.
3	The Baby's Room: The baby's room is the source of the black roots, which are originating from the base of a shiny, black crib. Around the crib, toys levitate and bob in midair, while inside, a brown-skinned baby sleeps peacefully.
4	The Cellar: The door to the cellar is latched tightly closed with a silver lock. A successful **DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or DC13 Strength (Athletics) check** opens the lock. If the adventurers open it, 2d8 Chultan **yellow musk zombies** (ToA) climb out, attacking anyone they see.
5	The Parlor: The parlor is in disarray, but the lush furniture has all been upended and suspended against the wall, as though some force were attempting to recreate the home on the ceiling. 2d6 Chultan **yellow musk zombies** shuffle aimlessly here, guided by wriggling black tree roots. They attack anyone who enters the parlor
6	The Attic: The entrance to the attic is nearly covered with black, squirming roots. Removing them will open the hatch and pour 3d4 Chultan **yellow musk zombies** onto the adventurers. The Yellow Musk Zombies will attack immediately, and the roots restrain any adventurers who fail a **DC 13 Strength saving throw**.

If you do not have access to the statistics for yellow musk zombies, use the normal zombie (MM) statistics.

A Mother's Love

Regardless of where Lady Aralee is hiding, if the adventurers enter the baby's room, she appears.

> A brown-skinned half-elf pushes past you and into the baby's room, wide-eyed and fearful. She immediately lays slender hands upon the child, checking its face and form as best she can before lifting her gaze. Her gown, once spotless silk with richly embroidered leaping does and swooping doves, hangs in tatters from her narrow shoulders and she drags the point of a broadsword that is much too heavy for her along the floor as she walks.

Distraught, she explains her situation as best she can:

- A year ago, she returned from a missionary trip to Chult, where she spread the gospel of Chauntea. While there, she found a baby abandoned beneath a massive black baobab tree. She adopted this baby as her own and had the tree cut down so that it could be fashioned into a crib, to remind the baby of its homeland
- A month ago, the crib was finished, however, the baby soon grew colicky and irritable when she took it from the crib, as though it were only happy there
- Soon after, poltergeist activity began. Furniture moved on its own, undead began to pull themselves up from her cellar, and she felt afraid in her own home. Any attempts to remove the baby met with disaster,such as her carriage catching on fire and the stairwell collapsing, only to rebuild itself once she returned the baby to the cradle
- As the Summer Solstice neared, she woke to the sound of a creature crawling onto the edge of her bed. She fled in terror as a creature that claimed it was the baby's true mother cackled in delight, swearing to swallow up the baby on the solstice

Exhausted, Lady Aralee begs the adventurers to keep watch for the night, so that she might finally rest. Throughout the night, the bodak wails and laughs with increasing volume and intensity.

If Mother Zal accompanied the party, she will steadfastly refuse to sleep in the manor. If she leaves, she does not return. Only a successful **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) check** convinces her to stay, but she does not engage in any fighting until **Uluu Thalongh** shows himself.

Development

After speaking with Lady Aralee, the adventurers are free to either investigate or rest in the manor.

CHAPTER 3: OUR TWISTED ROOTS

As dawn breaks, any adventurers who attempted to rest in Rhava Estate must succeed on a **DC 17 Wisdom saving throw**, or else suffer a level of exhaustion, unless the bodak was defeated the day before.

As the Bough Breaks

Lady Aralee is exhausted, but wakes before the adventurers. She is walking the length of the hall, patrolling for more Yellow Musk Zombies. Adventurers who leave the baby's room find that the roots have engulfed the windows and doors, effectively forming an impenetrable cocoon around the manor.

Further investigation of the manor reveals the rooms are each filled with floating furniture and dining implements, vases and bedding. Any Yellow Musk Zombies the party encounters (if they were not defeated the day before) will be staring blankly at the pulsing ceiling. The door to the Master Suite is open, and the bodak is nowhere to be seen.

Cradle and All

When the adventurers return to the baby's room, they discover Lady Aralee wildly hacking at the base of the cradle, desperately trying to free the cradle from the writhing mass of roots on the floor. The roots have grown over the lip of the cradle, cocooning the entirety of the baby's bed. If the adventurers help, the cradle comes away easily and Lady Aralee clutches it to her chest as best she is able.

> The walls tremble with the frenetic energy of the shivering roots and suddenly the stale air is filled with an acrid stench that sets your teeth swimming and your eyes watering. This miasma snakes through the room and carries with it a deep, melodious laughter, raising the hair on the back of your neck. The limp body of the bodak hangs in the doorway, a root sharply embedded in the top of her shriveled head.
>
> "A sacrifice I was promised," an otherworldly voice echoes from deep inside the bodak's gaping maw, and the roots shudder and dance in unison. "A sacrifice I shall have…"

This is the voice of Uluu Thalongh (undead shambling mound, it/its, lawful evil), a malevolent spirit of Chultan legend who had been promised the baby as a sacrifice to rescue a Chultan village from disaster. Uluu Thalongh has possessed the body of the bodak. If prompted, it elaborates:

- Its spirit was sealed in the baobab wood when Lady Aralee had the tree cut down and has waited a year to devour the child it was promised
- Once Uluu Thalongh has devoured the child, it will use its Yellow Musk Zombies to carry it deeper into the Sword Coast and spread its legend

Lady Aralee has pried the baby from the cradle and will offer her life in exchange for the child's. The party has a decision to make:

- Allow Lady Aralee to sacrifice herself
- Insist that Lady Aralee sacrifice the baby--this option will ensure Lady Aralee attacks the party.
- Defeat Uluu Thalongh. If the Bodak was defeated the day before, its lifeless husk falls to the ground before the battle begins. Otherwise, it joins the battle

Uluu Thalongh uses the **undead shambling mound** statistics (Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage) with the following changes:

- Uluu Thalongh is immune to the Turn Undead ability.
- Uluu Thalongh uses the baby's room as a Lair. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Uluu Thalongh takes a lair action:
    - A sickening miasma rises, filling the room. Each creature in the room must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** or take 2d10 poison damage and become poisoned until the end of its turn. While poisoned in this way, a creature is incapacitated
    - Roots erupt from the wall, floor, and ceiling. Each creature in the room must succeed on a **DC 13 Strength saving throw** or be restrained until the end of its turn

If you do not have access to the undead shambling mound statistics, use the standard **shambling mound** statistics (MM) with the changes above, and replacing Lightning Absorption with Necrotic Absorption.

Development

If the party sacrifices Lady Aralee, choose Conclusion A.
If the party sacrifices the baby, choose Conclusion B.
If the party defeats Uluu Thalongh, choose Conclusion C.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION A

Lady Aralee gives a stern nod, head of curls bobbing with every step as she crosses the room and gently deposits the baby in your arms. She takes a deep breath, shoulders shaking, and walks into the embrace of Uluu Thalongh, allowing the twisted roots of the earth spirit to envelop her. Her death is silent, peaceful, but for the echo of wet chewing that follows you out of the front door and through the town. The memory remains as you hand the baby to Mother Zal, who wrings her hands and carefully averts her eyes. She instructs her fellow priests to find an appropriate cradle for the child.

CONCLUSION B

Lady Aralee is simple to dispatch, falling to the ground with one swing. She gasps and shudders as the black roots engulf her dying form and then the bundle of blankets that she'd held so tightly in her arms. The floor gives way beneath you, swallowing you whole and spitting you into the yard of the estate. From there, you see the pulsing husk of the manor as Uluu Thalongh indulges in its long-awaited meal, beneath the blood-soaked sun of the Summer Solstice.

CONCLUSION C

Lady Aralee gives a tearful gasp as the roots shrivel and wither, collapsing in great heaps of filmy ash. She sobs into the swaddled form of her adopted child as you hear a raspy whimper. The bodak, too, has begun to shrivel and the heart-wrenching form of a Chultan matron reaches with the last of her strength, no longer filled with the vengeful vigor that Uluu Thalongh bestowed upon her. Lady Aralee leans down beside her and listens intently as the dying woman whispers into her ear, then collapses into a pile of soot and leaves.

You escort Lady Aralee from her home to the Temple of Chauntea, where she and her baby bathe and begin the rites for the baby's nameday. When Mother Zal smiles widely and asks Lady Aralee the baby's name, she answers:

"Kora. Her mother wanted her name to be Kora."

Rewards

Characters who complete this adventure earn the following rewards:

XP Rewards

Use either the table below or milestones to determine experience.

Obstacle	XP
Yellow Musk Zombie	50 per zombie
The Bodak	2,300
Uluu Thalongh	1,800

If the adventurers appease Uluu Thalongh with a sacrifice, Mother Zal offers them free rest and healing at the Temple of Chauntea, but insists that they move on soon.

If the adventurers rescue Lady Aralee and her child from Uluu Thalongh, Mother Zal offers them free rest and healing at the Temple of Chauntea. Lady Aralee offser them 200 gp each and a *wand of entangle* (TFtYP, The Sunless Citadel). The party will always have a room at Rhava Estate to rest and recuperate on their adventures.

Author Bio:

TK Johnson is a speculative fiction writer and part-time eldritch horror. They can be found as a cast member of The Land Between Two Rivers, Tales From the Mists, and Jace Beleren Must Die on the WebDM and Dungeons & Dragons networks, respectively - and as a contributor and editor in several Anthologies on Dungeon Masters Guild. Their spooky stories can be found at tkjwrites.com.



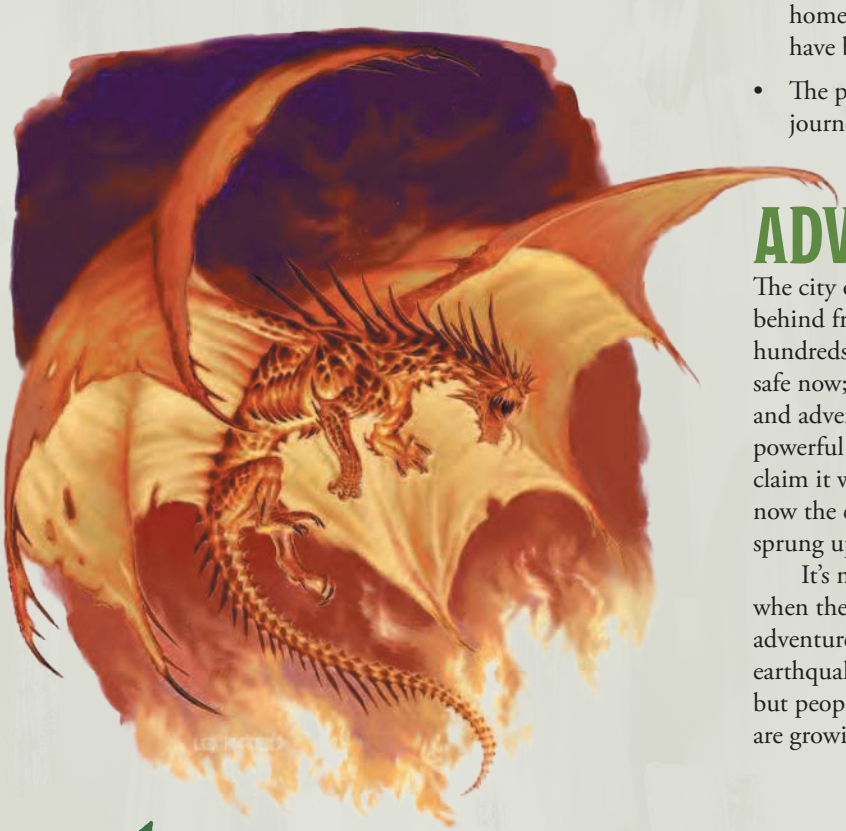
Cruel Summer

Written by Cat Evans

Level: 8 Content Warnings: Mob Violence

SYNOPSIS

Summer is hell. It's unpleasant even when your city isn't being menaced by a vengeful fire elemental in dragon form reactivating the dormant volcano beneath your feet. When that volcano begins to rumble and threaten to erupt - just as the bicentennial celebrations are kicking off - you really need that elemental dealt with. This adventure is for a party of 5 level 8 characters.



ADVENTURE HOOK

All the DM needs to do is get the characters into the island city of Caldera around midsummer. Caldera offers many lures for an adventuring party:

- The city is famous for its hot springs, which are said to have healing properties. Perhaps a party member or ally needs to lift a curse or heal a persistent wound or disease.
- Wealthy folk flock to the healing springs, so Caldera has a well developed tourist industry, offering luxury resorts and holiday homes. The characters might visit simply for pleasure - or even have been rewarded with a home here by a grateful employer.
- The party might have been guards for noble family on the journey to Caldera, and have recently arrived in town.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The city of Caldera, as the name suggests, stands in the crater left behind from the last time the volcano Idoraia erupted. That was hundreds of years ago. Everybody in Caldera believes the volcano is safe now; the spirit that inhabited it was slain by brave adventurers, and adventurers are never scam artists who might, say, banish a powerful fire elemental to another plane for two-hundred years and claim it was dealt with. No, wait. That's exactly what they did. And now the elemental is back, and extremely angry at the city that's sprung up in its domain.

It's midsummer, and the city is celebrating its bicentennial when the elemental (also named Idoraia) returns. When the adventure begins, Caldera has already suffered a few days of earthquakes. So far, the quakes have caused relatively little damage, but people who can afford to leave are doing so, and city officials are growing concerned.

CHAPTER 1: THE EARTH QUAKES

In this chapter, the adventurers explore Caldera, encounter several important NPCs, and bear witness to the first signs of the impending eruption.

The City of Caldera

To begin the adventure, read or paraphrase:

> Caldera sprawls luxuriously out of the crater in which it was first built. Green parks and olive groves surround pristine white villas - the luxury abodes of visiting plutocrats - which jostle with more modest brick and tile structures that house the rest of the population. Planned in concentric circles and broken up by lakes and greenery, the city radiates tranquility.
>
> Preparations are in full swing for a festival: workers bustle about the more affluent areas decorating with wreaths and garlands, and the central forum is empty except for people setting up attractions and stalls. But something isn't right: there are ships leaving the harbour, but none entering, and few people in the streets who aren't at work.



Blistering Heat

The heat in Caldera is unbearable and unnatural. Characters who move around the city wearing armor, or who undertake strenuous activity(e.g. manual labour), must succeed on a **DC 13 Constitution saving throw** each hour or take a level of exhaustion. A short rest removes one level of exhaustion.

The Word on the Street

It's impossible for the party to spend any length of time in the city without absorbing some information. No matter who they speak to, they should learn the following facts quickly.

- Tomorrow, Caldera celebrates the bicentennial of its founding
- Minor earthquakes have been occurring for about five days. It's unusual to have so many in a short time, but probably nothing to worry about. Characters proficient in Insight understand that people are most definitely worried
- Caldera is built on top of an inactive volcano (Idoraia). Characters proficient in Nature or History know this automatically
- The volcano is definitely inactive, because an adventuring party slew the elemental that dwelled there (Idoraia), 200 years ago. The bicentennial tomorrow celebrates both the founding of the city and the defeat of the elemental. Characters proficient in History know this automatically

As well as this general information, some locals have more to say.

The Shopkeeper

Cassia(human **commoner** (MM), she/her, lawful neutral)

> ***Who She Is:*** Cassia is a middle-aged human woman with grey-streaked dark hair and a kindly face. She's well-mannered, and a stickler for propriety. She runs a local shop (or inn, if need be).
> ***What She Knows:*** Cassia knows that the rich folk have started to leave town, and generally when the rich people go, it's time to start worrying. She would leave too, except that her husband, who is bed-bound after a stroke, wouldn't cope well with a journey. She also has children and grandchildren to worry about, and she can't afford to pay for travel for all of them. Passage out of Caldera by sea is more expensive every day.
> ***How To Use Her:*** Place Cassia in any shop or inn the party visits.

The Priest

Aian (halfling **acolyte** (MM), they/them, lawful good)

Who They Are: Aian is a rotund, blonde, halfling who enjoys tasteful jewelry and showing off their smooth, tanned, skin. They are the keeper of one of the many healing springs throughout Caldera - i.e., they run a bath-house where people can 'take the waters.' They're curious, considerate, and talkative.
What They Know: Aian understands the waters, and the land. They know that the earthquakes are growing more frequent, though not yet any more severe. They also know that the water is heating up. They are absolutely certain that the volcano beneath Caldera is stirring. They have tried to warn the city authorities but they've been fobbed off.
How To Use Them: Caldera has many bath-houses. Some are grand and luxurious, some are humble. If the characters choose to visit one, Aian runs the place; they strike up conversation with the party, curious about new faces. Otherwise, the characters see Aian outside the baths they run, having a fraught conversation with a city guard, asking them to please tell Aian what's going on.

When Aian learns the party are adventurers, they ask the group if they will descend into the chambers beneath the city and deal with whatever is down there. Aian can't offer much by way of reward, but they can enchant the baths so that a dip in the waters grants **12 temporary hit points**. If the characters take no damage, the temporary hit points remain until the end of the characters' next long rest.

The Descendant

Lucius (fire genasi **commoner**, he/him, chaotic good)

Who He Is: A young genasi who runs a stall selling water or wine - or watered wine - to passers-by. He's friendly, bordering on flirtatious, but currently nervous and on edge. His left arm ends at the elbow, terminating in flickering flames.
What He Knows: Lucius' family are descended - in some way nobody fully understands - from Idoraia, the elemental of the volcano and he's been having dreams about her. Lucius knows she's back, and angry.
How to Use Him: The characters see Lucius being harangued by other locals, calling him 'demon' and 'cursed,' and blaming him for the unnatural heat and the quakes. If the characters don't intervene, the humans kick over his stall and beat him, running off before anyone thinks to call the guards.

If the characters interact with Lucius and seem to be on his side, he tells them what he knows, and asks them to go down into the chambers beneath the city and investigate; perhaps Idoraia can be placated. He has a *necklace of fire resistance* (see *ring of fire resistance*, DMG, Treasure) made of gold and garnets, which he offers as payment. It's an old family heirloom, and obviously of no use to him. He freely admits that he is terrified of the elemental, and believes she would kill him if he went down there; the party seems powerful enough to stand up to her if need be.

The Politician

Julia Servinia (human **noble** (MM), she/her, neutral good)

Who She Is: Julia is a spry, sharp-witted, dark-skinned, woman in her sixties. She is currently campaigning to be elected Consul (the highest office in the city; equivalent to governor or mayor). She is one of the few senior politicians who have decided to stick around: her politics revolve around giving local, working, people more voice in how Caldera is run, and her supporters are the ones stuck in the city now that the rich have fled and taken most of the ships.
What She Knows: Julia is about to give the order to evacuate Caldera, but she knows there aren't enough ships in the harbour to move everyone safely.
How to Use Her: If the characters have any noble contacts/go to high-status districts, Julia encounters them in an appropriate location. Otherwise, she quickly learns of the arrival of powerful adventurers in the city, and asks them to visit her in a private pool in one of the bath-houses (use Aian's, if possible). Julia suspects that the volcano's activity means the elemental that dwelled there is not dead, as everyone believes, and that subduing - preferably killing - it might be the only way to save the city. She contracts the characters to do just that, initially appealing to their better natures but offering them gold (or other non-magical treasures) up to 3,000gp. The characters can haggle this up to 5,000gp: that is literally all she can deliver, and it means including her home in the deal.

Development

Aian, Lucius, and Julia all direct the characters to a secret passage hidden in an empty building in the City Forum. When the characters agree to investigate, move on to Chapter Two.

CHAPTER 2: THE SKY TEARS

The eruption begins and the city devolves into chaos. You may use as many or as few of the following encounters as you wish to depict the danger the volcano poses as the party makes their way to the forum, but two encounters will probably be enough for a 3-4 hour one-shot game. How many **delays** the characters suffer affects the final encounter with Idoraia (Chapter 3).

The Beginning

To commence Chapter Two, read or paraphrase:

> The earth shivers and the world tears itself apart. Tremors run through the rock beneath your feet, bucking and lurching, and stone crumbles off the corners of buildings. A statue of a mounted soldier topples; people shriek and scatter. And then it stops.
>
> For a while.
>
> A few minutes later there's another rumble, and somewhere towards the center of the city - the forum - a cloud of thick, dark, smoke billows into the air. The stench of sulfur carries on the breeze.

Collapsing Building

One of the grand, stone buildings near the characters begins to collapse. Characters who succeed on a **DC 17 Dexterity saving throw** get out of the way; those who fail take 3d10 bludgeoning damage. 1d4 **commoners** (MM) are trapped in the rubble, as are characters who fail the saving throw by 5 points or more (i.e. do not achieve **DC 12**). Rescuing a trapped person takes five minutes (halved with a successful **DC 15 Strength check**) and causes a **delay** (see Chapter 3).

Lava

One of the hot springs boils and begins to vent lava through the fissure. Rivulets of molten rock vomit between the stone columns of a bath-house and through the streets. Characters take 5d8 fire damage, halved on a successful **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**. The lava blocks off streets and forces people, including the characters, to take alternative routes; this makes surrounding streets more crowded with people. After the 'lava' event occurs, moving through the city is harder. Characters must make a successful group **DC 16 Charisma (Intimidation) or Strength check**, or move at half speed and be delayed.

Riot

The city guard are doing their best to maintain order, but the evacuation has driven people to panic. Every attempt to control traffic makes people more fearful, and the guards are losing control. The characters walk right into one of these riots. They can skirt around it with a successful group **DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check**, or bring the crowd under control with a successful **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check** - or be **delayed** by being caught up in the riot.

Sacrifice

A mob of panicking citizens, has decided that offering Lucius as a sacrifice - throwing him into one of the fissures opening up around the city - might somehow avert the crisis. They're not entirely clear as to how or why, but they are desperate. A dozen human **commoners** (MM) are dragging Lucius closer to one of the rivers of lava, intent on throwing him into the crack in the earth from which the lava vents. Characters can simply ignore this - or they can intervene, either through combat or **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) checks**. Doing so causes a delay.

Development

When the party reaches the forum, Chapter Three begins.

CHAPTER 3: THE AIR BOILS

Idoraia has already emerged from the depths when the party reach the forum. The elemental, in the form of a young red dragon, has taken residence.

Idoraia

Read or paraphrase:

> A dragon of shimmering flame perches on a jagged peak of ruptured earth in the centre of the forum. Through its shape you see buildings and rocks, and a heat haze ripples around it. Crimson eyes light upon all of you and this creature of living flame extends her graceful neck and hisses.
>
> "More adventurers. I will not suffer you twice."

If the party speaks with her, Idoraia talks enough to summarize the information in the Background section, but has little interest in conversation. She has returned from centuries of banishment to find humans have taken over her territory, and she is enraged and murderous. She fully intends to destroy the city and everyone in it, and dwell in the ruins.

Delays

If the characters suffered any **delays** in Chapter Two, Idoraia has been above ground long enough that the air is dizzyingly hot and filled with smoke, stone dust, and ash. The Forum is Lightly Obscured, and characters who fail a **DC 11 Constitution saving throw** are Poisoned. Poisoned characters repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns until they succeed or leave the forum. If the characters suffered **two or more delays**, Idoraia has nine **magmin** (MM) with her when they arrive.

The Forum

Broken statues, overturned stalls and carts etc. provide half cover for Small or Medium creatures.

The Volcano

Use Idoraia's Lair Actions for the effects of the volcanic eruption.

Tactics

Make full use of Idoraia's Lair Actions, and her ability to fly. She stays out of reach as much as possible, swooping down to use her breath weapon.

> As well as the normal statistics and actions of a **young red dragon** (MM), Idoraia can summon 2d4 **magmin** (MM) to a point within 60 feet of her, as a bonus action. This ability recharges on a roll of 5-6 on 1d6, and Idoraia cannot use it in the same turn as her fire breath.

Idoraia's Death

When Idoraia is reduced to 0 hit points, her form heats up rapidly, streams of magma spread from her, and she contracts in on herself. Three rounds after being reduced to 0 hit points, she explodes as per a fireball spell cast at fifth level (10d6 fire damage to all creatures in a 20 foot radius, halved on a successful **DC 17 Dexterity saving throw**).

Treasure

After Idoraia explodes, nothing remains of her except seven small, intensely hot, red beads. Each one functions like a single bead from a *necklace of fireballs* (DMG, Treasure).

Development

When Idoraia is defeated, the adventure is complete.

CONCLUSION

The volcanic activity subsides with Idoraia's death. Caldera is badly damaged and there are many casualties, but this is still the best possible outcome. Julia Servinia takes control of the recovery, and rewards the party for their role in saving the city (see Chapter One).

If the characters do not defeat Idoraia, the volcano erupts, causing massive damage and loss of life. Caldera, like Pompeii, will become a historical tragedy and an archaeological curiosity.

Rewards

The characters have the opportunity to earn:

- 3-5,000 gp
- *Necklace of fire resistance*
- Fireball beads (see *Necklace of Fireballs*)

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

This was originally going to be a completely different adventure, but there just aren't enough big, angry, red dragons in D&D. Thanks to Jess and Jenn for letting me write "Pompeii, but with a dragon" and for letting me claim "sweltering heat and the world is on fire" was summery. It's what summer means to me, anyway. Thanks Alicia and the rest of the Coven for ongoing support when writing is hard.

Author Bio

Cat lives in the UK with her spouse and a whole pack of cute but ill-behaved dogs. She writes things for the DMs Guild (as Catherine Evans) and other RPG places. She wants to be a Night Hag when she grows up.



House of Light, Children of Shadows

Written by Awkward Bard

Levels: 11 - 13 Content Warnings: Murder, Vampires, Werewolves

SYNOPSIS

The party is invited to oversee the Summer Festival of Lorlea, a town once known for its vampire hunting traditions. They arrive to find a lively celebration but something doesn't feel right. As They are called upon to oversee a sacred ritual, the dark truth about Lorlea comes to light. House of Light, Children of Shadows is an adventure for 4 characters of 11th-13th level.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The party is invited to oversee a sacred ritual in Lorlea, and promised a great reward for doing so. That invitation may come from an old friend, someone the party has helped in the past, or from a stranger who reached out to the party because they are famed adventurers.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, the region surrounding Lorlea was overrun with vampires and werebeasts. The people lived in constant fear for their lives, dreading the dark and the long winter nights. A few of them, tired of living in fear, took to hunting those beasts and founded the Hunter Order. The Drafend family were prominent in the Order, dedicated to freeing the land from the vampires terrorizing it.

While they were successful in their endeavor, victory came at a great cost. Delores, their matriarch, was turned into a vampire herself. She was the most skilled huntress of the Order, and undeath only made her more powerful. Unable to defeat Delores, her children drove a stake through her heart, paralyzing her. They built the temple of Ûr Gal to keep her confined and dedicated their lives to guarding it. Over time, people settled nearby and Lorlea came to be. To keep Delores dormant, they must replace the stake - the ritual they call The Staking - every twenty years.

The short nights of summer are celebrated as vampire-hunting season, though vampires are now so scarce many believe they are gone for good.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Delores Drafend: (**vampire** with modifications listed below), she/her, lawful evil) A skilled monster hunter, and now a powerful and ancient vampire.

Delores uses the statistics for a vampire with the following alterations:

- Proficient in Insight and Investigation.
- Learns the hunter's mark spell and can cast it twice a day on its lowest level.

Ghulla: (human **necromancer** (MM), she/they, lawful neutral) A young, arrogant acolyte training under Rainluar to become the first full-fledged Hunter in over two decades.

Hosianna Breenan: (human **priest** (MM), she/her, neutral good) Current leader of the Hunter Order. Despite having conducted the Staking twice before, she believes Delores is no longer a threat. Believes the Order has served its purpose and seeks to dismantle it.

Rainluar Vatoris: (half-elf **priest**; they/he, lawful good) Hosianna's right hand and second-in-command of the Hunter Order. Despite never participating in The Staking, they firmly believe it to be necessary and wish to revitalize the Order at all costs. Also called Lua.

Emelyn: (human **scout** (MM), she/her, chaotic good) Loud and boastful, she is determined to join the Hunter Order and become their greatest Hunter. She is best friends with Magna and Alastor.

Alastor: (tiefling **thug** (MM), she/her, chaotic neutral) Best friends with Emelyn and Magna. Although she doesn't believe in vampires nor care about the Order, Alastor tags along with Emelyn because it's entertaining.

Magna: (tabaxi **acolyte** (MM), they/them, neutral) Best friends with Alastor and Emelyn. Quiet and shy, Magna doesn't believe in their potential. Regardless, they are always trying their best to support their friends.

CHAPTER ONE: PRAISE THE SUN

When the party arrives at Lorlea, read or paraphrase:

> You are on the road to Lorlea and the sun burns bright above you. Not a cloud can be seen against the bright cyan, as if the sky itself proudly announced the arrival of summer.
>
> A faint, lively melody fills the air and the smell of baked goods surrounds you. In the far, you can see a large town painted and draped in warm colors. As you walk into town, people greet you with wide smiles. Some of them play pranks on you, pretending to be vampires coming to bite you, or jokingly accusing you of being the vampires.
>
> The town's narrow streets all lead to the central square, where all the smells and music seem to originate.

Lorlea

Lorlea grew organically, with narrow streets connecting the various locations in town, all of which have distinctive baroque architecture. All paths lead to the town square. It is hard to navigate the town without a map or a guide.
The town has two important locations:

- Ur Gal: the oldest building, in the oldest part of town (Goitia, or Old Lorlea). A temple to honor the sun, and Delores' prison
- Morfran's Rest: formerly the Drafend family home and home of the Hunter Order, it is now a museum

The Town Square

Morfran's Rest

> Of the several items on display in this manor house turned museum, two catch your eye—a magical rapier and a well-preserved, although ancient, coffin. Two people stand in front of the sword. One of them, a bulky half-elf with a beard, talks in a low and patient voice. The second figure, a human woman dressed in deep red robes, stares up at the sword with a glint of desire in her eyes.

The pair are **Rainluar** and **Ghulla**. Rainluar is tutoring Ghulla on Lorlea's history. Unless Rainluar or Ghulla hired the party, Rainluar asks them to leave before continuing the lesson. Ghulla stands in silence, occasionally asking about Delores or the sword..
Rainluar tells Ghulla:

- The sword is the *Sunsteel Needle*, a blade forged to slay vampires. The blade was passed down to Morfran by his mother, Delores
- The coffin belonged to Delores. It used to be kept at Ûr Gal, but Hosianna believes the museum can preserve it better

Once noon approaches, Rainluar and Ghulla lead the party to Ûr Gal.

Young Hunters

Magna, **Alastor** and **Emelyn** are dressed in silly costumes and playing Vampires and Hunters (hide-and-seek). The self-proclaimed Young Hunters tease the party and challenge them to play. Due to their extensive knowledge of Lorlea and its underground tunnels, the teenagers have advantage on **Dexterity (Stealth) checks** to hide or **Wisdom (Perception) checks** to 'seek.' If the party wins, the teenagers give them a *sunburst pendant* worth 120 gp, which they found in the tunnels.

Morfran the Vampire Slayer!

The main event of the morning is a play taking place in the town square.

> In the main square, a lively crowd cheers and boos a group of actors telling the story of Lorlea's founding by Morfran, a celebrated hunter.
> The play depicts a hunter, Morfran, fighting alone against an evil vampire to save his lover, Delores. After a long battle, he vanquishes the vampire, but Delores has been inflicted with vampirism. In a tragic ending, he kills her.
> Morfran erects Ûr Gal, the House of Light, in Delores' honor and thus, gives birth to Lorlea. The play ends with the following line:
>
> "Although your life was stolen, this House shall be a testament to our eternal love. I will be a father to any who come here, and treat them as children, mine and yours. Ûr Gal will be a haven, and its people, your children."

Elora, (human, she/her, lawful neutral) a travelling scholar, watches with disapproval. She rants about the play's historical inaccuracy to anyone who will listen:

- Delores was Morfran's mother, not his lover
- Morfran was probably not straight, as per a "friend's" journal

- Delores was a skilled huntress, not a damsel-in-distress
- Morfran didn't fight alone, he had siblings and friends
- Some accounts say Delores was not killed, and that Ûr Gal was built to hold, not honor, her

Ûr Gal, the House of Light

The oldest part of Lorlea is on its outskirts, surrounded by abandoned farmhouses reclaimed by greenery. Ûr Gal is home to the Hunter Order and holds Delores' paralyzed body in its innermost chambers.

Its underground tunnels connect all of Lorlea and hold terrible secrets.

The Hunter Order

Rainluar guides Ghulla and the party through the temple. The size of each room makes it clear that this building once housed many people.

Hosianna and Rainluar are a few of the remaining Hunters. The Order now consists mostly of priests and scholars dedicated to studying the ancient texts, few knowing how to properly wield a weapon. Hosianna, believing Delores no longer poses a threat, wants to disband the Order as it no longer serves its original purpose. Rainluar, however, is certain Hosianna is making a mistake. Because of this, they have accepted Ghulla into the Order despite knowing virtually nothing about her. They have been training her to become the first full-fledged Hunter in over three decades.

The Staking

As Rainluar guides the party to Ûr Gal's innermost chamber, they explain the Staking. Underneath the House of Light, lies the body of a powerful vampire, Delores. They don't know how to kill her, only how to keep her in this unconscious state. Every 20 years, the stake that pierces Delores' heart and keeps her paralyzed must be replaced in a special ritual called the Staking. Hosianna is the only current member of the Order to have witnessed the ritual before. Ghulla accompanies the group, not saying a word.

The Order gather around the stone coffin. Hosianna and Rainluar remove the chains that seal it shut while Ghulla blesses a wooden stake. The sound of chains hitting the ground echo throughout the large chamber. Rainluar pushes the coffin open, revealing the dried corpse of an old woman. As you look upon it, a voice rasps in your head. "Delores". The room falls silent.

Rainluar, with fear in their eyes, looks to Hosianna. She tries to hide her own fear as she reaches for the stake piercing the vampire's armor and chest. As she pulls it out, fresh blood drips from it. A loud heartbeat echoes throughout the chamber and the vampire's chest expands slowly. Hosianna seems frozen in place. "This… Impossible. This can't be…"

"Ghulla, stake Delores. Now!", Rainluar yells.

Ghulla smiles and raises the blessed stake above her head. She drives it through not the vampire's heart, but Hosianna's neck. The cleric's body falls over the open casket, her blood spilling all over the corpse that lies inside. Rainluar stares in disbelief at their apprentice. Ghulla presses Hosianna's neck against the vampire's mouth and says "time to wake up, Delores."

The vampire opens her eyes.

Delores drinks Hosianna's blood and becomes revitalized. Her dried and gray skin gains new life, although she is still pale, and aged. The members of the Order reach for their heads, screaming in pain. Two of them transform into **werebears** (MM) and 1d4 into **werewolves** (MM) and immediately attack the party, along with 1d4-1 **swarms of rats.**



Delores

Delores uses the statistics for a vampire with the following alterations:

- Proficient in Insight and Investigation.
- Learns the hunter's mark spell and can cast it twice a day on its lowest level.

Battle

Delores starts her turn with 72 hit points. She spends her first turn drinking Hosianna's blood while the werebeasts protect her. On her turn, Ghulla demands power from Delores, claiming she is the only reason Delores is alive again. Delores laughs, thanks Ghulla for the help, and uses one of her legendary actions to strike at her legs. On her second turn, Delores uses her action to shapeshift into mist and leave Ûr Gal. If defeated before she can make her escape, Delores' uses misty escape to flee to her coffin in Morfran's Rest. Ghulla tries to escape through the underground chambers, but if Delores' attack hit, she moves at half speed.

Rainluar casts spirit guardians to protect themself and the party. They stay as far as they can from the beasts and favor healing injured allies over attacking.

Delores uses modified **vampire** statistics (see Appendix B).



Development

If Delores escaped Ûr Gal, proceed to Chapter 2.
If the party destroyed Delores, proceed to Conclusion C.

CHAPTER 2: AND NEVER AGAIN ROSE THE SUN

Delores' return has awakened the cursed blood in her descendents, causing them to transform into werebeasts. The ones who haven't transformed run to Ûr Gal seeking refuge. Delores makes her way to her coffin in Morfran's Rest.

> "We are on holy ground, the beasts can't come inside… I hope." Rainluar tells you.
>
> Desperate Lorleans hammer on the door, begging to be let inside. Rainluar rushes to the door and opens it, and maimed townsfolk, covered in blood, rush into Ûr Gal, werebeasts close behind them.
>
> Rainluar slams the door behind the last of the Lorleans and turns to you, wide-eyed.
>
> "You must stop her. Please, you're the only ones who can."

Several Lorleans have seen Delores heading to Morfran's Rest. Rainluar suggests the party travel there via the abandoned tunnels: They should be safer than the streets, though slower. Rainluar warns the group about the oozes in the tunnels, but believes they shouldn't pose a serious threat.

Lorlea

The fastest route to Morfran's Rest is through Lorlea's streets.

Stalkers

A group of two **weretigers** (MM) spots the party and stalks them, letting the patrols ahead know the party is on their way. Characters with a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 17 or higher** realize they are being stalked.

Patrol

Three different patrols walk the mists, each consisting of a **werebear**, a **wereboar**, and three **wererats** (all MM). The party may sneak past a group with a successful **DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) group check**. They automatically fail the check if a weretiger is stalking them.

The Tunnels

Underground tunnels beneath Lorlea connect Ûr Gal, Morfran's Rest, and other locations - including interconnecting with the sewers, which gives the tunnels a foul stench. The tunnels were sealed off due to an ooze infestation.

The Old Library

After several minutes in the tunnel network, the party reaches this chamber.

> This large chamber is filled with shelves, and the shelves are covered with books. Most are so decayed they're unreadable, but maybe you can still find some useful information here.

The library contains:

- A wizard's spellbook, that gives off a slight glow. It is the only intact book here. Its shelf is unstable, and a character reaching for it must succeed on a **DC 17 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**, or the bookshelf crumbles, unleashing a cloud of **devil's mold** (see sidebar). The spellbook contains the dawn and sunbeam spells
- A partially destroyed cope of Morfran's Guide to Beast Slaying. Found with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, made with advantage if the character is specifically searching the pile of books. Characters who touch the pile are exposed to devil's mold

Devil's Mold

Named for its scarlet color, touching this mold causes terrible rashes, and its spores cause Devil's Mold sickness.
Characters who inhale the spores must succeed on a **DC 14 Constitution saving throw** or contract devil's mold sickness. They have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws until cured.
Symptoms. Coughing and sneezing, irritation to the eyes, nose and throat, and intense rashes. In more serious cases, fatigue, debilitating headaches and blisters occur.

A Young Hunter's Cry For Help

While navigating the tunnels, the party is faced with a decision: help Magna, Emelyn and Alastor, or ignore the teens, possibly leaving them to their deaths.

> While navigating the tunnels, you hear familiar voices. A young person screams in pain. Alastor's shadow projects on the halway, an ooze attacking her.

Alastor is currently under attack by two **black puddings** (MM). A **slithering tracker** (MM) grapples Magna while Emelyn tries to pull it off her. Magna becomes unconscious in one round if the characters do not intervene.

Development

If the party saves the Young Hunters, Alastor helps Magna return to Ûr Gal and Emelyn offers to serve as the party's guide, leading them to a secret entrance to Morfran's Rest. She also asks that they take her along to face Delores.

CHAPTER 3: LAST STAND AT MORFRAN'S REST

The party reaches Morfran's Rest, where Delores recovers her strength. Their choices so far determine the difficulty of this encounter.

> The once welcoming manor is now enveloped in thick fog, inside and out. Snow accumulates on the roof and around the house, and it is bitterly cold here.

If Delores was defeated, but not killed, in Chapter One, she has only 72 hit points.

If the party came through the tunnels, Delores has had enough time to attune to sunsteel needle (Appendix A), and she uses it in combat.

Arriving from the tunnels

Delores sits in the main chambers, petting a werebear. She is not expecting the party but has a **passive Wisdom (Perception) of 17 (14 in the fog)**.

Arriving from the streets

If the party alerted any werebeasts, Delores is aware that they are coming. She uses spider climb to hide on the ceiling, hoping to catch the intruders by surprise. She drops on the most fragile looking member of the party, favouring spellcasters, and strikes. Two werewolves and a werebear lurk in the fog, and try to confuse and split the party.

Combat tactics

Delores uses her charm on the party's physically strongest member. When reduced to half her hit points, she uses children of the night and commands the swarms of rats to focus on the party member who seems closest to death. Delores attempts to bite physically weaker enemies. If attuned to sunsteel needle, she activates and attacks with it; otherwise she uses her unarmed strikes.

Werebeasts nearby are loyal to her and obey her verbal commands. They attempt to protect her at all costs.

When Delores drops below 20 hit points, she uses her shapechanger trait to escape as a bat.

Development

If the party destroys Delores, proceed to Conclusion A. Otherwise, proceed to Conclusion B.

If Ghulla was spared, she attempts to escape and continues her quest for power. It is possible she will cross paths with the party again in the future.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion A

Delores is killed. The fog dissipates, the snow vanishes, and summer returns to the land. This day will not be easily forgotten, but the land is free of Delores' shadow for good. Each member of the party receives 1000 gp, and a statue erected in their honor. If any character chooses to join the Hunter Order, Rainluar also gives them the sunsteel needle.

> With Delores gone for good, Lorlea can live free of fear! After mourning their dead, the people of Lorlea hold a small celebration in your honor.
>
> Rainluar proposes that the festival be renamed to celebrate your victory, and asks if you have any names in mind. In addition, they invite you to take charge of the Hunter Order, offering Ûr Gal as your base of operations.
>
> "Together, I am sure we can make the Order greater than it ever was! Your names will be known in all corners of the land and feared by all creatures of the night. You will go down in history! I, and all of Lorlea, am at your disposal."

Conclusion B

Delores is defeated but not killed. The fog and snow lessen, but do not dissipate entirely. Who knows for how long she will be gone this time?

People are grateful, but uneasy. Each member of the party receives 500 gp as a reward. The party may join the Hunter Order as initiates if they wish. Rainluar does not give them sunsteel needle.

> The fog still lingers around Lorlea, and the sun's warmth barely reaches your skin. You can't help but wonder if will ever lift.
>
> Rainluar thanks you for your help and apologizes they can't give you a greater reward Their hands are full, as they must tend to the dead and care for those still living.
>
> "If you wish to help, the Hunter Order needs new members… now more than ever."

Conclusion C

The party defeats Delores, forever ridding the land of her shadow. They would be considered heroes… had anyone seen this great feat. Rainluar thanks the party and offers them 1000 gp — all the gold the Hunter Order currently has. They praise the party's abilities in vampire slaying and invites them to join the Order in the hopes of revitalizing it. Ûr Gal has living quarters they can use, should they feel like it.

> The tragedy was avoided before it could even start! Sadly, no one but you and a few others know of it.
>
> Rainluar and the remaining Hunters clean the chamber and prepare the bodies for burial. They tell you to go and enjoy the rest of the festival if wish, or stay for Hosianna's last rites.
>
> "You know, the Order could use able adventurers like you. We can help people, rid the world of its darkness! With you on our side, I'm sure the Hunters can go back to what we once were. Even if you don't want to become Hunters, Ûr Gal and the Order are here for you. Whatever you need, we will do our best to help. But please, consider my offer. Think of all the good we can do!"

Items

Sunsteel Needle

Weapon (rapier), very rare (requires attunement)

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

You can use a bonus action to speak the command word, causing the blade to shed bright light on a 10-foot radius around you. This light is sunlight. While this effect is active, you deal an extra 1d10 radiant damage to undead.

While an undead is attuned to it, the blade becomes **corrupted**. Speaking a command word causes it instead to deal 2d10 necrotic damage.



Morfran's Guide to Beast Slaying (damaged)

A bestiary kept by Morfran Drafend. This book details several monsters faced by the Hunter Order and their combat tactics. Most entries have been partially or entirely destroyed. Luckily, the entry on vampires is mostly intact.

While you are holding this book, you can use an action to consult it. You gain access to the **vampire** stat block (MM).

Author's Note

House of Light, Children of Shadows is, above all, a product of love. When you read this adventure, or play it with a group of friends, take a moment to appreciate all the hard work by the people behind it. You fill the hearts of every artist, editor and writer (and many others!) with joy when you do so.

A huge thank you to all who made this adventure possible! Jenn, Isis, Gabi, Bryan and my dear sisters, Ori and Lara, but above all, Jess and Cat: thank you for your patience and for believing in me even when I didn't.

Author Bio

Awkward Bard, or simply Nemo, is a kind and gifted adventure creator from Brazil. Nemo spreads joy and peace wherever they play. They consistently strive to make the world a better, more welcoming place. You can find them on Twitter at @awkwardbard.



Cult of the Summer Solstice

Written by Collette Quach

Levels: 17 - 20 Content Warnings: Mental Health, Fire

SYNOPSIS

In a town nestled in the mountains, there are rumors of a cult that scorned the sun. Hidden in the ruins nearby, the cultists plot to steal the power of the sun on the day of the summer solstice. A mysterious figure (Fangwei) approaches the party asking for help to stop their ritual. This adventure is intended for 4 17th level characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The mysterious figure approaches the characters near the town. They can simply be passing through the area or may have heard rumors of an estate lost to time.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure draws from Chinese culture and many words can be looked up to provide a better visual when providing description.

A successful **DC 18 Intelligence (History or Religion) check** discerns that this cult was created centuries ago and lasted all these years. They're a secretive group that keeps their agenda close to them.

The main theme for this module is the Yin Yang philosophy. The basic understanding of the philosophy is that yin and yang, while opposites, are interconnected and cyclical in the natural order. For example, while day and night are opposites, day eventually becomes night and night becomes day.

The conclusion is meant to be ambiguous. In the finale, players are left with three possible courses of action:

- Destroy the cult: the party assists the mysterious figure in destroying the cult
- Assist the cult: the party can turn on the mysterious figure and assist in taking the power of the sun
- Unite the leaders: if the characters search the temple and find enough history to discern that Fangwei and Jiachen were one person, they can attempt to fuse the two together back to their original form

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Mysterious Figure (Fangwei): They/them. One half of the Suncaller. Righteous and driven, they dedicated their life to stopping the cult.

The One who Scorned the Sun (Jiachen): They/them. Leader of the Cult of the Summer Solstice. Fanatical, yet charismatic. They are the other half of the former Suncaller.

The Suncaller: They/them. A powerful shaman with a connection to the sun and spiritual leader to the village below. Due to a crisis of faith and identity, the shaman split themselves into two beings.

PROLOGUE: A MYSTERIOUS FIGURE

As you approach the mountainside, a beam of sunlight brighter than anything you have seen before lights the path you walked. A figure materializes from the rays of sun. They are cloaked head to toe and wearing a white porcelain mask. They stride towards you and say in a clear voice, "Finally. The adventurers I've been looking for."

Meeting the Figure

Fangwei only refers to themselves as a wandering hermit concerned about the cult's movement. They tell the party that this cult plans to steal the sun's power.

What Fangwei Knows:

- The cult is led by a powerful cleric who despises the sun
- The cult uses the abandoned estate on top of the mountain as their meeting grounds
- The ritual that is taking place needs to happen on the summer solstice as the sun is in the sky the longest

Roleplaying Fangwei

Fangwei is covered by a black cloak and white porcelain mask, thus they have no identifiable features, though they appear to be humanoid. The figure is a determined individual with only one goal in mind: to stop the cult. They do not wish to go into any details about who they are.

Development

When players agree to the figure's request, they are encouraged to investigate the nearby village.

CHAPTER 1: THE TOWN

Adventurers may skip this chapter if they feel inclined to look for the estate themselves. However, they need to pass through the town to reach the temple, so summarize the town layout briefly as they pass through.

Town Layout

The town has a single, narrow, main street that goes up the mountain. Based on the Taiwanese town of Jiufen, buildings are pressed side by side, separated by narrow alleyways that cut through the town. The town has three levels; after the third level, a trail leads out of town to the cult's estate. The town itself can function as any regular town to buy supplies.

Conflicting Views

Many of the townsfolk are members of the cult. These **commoners** (MM) hold a different opinion of the cult than Fangwei.

A successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check** shows that the townsfolk, while truthful, are withholding specific information. If the characters explore homes without arousing suspicion, they can discover the townsfolk's hidden affiliation.

What the town knows

- The cult keeps to themselves in their estate outside town. While a half truth, the cult's reach doesn't extend past the town
- Townsfolk use the term "religion" over "cult"
- The estate has been abandoned for generations. The townsfolk seldom go up the mountain, as there is nothing for them there
- If characters enter a building they see a door guardian shrine at the entrance. This information will be useful in Chapter 2

Development

Once the party has enough information, they can venture into the temple.

CHAPTER 2: THE ESTATE

After another hike up the mountain, the characters arrive in front of the estate. While abandoned and showing signs of aging, the building is surprisingly intact. Cultists take extra care in concealing their movements within the area. A **DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals the door and the path leading up to it has been disturbed. Otherwise they are not moving about the estate aside from cultist rooms.

Estate Layout

The estate is based on a traditional Chinese home, siheyuan, with an entrance, courtyard and 4 doorways in the cardinal directions.

Door Guardians

The first room the characters enter contains an open cabinet holding a shrine. Two humanoid figures are painted on the cabinet doors. They wear identical armor with one wielding a dao and the other a guandao.

A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check** reveals the room is dedicated to two door guardians. They protect the home from harm and evil. If players ever entered a home in the town, they recall this information.

Success on the above check also reveals that each character who enters through these doors should make a prayer to the guardians by taking an incense stick, lighting it, and placing it at the shrine.

If any characters do not pray, two door guardians appear. One of them is dressed in green and red, wielding a dao. The other wears black and white, wielding a guandao (halberd).

Use the **deva** and **erinyes** stats, respectively, to represent the guardians with the following alterations:

- The deva and erinyes have a flying speed of 0
- The deva does not have its Shapechange ability
- The deva attacks with a longsword instead of a mace

- The erinyes' Hellish Weapons ability does necrotic damage rather than poison damage

The door guardians attack those who do not place an incense when entering. Their only goal is to kill intruders, disregarding their own health.

Courtyard

The courtyard is the main atrium that connects to the other rooms of the estate. At the center stands a large urn filled with murky water.

There is a sub-room on the other side which can be entered through the doors. There is a collapsable wall that combines the two rooms. This room appears to be a meeting room, with chairs against the walls and a small side table between chairs. At the end of the room is two more chairs, much more ornate than the other ones. Above these chairs is an old painting on the wall of an enlarged red sun beaming down to the ground.

This sub-room leads to the gardens.

Players can use this area to take a short rest. Keep track of time passing. Once the summer solstice has passed at 9 at night, the cult succeeds in their task.

Library

Various bookcases have toppled over and dust fills the room. Many of the books are moth-eaten and weathered, rendering them illegible. Characters who take the time to search can salvage some legible ones.

Book 1: The One who Bent the Sun

This book details various accounts of the Suncaller protecting the town from the sun. For example, the Suncaller one time absorbed the sun's rays that would have otherwise burned the town. None of these accounts are dated, and they seem to have taken place centuries ago.

Book 2: Accounts of the Summer Solstice

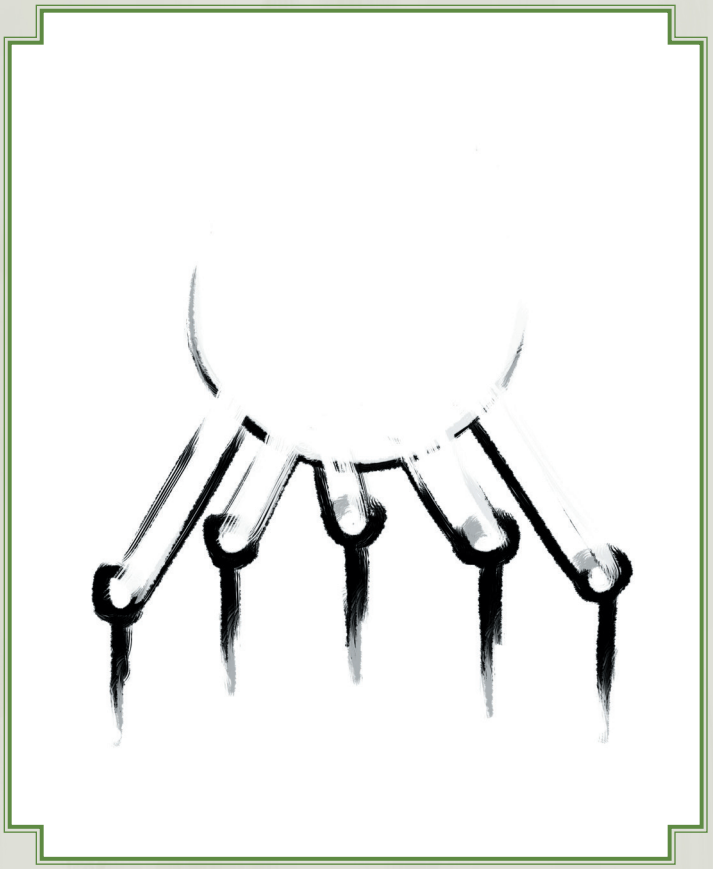
This book details various rituals and traditions observed during the summer solstice. There is a crude sketch of a mountaintop with stone pillars erected in a circle.

One of the rituals described is intended to absorb the power of the sun. Alongside the ritual is a sketch of the pillars (see handout 1).

Journal

Many of the pages have been torn out or are illegible. Among what remains, the party finds personal entries by someone named the Suncaller, a shaman who previously inhabited the estate. They had a connection to the sun that protected the town below from its harsh rays.

Handout 1



Sunlit Bedroom

Various trinkets hang on the walls of this bedroom, all covered with dust and rust. A large window illuminates the room with a warm glow from the sun.

With a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, the characters find a small letter hidden in a table.

Fangwei

Why do you not understand my hatred of the sun? The sun scorched the land for years, and we had to be worshipped to protect it. Our predecessor gave their life to the sun to remove us from our duty. So that we may live free. All of this because of the sun in the sky. It has given us nothing but suffering.

The people who come to me have seen firsthand the power of the sun. I want to give them solace to their burnt homes and scorched fields.

If you think we are still bound by duty to the sun then this is what I must do.

Eclipsed Bedroom

This bedroom contains the same items as the sunlit bedroom. The difference is that the window is boarded up. The walls are painted black with specks of gold.

With a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, players find a letter placed under the mattress.

Jiachen,

It hurts my heart to be writing this to you. I've seen you descend into madness, and I cannot bear to watch it any further. We used to be so close. Remember when we first set foot here? It was meant to be a new start in peace, but your hatred got the better of you.

You gather your followers to a useless cause. We need the sun as much as you scorn it.

Please listen to me.

Cultists' Rooms

Various rooms throughout the estate have been repurposed for the cult's use. While the walls are untouched all the furnishings have been replaced by newer ones. Windows have been boarded up and a blackout curtain is placed in front of the door.

Within one of these rooms are five **cult fanatics** (MM). They attack when they notice the party.

Difficulty Adjustment
Cultists aren't meant to provide a difficult fight but simply to exhaust players before the final encounter. DMs may add or subtract rooms and place more or fewer cultists.

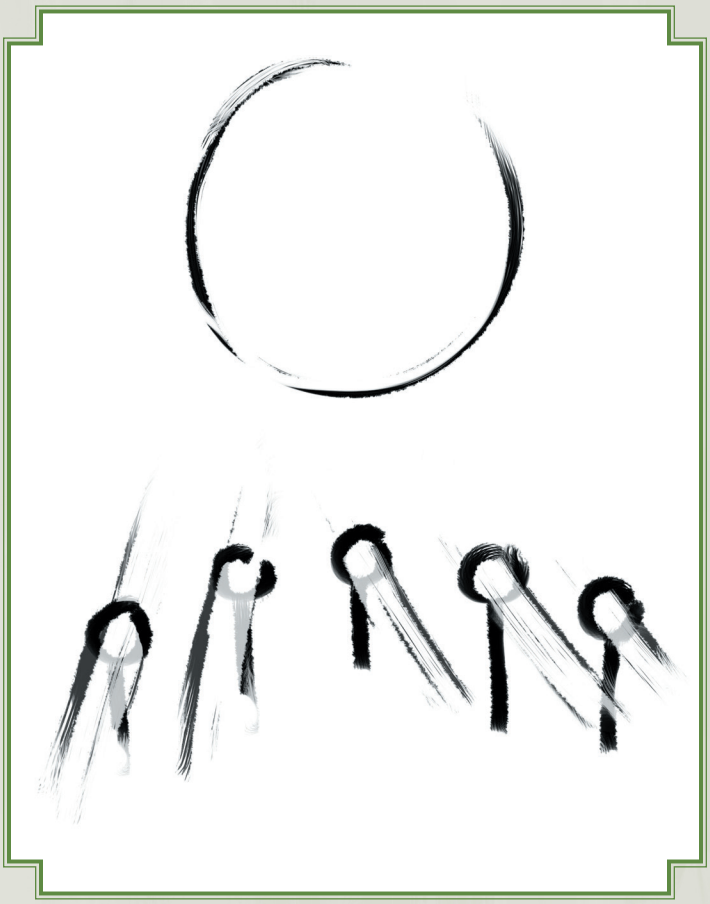
Gardens

The area behind the home used to be a beautiful garden; the plants that used to thrive here have long since died, replaced with weeds and brush.

There is a ripped journal page under some brush that the characters can find with a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check or a Passive Perception of 18**. The page is barely legible and shows considerable amounts of aging.



Handout 2



I keep the sun from destroying the town, but it always comes back. It is still my duty to protect the town. The more I struggle with this, the less effective I am in fulfilling my duty.

When the sun is at its most powerful I will head up to the summit. I will use the power of the sun to divide myself in two.

Whoever these two become, I hope they find peace and solace with one another.

Revelation

If players read the two letters in the bedroom, the books in the library, and the letter in the gardens make a **DC 13 Intelligence check**. A successful one allows characters to piece together:

- Fangwei and Jiachen were not just siblings, but are the same person named the Suncaller, a powerful being with a connection to the sun
- Thousands of years ago the sun was much more powerful than it was today. It scorched the village below. The villagers paid tribute to this being who protected them from the sun
- The Suncaller grew conflicted about their task and split themselves in two by using the power of the sun during the summer solstice
- After the split Fangwei and Jiachen lived together in peace in the estate for some time
- Jiachen succumbed to their own scorn and became fanatical about bringing an end to the sun

This revelation allows the characters to perform a ritual that brings the two together.

Development

Once the characters are done exploring and finding information they can head towards the summit through the gardens. The trail leads up the mountain all the way to the summit.

CHAPTER 3: THE RITUAL

The trails ends at an open plateau. If the players read Book 2 in the library they recognize the plateau as the ritual site. At the center is the leader of the cult, Jiachen. They look almost identical to the mysterious figure in terms of build and height. Appearance-wise, they wear a white cloak and black mask.

Pillars are symmetrically placed around in a circle that is 60 feet in diameter. Ten **cult fanatics** stand inside the circle. All of them are wearing similar cloaks to Jiachen.

The sun is high in the sky standing center right above the ritual circle. It is an abnormally large almost blinding in the sky. Tendrils of light radiated out of the sun like flames.

Fate of the Cult

The characters are faced with a choice: keep their word and side with Fangwei, or side with the cult. The option to bring the two figures together is only available if players collected all the information needed.

If players side with Fangwei, the goal is to stop the ritual and to defeat Jiachen. Details of the ritual are found in handout 1.

Otherwise Fangwei can inform the party. Disrupting the ritual requires the pillars to be out of alignment for three minutes while the sun is large in the sky.

If the characters side with the cult, their goal is to complete the ritual. Jiachen spends three minutes channeling the sun and needs help defending themselves. Defeating Fangwei is optional but will give experience.

If players decide to bring the two beings together, players must reposition the pillars based on Handout 2. Fangwei and Jiachen also need to have their health at half for the ritual to be complete. Fangwei assumes you are on their side and initially sides with you but defends themselves once learning of the party's intentions while still fighting Jiachen.

Difficulty Adjustment

To provide more of a challenge, DMs may:

- Extend the duration of the ritual
- Siding with Fangwei: add more cultists as enemies
- Siding with the cult: require players to defeat Fangwei
- Bringing the beings together: Fangwei and Jiachen's health may be lowered

Playing Jiachen

Like, Fangwei, they do not refer to themselves by name. Jiachen speaks in a calm and inviting tone. They have strong and unchanging scorn of the sun. They attempt to pull adventurers to their cause promising power and knowledge.

Combat

Stat blocks for Jiachen and Fangwei are both at the end of this adventure.

Jiachen attacks from afar using their magic but stays within the pillars. They rely on their cultists to defend them.

Fangwei's main target is Jiachen. If nothing is physically stopping them they attack their other half.

CONCLUSION

If players choose to destroy the cult:

With a final blow Jiachen falls to the ground. The mask on their face falls to the ground, revealing a simple humanoid. There is no hate in their eyes as they stare up at the sun. Only longing as they slowly disappear into the wind, leaving no trace behind.

If players choose to assist the cult:

Rays of light flow into Jiachen's mask and into a locket around their neck. As you look up into the sky you see the sun slowly eclipse, and the sky turn blood red. A sense of dread fills you.

If players choose to fuse the two together:

As the last pillar is hit by the sun's rays, a column of sunlight descends from the sky, enveloping the two figures. In a bright flash of light they disappear, leaving only a single fused mask. There is an unnatural silence as the cultists stare in disbelief at the sky. One after another they lay down their arms and flee down the mountainside.

There is peace now… or what you hope is peace. What could've happened to Fangwei and Jiachen? Did they want this?

Adventure Tie-Ins

If the party defeated the cult, Fangwei takes up residence within the estate. They keep a silent vigil, rarely leaving the area. If the characters discuss their feelings, they note that they don't feel any sense of peace–but rather emptiness–now that Jiachen is gone. Word of the ritual at the summit spreads throughout the cult. The village becomes hostile towards the party.

If the party sided with Jiachen, the power of the sun is absorbed. At the DM's discretion, the sun might be either temporarily or permanently blotted out. If the sun is permanently hidden, the party can find another solution to bring it back.

If the party merges Fangwei and Jiachen together to become the Suncaller they disappear for some time. The party may choose to look for the figure who has relocated to the Temple of Radiance, located far away dating the same time as the Suncaller. They are still coming to terms with their reformed identity, having retained all of their memories as separate identities. Word spreads of the ritual at the summit. Cultists who survived spread the word of what happened. Over time the cult dissolves, returning to their lives in the village.

Rewards

Players who complete the adventure receive one of the following rewards depending on whom they sided with.

Conclusion A

Fangwei's Sword

Wondrous Item, Legendary. Requires attunement

This sword brought solar justice to the Cult of the Summer Solstice. This sword acts as a *Sunblade* (DMG, Treasure) with some altered effects:

- Attacks with this weapon gain +3 to attack and damage rolls
- Twice a day the wielder can use Jiachen's Solar Smite ability on a hit with this weapon

Conclusion B

Amulet of the Stolen Sun

Wondrous Item, Legendary. Requires attunement

This amulet contains the stolen power of the sun, and is given to the party by Jiachen.

Twice per day, open the amulet to cast the spell Sunburst. The spell save DC is 20. When the amulet is used, there are two cosmetic options:

- If the sun is currently blotted out, when the amulet is used a column of light shines down in the radius stated in the spell
- If it isn't, the sun is blotted out for the duration of the spell with the column of light shining down on the point specified in the spell

Once closed, the amulet cannot be used for one whole day.

Conclusion C

Remnant of the Suncaller

Wondrous Item, Legendary. Requires attunement

The mask is a fusion of the two figures' own masks: half Fangwei's and half Jiachen's. The mask has a total of five charges. The wearer of the mask gains the following benefits:

- +1 AC
- Resistance to fire damage
- Advantage on saving throws against Charm effects
- Expend 1 charge to cast dominate person or flame strike. The DC for saving throws against these spells is 18
- Expend two charges to summon one of the two door guardians. They follow the mask wearer's command and act on the wearer's initiative

The mask regains 2 charges daily at dawn. If players expend its last charge, roll a d20. If the result is 5 or less, they take 4d6 psychic damage.

Author's Notes

While the theme of Yin-Yang and cyclicality is the core concept, my initial inspiration for this adventure was the Camp Fire in California. The smoke from the fires came down to where I was living and the smog clouded the sky. The sun became a silhouette, occasionally turning red. This adventure discussed under those ideas under the guise of a cult who wanted to steal the sun. I hope you enjoyed playing this as much as I enjoyed writing it. I also hope this brings up questions of right and wrong, morality, and duty.

Author Bio

Collette is a California based writer and game designer. She has a strong passion for diversity and inclusivity either by creating or inspiring others to get into creating themselves. Follow her on Twitter @collettequach.

Jiachen

Large humanoid, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 24
Hit Points 300
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	12 (+1)	10 (0)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Cha +12, Wis +11
Skills Persuasion +12, Insight +11
Condition Immunities Charmed
Damage Resistances Fire, Radiant
Condition Resistances Frightened
Senses Darkvision 30ft, passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Elvish, Celestial
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Spellcasting. Jiachen is a 17th level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom(spell save DC is 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). They require no components to cast their spells. Jiachen has the following cleric (light domain) spells prepared:

Cantrips(at will): *Sacred Flame, Guidance, Toll The Dead, Thaumaturgy, Resistance*
1st Level(4 Slots): *Guiding Bolt, Bless, Create or Destroy Water, Command*
2nd level(3 Slots): *Zone of Truth, Scorching Ray, Hold Person, Aid*
3rd level(3 Slots): *Daylight, Fireball, Dispel Magic*
4th level(3 slots): *Wall of Fire, Guardian of Faith*
5th level(2 Slots): *Flame Strike, Dawn, Geas*
6th level(1 Slot): *True Seeing*
7th level (1 Slot): *Firestorm*
8th level(1 Slot): *Antimagic Field*
9th level(1 Slot): *Mass Heal*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4+1)

Faith (3/day). Jiachen inspires their allies within 30ft. They gain +3 AC, and melee attacks do an additional 2d6 fire damage. This effect ends at the start of Jiachen's next turn.

Indoctrinate (1/day). Jiachen attempts to indoctrinate a creature they can see by uttering a couple of words only that target can hear. That creature must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 hour. Those with devotion to a deity, doctrine, or any strong code of ethics have advantage on the saving throw.

Legendary Actions

Jiachen has 3 legendary actions choosing from the options below. Only 1 legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end at the end of another creature's turn. Jiachen regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Command Cultist. Jiachen commands their cultists to protect them. Cultists can move up to their full movement towards Jiachen.

Cast a Spell(2 actions). They cast a spell from their list of prepared spells, using a spell slot as normal.

Sun Scorn (3 actions). Jiachen lets out a psychic wave filled with scorn. Those within 30ft. around them must succeed a Wisdom saving throw (DC 18) or take 2d10 psychic damage and lose their reaction until the start of their next turn.



Fangwei

Large humanoid, Lawful Good

Armor Class 26
Hit Points 300
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+3)	10 (0)	18 (+3)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Cha +11, Wis +11
Skills Persuasion +12, Insight +11
Condition Immunities Charmed
Damage Resistances Fire, Radiant
Condition Resistances Frightened
Senses Darkvision 30ft, passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Elvish, Celestial
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Spellcasting. Fangwei is a 17th level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC is 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). They require no components to cast their spell. Jiachen has the following cleric (light domain) spells prepared.

1st Level(4 Slots): *Compelled Duel, Wrathful Smite, Divine Favor, Searing Smite*
2nd level(3 Slots): *Branding Smite, Daylight, Dispel Magic*
3rd level(3 Slots): *Daylight, Crusader's Mantle*
4th level(3 slots): *Staggering Smite, Guardian of Faith*
5th level(1 Slots): *Circle of Power*

Actions

Multiattack. Fangwei makes 2 melee attacks with their longsword.

Longword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8+3) slashing damage

Solar Smite (3/day). Fangwei smites the enemy with the power of the sun while making a melee attack with their longsword. On a successful hit Fangwei deals an extra 5d8 radiant damage.

Wrath of the Sun (1/day). As an action, Fangwei channels a solar aura 10ft around them. For 10 minutes, those chosen as Fangwei's enemy take 2d8 radiant damage if they begin their turn in the aura.

Legendary Actions

Fangwei has 3 legendary actions choosing from the options below. Only 1 legendary action can be used at anytime and only at the end at the end of another creature's turn. Fangwei regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Solar Vengeance. Fangwei dashes to a target they can see. If target is an enemy they can make a weapon attack.

Force of Will(cost 2 actions). Fangwei's AC is increased by 3, and they have advantage on saving throws until the start of their next turn.

Radiance (cost 3 actions). Fangwei radiates a bright light around them. Those within 15ft. around them must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 3d8 radiant damage and be blinded for 1 round.





The Smiling Isles

Written by Jessica Washburn

Levels: 17 - 20

Content Warnings: deep water/thalassophobia/drowning. These are elements that players and Dungeon Masters may find uncomfortable and wish to exclude from their game. The Smiling Isles can be tailored to omit these themes. Be considerate of those who sit at your table.

SYNOPSIS

The town of Giant's Bank has put out a call for adventurers to participate in their summer solstice tournament: to sail across the fickle summer sea, capture an ice-white unicorn, obtain kelpie scales, and bring back a token of a water beast's might. The winning party will receive tokens of gratitude from the town's skilled (and rumored to be divine-touched) silversmith.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Smiling Isles is a 3-4 hour adventure intended for characters of 17th-20th level. The town of Giant's Bank is hosting their annual summer solstice festival and are looking forward to ushering the next half of the year. The only things that are missing? An ice-white unicorn from the neighboring island of Lisay, kelpie scales, and a token of a water beast's might.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure is a high-level "fetch-quest" to entertain parties of all types in celebration of the summer solstice. It includes a seafaring encounter and two search encounters on the isle of Lisay.

The adventurers will be given the task by **Áine**, a summer eladrin who is the town's silversmith. **Áine** is a trickster goddess in disguise; she is sending the party to 'capture' her sister, **Gréine**, who has spent her summer on the Isle of Lisay frolicking as an ice-white unicorn. The 'capture' is a ritual the two sisters maintain as an exchange of duties for ruling the sky. They involve mortals in the process as a way to add to their fun. Giant's Bank is a town of retired adventurers (some old, some on the younger side); they are all good friends with the sisters and in on the joke.

CHAPTER 1 – THE TASK

> Upon entering the town of Giant's Bank, you are greeted with a breath-taking view of the ocean and peculiar basalt formations that form a natural jetty. The town is alive with preparations and excitement for the summer solstice. Passersby talk of the competition to fetch the ice-white unicorn and ritual ingredients from across the sea as they leave the Whistlepig Tavern on the main thoroughfare of the town, and heading towards large ships docked in the harbor.

The party can learn more about the competition if they enter the Whistlepig Tavern, a large, comfortable inn that is owned by the middle-aged gnome **Barnabas Costlefoot** (he/him, neutral good) It's alive with talk of the competition from many adventuring groups from out of town. Barbabas will greet the party and elaborate on the competition:

> "Good day, adventurers! Have you come to try your hand at capturing a beast of lore? Well… you'll have a giant sea beast to contend with - it attacks all shipping, unfortunately… Oh. That's right. You'll need to get one of its massive teeth..."

The competition consists of:

- Sailing the sea to the Isle of Lisay and capturing an ice-white unicorn from Firgmar's Field
- Bringing back kelpie scales from Loch Aer
- Obtaining a token of a water beast's might (tooth of a plesiosaurus)
- Returning to Giant's Bank before sunset

Development

Barnabas directs the adventurers to pick up an item - the Chain of Giant's Bank - being handed out by the town's silversmith, **Áine**. **Áine** can be located in a smithy named The Brass Tacks.

Áine (she/her, chaotic good), an eladrin with fiery-red hair and a smile as warm as the high-noon sun, will welcome the adventurers. The Brass Tacks is full of other adventurers and brave souls eager to catch a white unicorn and waiting to receive their own *Chain of Giant's Bank* (see Appendix A).

Áine speaks in a lilting tone and encourages the adventurers to carry out the tasks swiftly, as the summer solstice waits for no one. She will collect the ritual ingredients from the group that returns with the unicorn in tow and grant them the ability to permanently keep the Chain of Giant's Bank.

CHAPTER 2 – THE JOURNEY

The Water Beast

Roll 1d4 when the adventurers set out from Giant's Bank. On a roll of 1 or 3, they must fight the water beast, **Plessie** (see Appendix) on the way to the Isle of Lisay; on a 2 or 4, they fight the beast on the return trip. An encounter on the way to Lisay risks damaging or destroying their ship; an encounter on the return voyage might mean losing the unicorn. Plessie will try to wreck the ship by ramming into it; it will also do its best to eat the adventurers. If it is a return trip, Plessie will attempt to knock the unicorn off the boat but will not harm her. Plessie ferries her across to Giant's Bank; DM can impose a skill challenge on the party to recapture the unicorn.

Plessie will retreat from the fight when it reaches half-health;

If the ship is damaged on the voyage to the Isle of Lisay, the adventurers can commandeer another in the town of Portnelle on Lisay to return to Giant's Bank.

> As you sail across the sea, there comes a great rumbling from beneath the ship. Breaching the water is a long, powerful neck that ends in predatory eyes and sharp teeth.

Loch Aer

Once arriving on the Isle of Lisay, the adventures take a winding path that leads them first to Loch Aer. The path is strangely covered in a mucusy substance that smells like stagnant water.

Loch Aer is a lake shaded by old, massive oak trees. When the party rounds the last bend, they see ten pale unicorns by the edge of the lake, drinking water or lying down, about eighty feet away from them. A successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check** allows an adventurer to capture a glimpse of dappled sunlight through the seams of the seaweed, and determine that these creatures are not what they appear. They are **Loch Aer kelpies** (see Appendix) using their Seaweed Shape ability.

The path continues around Loch Aer, to Firgmar's Field.

Firgmar's Field

In the middle of a wide wildflower field, an ice-white **unicorn** (she/her, neutral good, MM) with blue streaks in her mane is asleep inside a faerie circle. The mushrooms that make up the circle are **mushroom fey** (see Appendix).

When the unicorn becomes aware of the adventurers, she flees. The mushroom fey attack the party to cover the unicorn's escape. Should the unicorn escape, the party can track the creature through the woods with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Survival) check and attempt to capture her again. On a failed check, they are lost in the woods for 1d4 hours and may encounter more mushroom fey at the DM's discretion. Also at DM's discretion - the ability to encounter other competitors!

CHAPTER 3 – THE RETURN

If the party did not encounter the water monster on the way over to the Isle of Lisay, it attacks on their return journey.

CONCLUSION

When adventurers return to Giant's Bank, Áine greets them on the dock and leads them to the town square to perform the ritual. In the event that a party tries to get one over on the silversmith (example: using True Polymorph on a party member), she will perform the ritual, but that party member is now stuck in this unicorn form permanently and they do not get to keep the Chain of Giant's Bank.

> Áine breaks apart the tooth of the water beast and places the kelpie scales inside. She binds both sides of the tooth together, chanting words in Sylvan:
>
> A tooth, a trick;
> Equine disguise.
> A kelpie's glic;
> Divine, arise!

Before the townsfolk will appear **Gréine**, a winter eladrin who appears younger than **Áine**. **Áine** erupts into laughter upon seeing **Gréine**. When she's done, she introduces the party to her sister, the goddess of the pale winter sun. They both thank the party for being 'good sports' in their ritual, and they tell the group to keep the *Chain of Giant's Bank*.

The townsfolk are not surprised at the admission of gods in their presence - they're in on the joke from the beginning; a big trick for those who are not from the area.

Chain of Giant's Bank

Wondrous item, requires attunement

This 30ft. silver-wrought chain can ensnare large size or smaller celestial creatures. All targets must succeed on a DC 25 Dexterity saving throw or become restrained. This item can also be used to tow or drag heavy items - up to 250 pounds.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Jessica Marcrum and Jennifer Peig for organizing this project and for providing me with the opportunity to participate; Cat Evans and Liz Gist for their unending patience in my frantic last minute changes; to my spouse, Paul, for making sure I was well-hugged, well-fed, and well-caffeinated during this project; my artist for doing a tremendous and wonderful job; this module is lovingly dedicated to my sister.

Author's Notes

This module can also be adapted to a winter solstice module. In such an adaptation, the winter solstice takes place on the isle of Lisay, Gréine places the call for adventurers to capture a sun-touched unicorn (Áine), kelpie scales, and a token of a water beast's might; Gréine is a goldsmith for this iteration and the chain used is the Chain of Lisay.

Author Bio

Jessica is a writer and copy-editor who looks forward to releasing more projects and supplements for D&D 5e as well as some system-agnostic materials. She is the ENnie-nominated author of Uncaged Anthology Volume 1 module: The Tale of Two Sphinxes, and author of The Halted March. You can find her on Twitter as @HealthPakStream. She may or may not be a halfling bard.

Plessie

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 472 (27d20+189)
Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	11 (0)	25 (+7)	2 (-4)	17 (+3)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +17, Dex + 7, Con +14
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities frightened, paralyzed
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages -
Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

Hold Breath. The plesiosaurus can hold its breath for one hour.

Siege Monster. The plesiosaurus deals double damage to objects and structures.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the plesiosaurus fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The plesiosaurus makes three bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 33 (5d8+10) piercing damage.

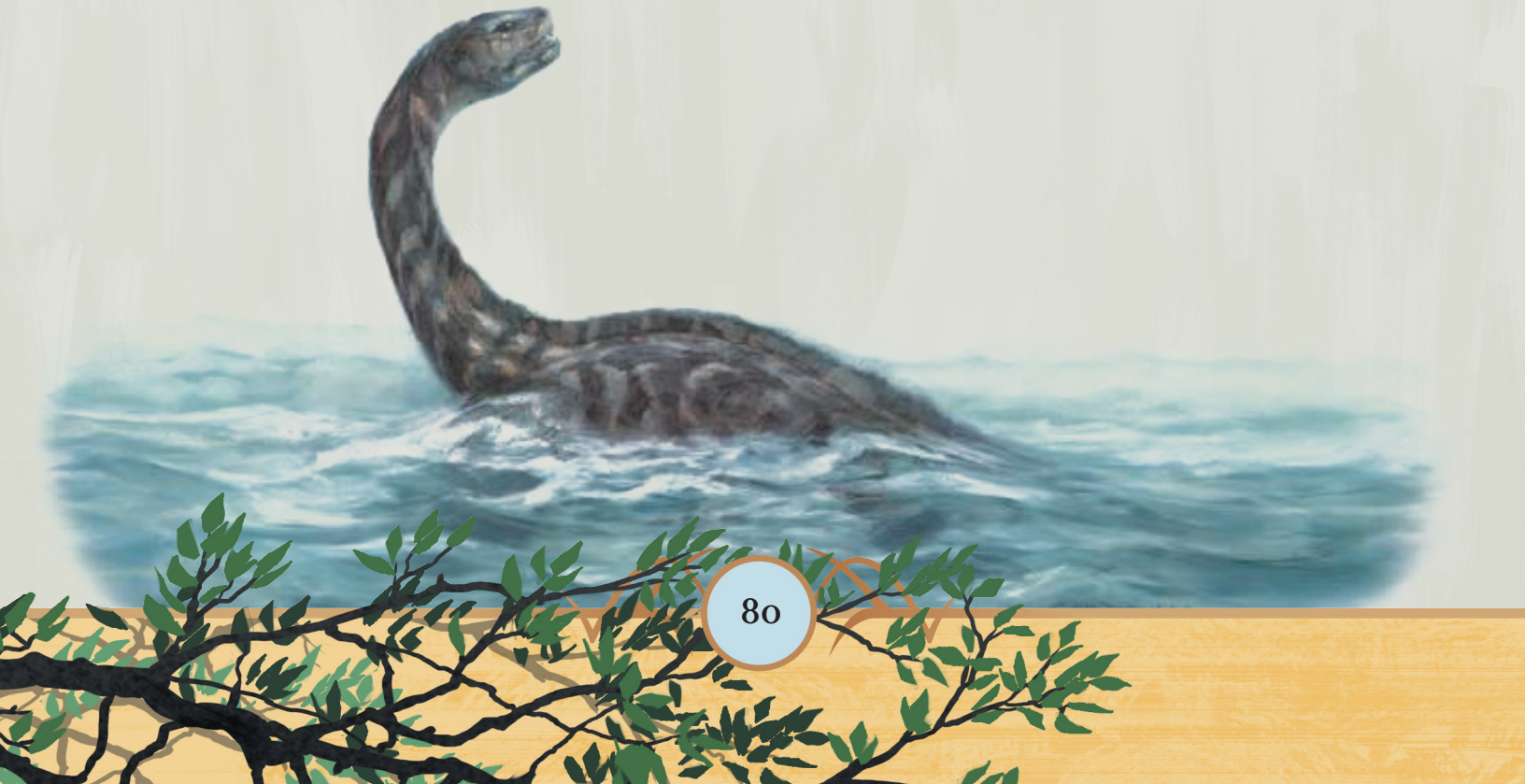
Legendary Actions

Plessie 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. The plesiosaurus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Breach (1 action). The plesiosaurus breaches the ocean to attack sea-faring vessels, causing a sizable wave to crash onto their decks. A creature must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

Rock the boat (2 actions). Plessie swims quickly, causing a strong current in its wake. Each creature on the deck of a boat must succeed a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone and drop any item in their hands. On a successful save, the creature is either knocked prone or drops held items - creature's choice.

Treacherous bite (1 action). The plesiosaurus takes a bite out of a crew member or ship. The target must succeed a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw



Kelpies of Loch Aer

Medium plants, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 10ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	10 (0)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The kelpies can breathe air and water.

Seaweed shape. The kelpies can use their actions to reshape its body into the form of a humanoid or beast that is Small, Medium, or Large. Its statistics are otherwise unchanged. The disguise is convincing, unless the kelpie is in bright light or the viewer is within 30 feet of it, in which case the seams between the seaweed strands are visible. The kelpies return to their true form if it takes a bonus action to do so or it dies.

False Appearance. While the kelpies remain motionless in their true form, they are indistinguishable from normal seaweed.

Actions

Multiattack. The kelpies can make two slam attacks

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: (4d8+4) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled, (escape DC 15).

Drowning hypnosis. *The kelpies choose one humanoid it can see within 150 feet. If the target can see the kelpies, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed while the kelpie maintains concentration, up to 10 minutes (as if concentrating on a spell).*

The charmed target is incapacitated, and instead of holding its breath underwater, it tries to breathe normally and immediately runs out of breath, unless it can breathe water.

If the charmed target is more than 5 feet away, the target must move on its turn toward the kelpies by the most direct route, trying to get within 5 feet. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks.

Before moving into damaging terrain, such as a lava or a pit, and whenever it takes damage from a source other than the kelpie or drowning, the target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If the saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.

A target that successfully saves is immune to this kelpie's hypnosis for the next 24 hours.



False Chanterelle of Firgmar's Field

Medium mushroom fey, neutral

These golden-capped fey creatures are known for hanging out in fields, pretending to be faerie circles. Their bodies are a more intense shade of orange than the caps that form their heads and they stand about five feet tall. While generally peaceful, they have been known to incite violence to protect something in their faerie ring from harm.

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	10 (0)	10 (0)	8 (-2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

False Appearance. While the false chanterelle remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a mushroom.

Actions

Multiattack. *The false chanterelle can make two slam attacks*

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) poison damage, and 12 (2d8+2) bludgeoning damage.

Rot Touch. *The false chanterelle can use an Action to touch one target in melee range. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take (4d8+4) points of necrotic damage. On a success, a target takes half-damage.*

The target is Poisoned for as long as the false chanterelle touches it. If the target moves more than five feet away, it is no longer poisoned; however, the false chanterelle can use its Reaction to do 2d8+2 additional necrotic damage (DC 18 Constitution saving throw) to the creature as it moves out of reach.

Fly Agaric of Firgmar's Field

Medium mushroom fey, neutral

These red-capped fey creatures are known for hanging out in fields, pretending to be faerie circles. Their bodies are pale white or cream color and they stand about five feet tall. While generally peaceful, they have been known to incite violence to protect something in their faerie ring from harm.

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (0)	10 (0)	8 (-2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

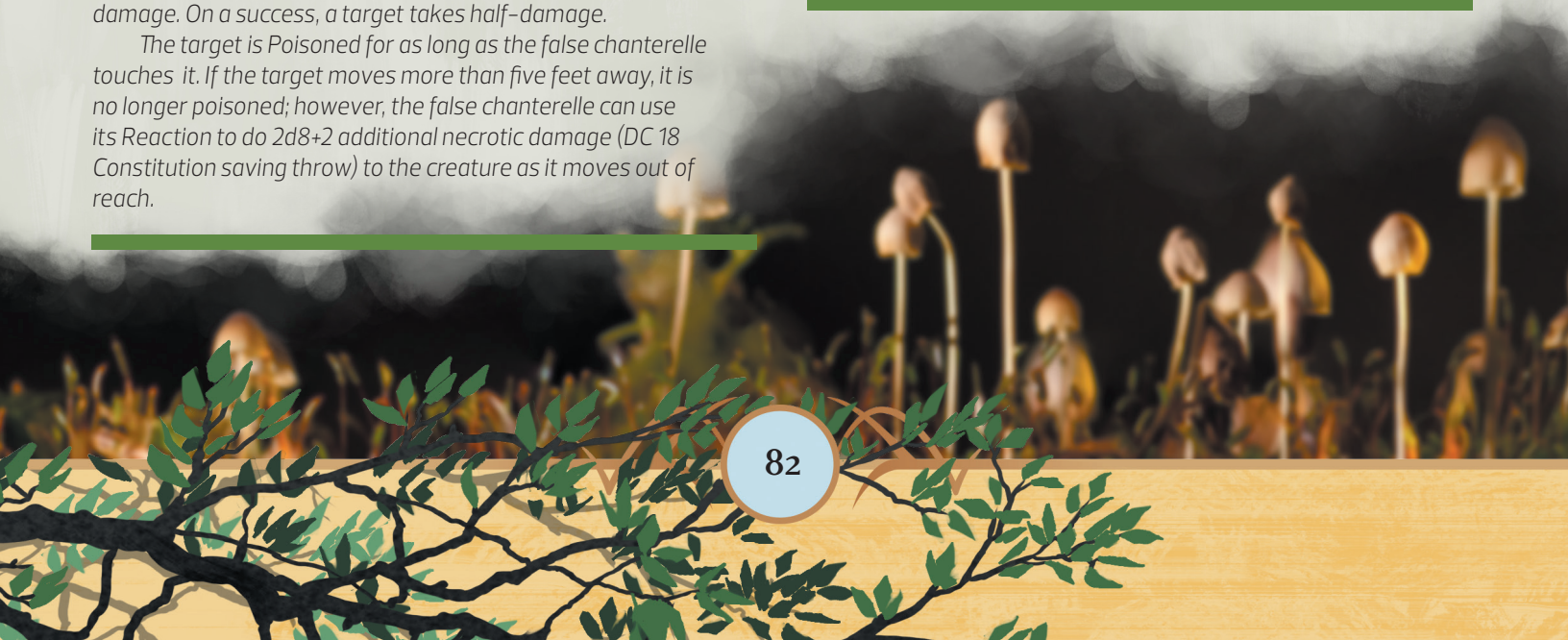
False Appearance. While the fly agaric remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a mushroom.

Actions

Multiattack. *The fly agaric can make two slam attacks*

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) poison damage and 12 (2d8+2) bludgeoning damage

Spore Seam. *The fly agaric can target up to three creatures in range and unleash a spore seam. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 4d8+4 poison damage. On a failed save, the targets are poisoned for 1d4 rounds and takes half damage.*



Shaggy Ink Cap of Firgmar's Field

Medium mushroom fey, neutral

These black, shaggy-capped fey creatures are known for hanging out in fields in faerie circles. Their bodies are pale white or cream and they stand about five feet tall. While generally peaceful, they have been known to incite violence to protect something in their faerie ring from harm.

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (0)	10 (0)	8 (-2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

False Appearance. While the shaggy ink cap remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a mushroom.

Actions

Multiattack. *The shaggy ink cap can make two slam attacks*

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) necrotic damage and and 12 (2d8+2) bludgeoning damage

Disintegration. *When a shaggy black ink cap is destroyed, it releases its dense, black spores into the air. The spores cover a 30 foot cube centered on the spot where the shaggy ink cap died. Any creatures in this cube are blinded until they move out of the affected area. This feature does not affect other mushroom fey.*






Winter



The Longest Night of the Year

Written by Samantha Lavendar & Miranda Mels

Level: 0 Content Warnings: Child Death, Parental Neglect

SYNOPSIS

The night of Midwinter marks the darkest point in the entire year, before the warmth and light of the sun begin to return. But as a small mountain village prepares to wait out the longest night of the year, every fire in the valley is stolen by a ghost who was left out in the cold long ago. A group of brave villagers—would-be adventurers, perhaps—pursue her into the forest and help lay the lonely spirit to rest. This adventure is intended for level 0 characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters begin the adventure without class levels, as ordinary people attending a Midwinter festival in a small mountain village. They could have grown up in the village and have been fast friends since childhood, or they could be simply passing through and were welcomed to enjoy the festivities.

0-level Characters

Characters without class levels function very similarly to 1st-level characters, but they lack any proficiencies, features, or equipment granted by a character class. They determine ability scores just as 1st-level characters do, have a proficiency bonus of +2, and have any proficiencies, traits, and equipment granted by their race and background.

Characters without class levels start with 6 + their Constitution modifier hit points, and can regain any lost hit points by finishing a long rest.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The village of Afonwen is nestled deep in the mountains and although winters are cold and harsh, the villagers are used to pulling together to make sure everyone makes it safely through the dark and snowy season.

They haven't always succeeded, however. Many decades ago, a widower who lived near the outskirts of town died hunting in the thick forest surrounding the village. On a dark Midwinter's Eve, he had ventured into the woods, determined to take down a boar on his own. He left his only daughter, Isa, to watch over their camp and told her not to leave it before he returned.

The boar killed him in the deep woods where he would never be found, but Isa did as she was told and waited for him. Even as the night grew cold and her fire died, her shivering gave way to stillness, she remained where she was.

Isa's ghost has watched Midwinter in Afonwen for decades now. She only manifests on the longest night of the year, so to her it is always Midwinter and she is still waiting for her father to return. But she is so very cold; this year, she steals into the village and takes all of their fire in an attempt to keep the cold that she feels at bay.

CHAPTER 1: MIDWINTER'S EVE

The Village Feast

To begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following:

> It is Midwinter in the mountains, and night has fallen swift and cold over the snow-covered village of Afonwen. An explosion of stars light up the deep, moonless sky as villagers shuffle quickly from home to home, carrying steaming baskets and trays through the freezing night air and into the tavern where the feast is being held.

Inside, the normally spacious common room is packed with people and tables heavily laden with food. The rafters ring with talk, laughter, and song. Behind the bar, the innkeepers have lit the large candle that will burn through the night to welcome the lengthening sunlight of a new year. Celebrations have even spilled into the neighboring houses, where smaller groups of villagers have lit their own Midwinter candles. The whole village, as well as most of the neighboring farms, have come together to wait out the last and longest night of the year.

Let the players describe what their characters are wearing to the festival, and invite them to explore and join in the celebrations. The following foods are available for all to try:

- Steamed pork dumplings stuffed with green onions and mushrooms
- Buttered and roasted parsnips, carrots, and peas dressed with rose hips, gravy, and sage
- Mutton-cider stew with potatoes, carrots, and winter radishes, along with small loaves of dark, crusty bread
- Fresh river pike, grilled with leeks in an elderberry glaze and served over creamy garlic potatoes
- Juniper berry mutton chops with butter-fried apples and cabbage sprouts
- Apple-rowanberry sauce with fresh yogurt and roasted chestnuts
- Apple and persimmon pies topped with cold cream, along with crumbly ginger cakes
- Steaming mulled cider, spicy winter ale, and plenty of hot, green tea

Once everyone has eaten their fill, platters and plates are replaced with conversation, games, singing, and dancing. Characters can spend time enjoying the feast in the following ways:

- Helping the innkeepers Elias and Medran (he/him), who are sharing a stool behind the bar, get their husband Galen (he/him) to stop working in the kitchen and enjoy the festival
- Playing cards with Rowan and Rilsa (she/her), the carpenter sisters (Rilsa is deaf, but most of the village can translate for anyone who doesn't know hand-signs)
- Playing chess with Della from the orchard or Clemmie (she/her) from the dairy, while their wives Elsa and Mariseth (she/her) give bad advice and try to swap out pieces when no one is looking
- Moving tables aside to make room for dancing, or helping to provide the music once dancing begins
- Fetching food and drink for Rhea so she doesn't have to navigate her rolling chair around the crowded common room
- Helping Tei the baker (she/her) bring in fresh bread from across the village square, or Kareva the blacksmith (she/her) chop more firewood outside

There is plenty of time for each character to take part in multiple games dances and games (if you need statistics for the villagers, they are human **commoners** (MM) with proficiencies and higher ability scores appropriate to their professions). Let characters make appropriate ability checks, even if they are not proficient in Performance or with particular games, for the chance to earn friendly thanks, hearty congratulations, or an extra slice of pie.

When the dancing has finished and a new round of drinks have been poured, the room settles down for the singing of winter carols, such as "Holly's Luck," "Winter's Eve in the Last Home," and "The Snow Elk." Everyone in the village takes part, and the characters may sing along as boldly or quietly as they like.

Winter Songs

If you've never tried singing during a game of Dungeons & Dragons before, consider this a chance to add a musical element to the verisimilitude and emotional depth of your world. An easy way of beginning is picking a melody you already know quite well and writing new lyrics that fit the stress and syllables of the original. Pick a song that your players know as well, and as soon as they pick up the words they might be willing to sing along too.

Stolen Flame

In the midst of everyone singing, every fire in the inn is extinguished at once. The only exception is the tall Midwinter candle behind the bar, which still burns. Every other flame, including the kitchen cookfire, has gone out and cannot be relit by any means. Even magical attempts fail.



Shock and surprise at the sudden darkness turns to confusion and dread when it is discovered that no fire can be lit. Tinder won't catch, candle wicks refuse to burn, and even the coals in the fireplaces are cold. As the realization turns to fear, several villagers begin setting out across the village to help those in need and the characters are enlisted to join them.

CHAPTER 2: THE COLD NIGHT

The ghost of Isa, the young girl who froze to death in the woods decades ago, has come down into the village and is stealing all the fire from the houses one by one. The only flames she leaves behind is that of the Midwinter candles, which each household has lit as a symbol of the sun's return after the solstice. There is too much faith placed into those tiny flames for a ghost to touch, but every other candle, torch, lamp, stove, and fireplace in the village is soon rendered incapable of catching fire. Flint and steel do not even spark in her wake.

Helping the Village

The characters quickly discover that the rest of the village has suffered the same fate as the inn. Although the Midwinter candles still burn, no new fire can be lit in Afonwen.

To prepare the village for the long night ahead, the characters must make a group ability check. Each character should make at least one check to contribute to the group effort, but they don't all have to be the same checks. Some ability checks the characters might try could include:

- **Charisma (Persuasion) checks** to keep people calm and convince them to gather together in larger groups to share body heat, or **Charisma (Deception) checks** to convince the children that this is an exciting adventure and that there is no need to be scared
- **Strength (Athletics) checks** to help carry anyone who cannot make the trip through the snow on their own and **Wisdom (Perception) checks** to notice people who may have fallen behind
- **Intelligence (Investigation) checks** to gather as many coats, blankets, and shawls as possible from around the village and **Constitution checks** against the cold to distribute them evenly to everyone
- **Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks** to corral livestock into homes in order to share their warmth or **Wisdom (Survival) checks** to shore up barns and stables against the weather and make them comfortable for people to spend the night in

Encourage the characters to try different things, and to come up with their own ideas for what they could do to help. If ability checks with a character's skill proficiencies have already been attempted, that character's tool proficiencies might provide inspiration instead.

For every result below 10, another hour passes as the characters struggle against the winter night. If every character rolls below 10, they each gain a level of exhaustion by the time they are finished.

The Winter Girl

As the characters move from home to home, checking in on people and consolidating households, they hear of a strange apparition that a few of the sharper-eyed villagers, particularly children, caught sight of around when the fires went out. They describe seeing a very pale girl walking alone in the snow. She had white hair and her cloak looked stiff with frost. No one recognized her, but if the characters ask around they eventually hear that a child from one of the outlying farms saw the girl heading across the cow pastures and into the surrounding forest.

While investigating the mysterious sightings, characters with a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check** notice a strange mixture of emotions cross Old Mabin's face when she overhears the winter girl's description as it is told to the characters. Old Mabin was childhood friends with Isa when the girl and her father seemingly vanished one Midwinter night, nearly a lifetime ago. If pressed, Mabin will share what she knows but she is hesitant to believe that this strange being and her long-lost friend could really be one and the same.

If the characters decide to pursue the winter girl into the forest, they will need one of the still-burning Midwinter candles from the inn or someone's home to light their way through the moonless night. Once they have one, the ghost's child-sized footprints are not difficult to find in the freshly fallen snow.

CHAPTER 3: A LIGHT IN THE DARK

The forest at night is surprisingly dark; even with snowy tracks to follow there is a chance that the party will get lost. Following Isa's trail requires a successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check**, but with only a dim light to guide them, the characters have disadvantage on any attempts to do so.

If the party becomes lost, the cold begins to creep in as they push their way fruitlessly through the snow. Each character must succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** or suffer one level of exhaustion from the winter chill. After about an hour, the party is able to find Isa's trail again and follow it back to her camp.

Isa's Campfire

When the party catches up to Isa, read or paraphrase the following:

> The footprints lead to a small campsite in the snow, beneath the boughs of an old pine tree. A young girl, no more than ten or eleven years old, sits with her arms around her knees in front of a meager campfire. She looks deathly pale and the child's cloak around her shoulders is frozen stiff.

The girl is a **ghost** (MM), and introduces herself as Isa if the party approaches her. She is solemn but friendly, and tells the characters that she is waiting for her father to return from boar hunting. She adds that she doesn't want to miss Midwinter feast, especially the singing, but her father told her to wait for him and not to move until he returns. If asked about stealing fire from the village, Isa just states that she's cold. If pressed further, she protests that the carol singing can't start until her father returns. She doesn't want to miss the singing.



If the characters aren't sure what to do next, a **DC 11 Intelligence (Religion) or Wisdom (Insight) check** might suggest that Isa's spirit can be laid to rest by singing winter carols with her around her campfire. Although her father is still "missing," Isa is relieved and overjoyed to have this part of the Midwinter festival finally brought to her after so many years alone. The characters have to begin the caroling, but once they do Isa joins them in song.

CONCLUSION

Tears sparkle on Isa's face like ice in the firelight as the party finishes singing, but she wipes snot from her nose like any living child. She soon grows incredibly weary and wishes her new friends goodnight and thank you before pulling her cloak around her and laying down in the snow. As she does, her form fades into nothingness as she sinks down through the snow to her bones.

Although the characters can't know until they return, in that moment all the stolen flames flicker back to life in the village. Isa's campfire starts burning down to coals, but the characters can take torches from it to help light their way back. Once they exit the forest, they can see the many lights of the village burning beyond the pasture before them, and the sound of singing drifts through the night.

Rewards

The experience of bringing peace to a cold, lonely child and bringing light back to the village settles in the characters' chests like a tiny flame. Any character that sang with Isa and helped lay her to rest receives the following charm:

> ***Charm of Warmth.*** This charm allows you to give yourself the benefits of a potion of cold resistance as an action. Once you do so, the charm vanishes from you.

Because they do not have class levels, characters do not earn experience points for completing this adventure. However, their encounters with mystery, magic, and excitement over the course of the night may be enough to push them towards developing the skills of a true adventurer.

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

The first time we played this adventure, Sam and Miranda were both in tears before the end of the game. Dungeons & Dragons can be a powerful way to explore serious or heartbreaking subjects, if you are willing to approach the experience with open and honest vulnerability.

Author Bio

Samantha Lavender has been playing Dungeons & Dragons for most of her life, starting with the 2nd edition introduction box and including every edition since. She can occasionally be found on Twitter as @RainyRedwoods.

Miranda Mels began playing Dungeons & Dragons at Sam's table during the D&D Next public playtest. She now runs multiple games of D&D every week. She isn't really on Twitter, not even @MelsCommaMira most days.



Purls Before Swine

Written by Ally Sulentic

Levels: 2 - 4

Synopsis

A small hamlet is suffering from a strange curse that is turning villagers into animals, and the local priest is certain the nearby woods witch is to blame. He hires a band of adventurers to get to the bottom of the curse and figure out how to break it before the entire village falls victim.

Adventure Hook

- The party comes across a flyer tacked on the local tavern's wall, asking for adventurers to come to the village of Sweetwater to help its new priest exorcise dangerous spirits from the town
- While traveling, the party passes near Sweetwater and witnesses the transformation of a fleeing farmer into a small pig

Adventure Background

The village of Sweetwater is small, with most villagers making a living tapping maple trees from the nearby forest and refining the syrup to sell down the river. For as long as the village has existed, the woods witch 'Nanny' Agatha Moonfall has lived nearby, keeping to herself unless a sickness in the village or a difficult childbirth draws her attention and help.

This Midwinter, Nanny Moonfall sent gifts to every villager in Sweetwater as a show of friendship: Hats, scarves, mittens, blankets, and sweaters, all hand-knitted and infused with a little bit of her chaotic fey magic. The villagers, particularly the children, were initially happy with the gifts, but before any of them could thank Nanny Moonfall for her thoughtfulness, the local priest encouraged the adults to throw away the gifts, angering the local fey that work closely with Nanny. The fey chose to punish the adults for their ungratefulness, invisibly tormenting them and turning those they could find into harmless animals, sparing only the village children and those adults who showed respect to Nanny Moonfall's gifts.

Chapter 1

The party is greeted by a beautiful view of the wintery village of Sweetwater laid out below them as they crest the hills surrounding it. The image is marred, however, by the following sight:

> As you admire the quiet, snowy village laid out before you, a distant shout of help distracts you from the idyllic sight. Coming down the road leading to the village is a middle-aged man running as fast as he can, his voice hoarse as he calls to you for help. Before you can act, a brightly colored afghan soars up and drops over the man's head, covering him as he falls to the ground and writhes around. A moment later, a small pink pig emerges from beneath the blanket. It squeals as it runs away back down the road toward the village. Phantom giggles fill the air, though the source can't be seen.

The giggles quickly dissipate, leaving behind the blanket on the road. Examination reveals a small tag attached to the afghan with the words 'Handmade with Love' embroidered on it. The entire blanket is infused with faint abjuration magic.

Sweetwater Village

Despite the festive Midwinter decorations and the fresh snow on the ground, Sweetwater is a dour place. The streets are almost abandoned save for a few adults hurrying from place to place with their heads down, avoiding eye contact. Faces peer out from frosted

windows, warily watching the newcomers walk through their town. Any interaction with the villagers earns the party terse directions to the village chapel, where Paulus Burne, the new priest, resides.

The Chapel

The village chapel is located in the center of town, just off the village common. The building looks like it was recently renovated into a more austere style; colorful wall murals were whitewashed away, and a blank piece of stone barely covers a mosaic in front of the chapel's doors. Inside, the scents of incense and wax fill the small building, joined by the sound of solemn chanting.

Paulus Burne (human **priest**, he/him, lawful neutral) is a serious man, his stony face betraying no signs of smile lines or wrinkles despite his graying hair. He speaks in a deep voice, never saying more than he needs to, but seems pleased to see the party, especially if they are answering his call for heroes.

> The priest speaks tersely.
>
> "A week ago, the village was struck with a curse that turns whoever it touches into a wild animal. So far, it seems to only affect the adults of the town--my prayers of protection have kept the children safe, but I don' t know how long that will last. With my time taken up by prayers here, I need you to find the source of the curse and stop it before it consumes the entire village. I can't be sure, but I think that witch might be behind it all. You should use caution if you go near her home--she's played tricks like this before."
>
> He hands each of you a simple wooden holy symbol that matches his own.
>
> "The townsfolk are unlikely to speak with you if you don't have these--they will ease your passage through the village."

If asked about payment, Paulus offers the party a total of 80 gp upon breaking of the curse, grudgingly acknowledging their mercenary status as he does.

Development

With the task in hand, the party is free to canvas the neighborhood looking for clues to the curse.

CHAPTER 2

The following scenes can be run in any order as the party makes its way around the village of Sweetwater. Most adult villagers react with suspicion unless the party flashes the holy symbols given by Paulus. Children and visitors to the village react with friendly caution. Any townsperson can direct the party in the direction of Nanny Moonfall's house east of the village, if asked.

Farmer in Distress

The party comes across a woman being menaced by a pair of mittens and a scarf (two invisible **pixies** (MM) wielding the items.) She's trying to drive off the floating objects with a heavy stick. The pixies flee if they are threatened with actual weapons. The farmer, Selene (human **commoner**, she/her, neutral good) thanks the party, explaining that she is looking for medicine for her gravely ill daughter. Her wife Juna was attacked and turned into a rabbit two days ago while trying to get to a healer, so Selene was forced to leave the safety of their home to continue the search. She is heading toward the eastern woods, hoping to speak to Nanny the woods witch about her daughter's illness, but is terrified that she too will fall victim to the curse.

Do You Want to Build a Snowman?

A lone child plays in the snow, wearing a pair of brightly colored mittens and singing softly to himself. He waves to the party, introduces himself shyly as Runek Cotter, age 9, and asks if they want to help him build a snowman. If questioned, he says the mittens were a Midwinter gift from 'Nanny' that his parents made him throw away, though he went back and got them after his parents were turned into pigs. His elder brother corralled them into the barn until the curse is broken. As the party leaves, they catch sight of several snowballs forming on their own and rolling toward Runek--two invisible **pixies** are helping him build his snowman.

Handmade With Love

On the outskirts of the village, the party finds a snow-covered pile of discarded knitwear, all bearing the same 'Handmade With Love' tag described above. Four invisible **sprites** (MM) carefully dig each piece of clothing out of the snow, dust them off, and lay them reverently in a neat line as the party watches. They continue doing so until they've laid out every item in the pile and then flit away. The sprites attack anyone that stops them from doing their job, but anyone that chips in to help clean the knitwear earns their respect, which could be helpful later on in the adventure. A **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check** notes that almost all of the discarded items are sized for adults.

Traveling Merchant

The party meets a merchant from out of town in the almost-abandoned marketplace, packing up his wears to take home. He introduces himself as Derrik (half-elf **commoner**, he/him, neutral good). He makes the trip to Sweetwater about once a month. At the moment, he is distraught after watching a villager fall victim to the curse. He tried to help before it was too late, but came away from the experience with only a handful of sparkling dust and a bite from a newly-transformed squirrel. A **DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check** identifies the dust as pixie dust, and a **DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check** assures Derrik that his bite isn't infected or dangerous.

Debate in the Dark

As the party comes near a closed cellar door, they hear the sound of adult voices raised in argument. Several voices claim that the 'witch of the woods' is the source of the curse and, and declare someone should march over to her hut at the edge of the woods and force her to fix everything, with only a few voices arguing against that course of action. Despite this, no one in the cellar seems eager to actually put their plan into play.

I'm a Lumberjack and I'm Okay

As the party nears the border of the town, they catch sight of a tall woman walking out of the nearby woods, wearing a bright red and yellow knitted hat and dragging a trio of freshly cut logs on a sledge. She cheerfully greets the party if they approach, introducing herself as Cherry (human **scout**, she/her, chaotic good), the local lumberjack. She is unconcerned about the so-called 'curse;' having spent much of her life in the woods learning the lay of the land, she recognizes fey mischief and suspects their handiwork in the troubles affecting the village. She says, rather flippantly, that she doesn't belief in Paulus' nonsense about the gifts being cursed. She's wearing her hat out of protest, and also because it's damn cold outside and the hat keeps her nice and warm.

Satyrs and Snowballs

As the party reaches the woods, they stumble into an ambush set by a pair of young **satyrs** (MM) itching for a snowball fight. Their snow fort affords them 3/4 cover, and they throw their snowballs with force at any adults they see in the vicinity, regardless of their affiliation with the town. Their snowballs are thrown with a ranged attack and deal 1d3 - 1 damage on a successful hit. The satyrs fight fiercely against armed opponents until they are reduced to half of their hit points, at which point they turn and run. If the party chooses to fight them with snowballs of their own, they instead surrender when reduced to half of their hit points and acknowledge the party's superior snowball skills.

Development

The party should have enough information to lead them to Nanny Moonfall's home in the eastern woods, as well as having an idea of what might have led to the curse.

CHAPTER 3

Nanny Moonfall's cottage is about half a mile from the edge of the forest, set in a snowy clearing surrounded by old pines. The cottage itself is small, bearing weathered shingles and a roof that sags just a bit from the snow piled on the eaves. In a wicker rocking chair on the front porch sits Nanny Agatha Moonfall (human **warlock of the archfey**, she/her, chaotic good), a spritely elderly woman with white braided pigtails and small reading glasses perched on her upturned nose. The only concession she makes to the icy temperature is a brightly-colored patchwork quilt tucked around her knees. She is currently knitting a bright red scarf, murmuring something under her breath as she does. In addition, two invisible **sprites** lurk on the roof of Nanny's front porch keeping an eye on any visitors, and a **dryad** (MM) emerges from its tree to eavesdrop quietly, remaining peaceful as long as Nanny remains unthreatened.

Nanny looks up from her knitting if the party approaches close to her cottage, smiling genuinely at her visitors and inviting them to approach closer so she can get a good look at them. She peers into each of their eyes as she makes pleasant small talk about the cold weather and local fauna, trying to discern their motivation for visiting her home. If the party treats her with respect and remains non-violent, she invites them inside her cottage for tea and cookies; otherwise, Nanny's fey allies spring to her defense if she is threatened.

Inside the Cottage

The interior of Nanny's cottage is cozy and colorful, lit by several glowing lanterns. A fire flickers merrily in the hearth. Herbs hang from the ceiling, filling the air with their fresh scent, and a large, fluffy blue-gray cat lounges on a pile of afghans, watching Nanny's guests with luminous green eyes. An intricately crocheted ivory tablecloth covers her rustic table with several chairs pulled around it, each one bearing a different colored cushion.

Nanny encourages the party to find seats around the table and sets a full kettle over the hearthfire before asking what brings them to her humble home. She continues to knit as she talks with them, hardly looking down at her stitches as she does. She remains cheerful and friendly until the party brings up the curse, after which she grows serious and puts down her knitting, listening carefully to their words. She takes no offense to any accusations the townsfolk levy against her, understanding that they're scared, but affirms that she's done nothing to the town. In fact, she just sent her fey friends to the village a week ago with Midwinter gifts for everyone!

If any party member makes the connection between the discarded gifts, the fey messengers, and the mysterious 'curse,' read the following section aloud:

> Nanny huffs and throws open her front door. "All right, my little troublemakers, it's time we had a talk!" she calls, holding open the door as she waits for her friends. Over the next few minutes a collection of fey trickle into her cottage: Seven **sprites**, eight **pixies**, three **satyrs**, and a lone **dryad**. Nanny crosses her arms over her chest and speaks calmly. "Explain yourselves, dearies, if you please." After a few glances between the fey, one of the pixies pipes up and begins to explain.
>
> "We took the gifts to the village to deliver them like you asked, Nanny. Some of us stayed behind to watch the villagers open them so we could tell you about it, but that mean old priest came out and made everyone throw them away!" The other fey murmur in agreement with the pixie's outrage. "He said they were cursed by 'that insidious woods witch' and would 'infect the whole town with her dangerously chaotic magic,' which is not true at all! All of the villagers threw away your presents, except the children and a few of the smarter adults. Then Cedar said we should make the villagers appreciate your gifts…" The pixie hangs her head. "We didn't mean to hurt anyone, Nanny."

Nanny scolds the assembled fey, disappointed that they would go to such extremes over something she considers trivial, and asks Cedar to come forward. The assembled fey exchange nervous glances, and the pixie spokesfey reveals that Cedar is at the village; having found a loose window latch at the town chapel, he plans to 'goat-ify' Paulus.

Nanny's eyes widen and she looks to the party, appealing to them to stop Cedar from making the problem infinitely worse.

Stopping Cedar

The party arrives at the chapel to find Paulus sweeping the nave, his stony expression unchanged. He is surprised to see the party but unconcerned about any warning they give, assuring them that the gods will keep him and the rest of the village safe. He continues to rebuff their warnings even as **Cedar** (**sprite**, he/him, chaotic neutral) appears behind him, wielding a blanket sparkling with pixie dust. The pixie throws the blanket at Paulus, attempting to transform the priest into a 'grumpy old goat'.

Cedar resists attempts by the party to stop his attack on Paulus by summoning three **orange faerie dragons** (MM) to attack them. He continues to follow Paulus with his enchanted blanket until the faerie dragons are defeated, unable to catch the priest, at which point Nanny bursts into the chapel and demands Cedar stop his foolishness.

Despite being saved from a goat-y fate, Paulus is furious at the 'deceitful witch', insisting that she set the fey on him and demanding she lift the curse before it destroys the entire village. Nanny calmly explains that her fey allies were simply playing tricks that went too far. Cedar interrupts and retorts that Nanny worked so hard on the gifts, infusing them with a little of her own fey magic to keep the villagers warm and safe, and they just threw them away over the priest's lies.

Paulus wants the curse lifted and Nanny to leave Sweetwater forever; Cedar wants the village to pay for their careless disregard for Nanny's hard work, though he also insists that only the adults that threw away the gifts will face the fey's wrath. Nanny simply wants things to go back to how they were before she delivered the gifts. The townsfolk have assembled in front of the chapel in the meantime, as have the fey; If the party doesn't do something, the entire village might become a warzone of misinformation.

The party can diffuse the potentially violent situation with a well-spoken argument; good talking points are Nanny's rescue of Paulus from Cedar, and the villagers that kept their gifts being safe from the curse. If the party helped the sprites clean the discarded gifts, helped Runek build his snowmen, or joined in the satyrs' snowball fight, the fey back up the party's arguments. Soon, the villagers realize their mistake in blaming the witch and apologize to Nanny for throwing away the gifts. She graciously accepts, causing Paulus to fume and stomp away to his chapel in stony silence. Several pixies flitter by and drop off all of the discarded knitwear for the townsfolk to claim. The fey deposit the remaining unclaimed gifts at the party's feet, asking them to find the polymorphed townsfolk and put the items on them to break the spell.

The party must track down seven polymorphed animals: three pigs (**boars**), a **badger**, a **cat**, a **goat**, and a rabbit (**weasel**). Tracking the animals is a **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check** per animal; they must put the knitwear on them with a **DC 10 Strength check** while they struggle to free themselves. After the spell is broken, the newly de-cursed villagers are greeted by their friends and family with tearful smiles.

Development

With the curse lifted, the party returns to the village common to conclude the story.

Conclusion

The entire village is thankful that the Midwinter curse is over. The children run around in their colorful gifts chasing the playful fey as the adults look on with cautious smiles. Nanny Moonfall approaches the party, taking each of their hands and squeezing them with her strong, calloused fingers.

"My dears," Nanny Moonfall says, smiling up at each of you with twinkling eyes, "you have done a great service in sorting out this misunderstanding. I'm just happy that my gifts were returned to their intended owners."

She gestures for several pixies to come toward her, each carrying brightly colored knitted garments for each of you.

"Please, take these as a late Midwinter gift, and with my thanks."

The party is invited to stay in Sweetwater as long as they like. If anyone investigates the chapel, they find it empty and dark; Paulus left in the early hours of the morning, eager to get away from a place he considers beyond help. True to his word, he left a bag of 80 gp for the party for getting to the bottom of the curse.

Rewards

XP Rewards:

Add the total XP earned through play, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle	XP
"Farmer in Distress" encounter	150 xp
"Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" encounter	150 xp
"Handmade with Love" encounter	400 xp
"Traveling Merchant" encounter	75 xp
"I'm a Lumberjack and I'm Okay" encounter	100 xp
"Satyrs and Snowballs" encounter	300 xp
Visiting Nanny Moonfall's cottage and discovering the fey's involvement	1100 xp
Convincing the townsfolk to apologize to Nanny	150 xp
Freeing the polymorphed villagers from the curse	475 xp

Treasure Rewards:

If you break the curse, you receive 80 gp and Nanny's Midwinter Gift.

Nanny's Midwinter Gift

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This brightly-colored knitted item (a hat, mittens, or a scarf) fits perfectly and almost radiates warmth.

- You have resistance to cold damage
- You ignore difficult terrain created by ice or snow
- You can tolerate temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit without any additional protection. If you wear heavy clothes, you can tolerate temperatures as low as -100 degrees Fahrenheit

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

As someone who spends a lot of time knitting, I hate when I see a lovingly-crafted blanket or sweater at a thrift store or yard sale being sold for pennies--when you understand the work that goes into a handmade craft, it's heartbreaking to see that work unappreciated. Nanny Moonfall's mischievous fey friends are my solution to that problem.

Thanks, as always, to my wonderful family for the constant support, and particularly to my aunts Judy and Jean and late grandmother Julienne, the inspiration for the ever-cheerful, loving, and generous Nanny Moonfall. And an extra-special apology to my best friend and name-twin Ally--your handmade socks are almost done, promise!

Author Bio

Ally Sulentic is a nerd from Massachusetts who lives in a tiny apartment with her husband Tom and their two annoying cats, Pratt and Sherlock. She's been gaming for most her life and writing for even longer, though she only recently combined the two into something more. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram (@theuselessbard) and the Dungeon Masters Guild, where she's contributed to Uncaged and Friends, Foes, and Other Fine Folks, as well as writing for Pelgrane Press and The Onyx Path.


2014

Frostbite

Written by Jessica Ross

Level: 4 Content Warnings: Child Imprisonment and Potential Harm to Children

SYNOPSIS

For many prosperous generations, the town of Resting Star unknowingly sat atop a former shrine to Auril, the goddess of winter. Now, Resting Star experiences a winter unlike any they have before: they see snow for the first time and try to celebrate the change. Things turn dark, however, when the children of the town go missing and the creatures they built out of snow come to life and attack. This adventure is optimized for five 4th-level characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Shortly before Midwinter, the characters receive an anonymous letter that simply states, "The Resting Star is waking. Please help." They find this letter with their belongings upon waking, and it includes a map to a small town far off any main road.

Alternatively, a friend of the party delivers the letter. The friend received the letter, but they have urgent business elsewhere. The friend provides the map and asks the party to look into this matter. They have no insight to offer about what it could mean, but they have no reason to suspect it isn't genuine.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The town of Resting Star doesn't experience winter, and they celebrate Midwinter as Greenwinter—a time of harvesting and celebrations.

What many do not know is the town was first built as a shrine to Auril, the cruel goddess of winter. But many generations ago, the region stopped experiencing winter, and all traces of Auril were erased. Now, Resting Star stands on the remains of that original shrine.

Over the past two tenday, strange things have occurred in Resting Star—stranger than the first snow in generations or the unfamiliar chill of winter. Ice sculptures the townsfolk built started coming to life to attack them, and children have gone missing in the night.

Merin, a young boy who liked to explore the ruins outside of town, stumbled upon a box containing a cursed object, which brought Auril's wrath down on the town. The spirit released by the boy's curiosity spreads its cruelty through Resting Star, hypnotizing the town's children to assist it as it tries to wipe out the entire population.

CHAPTER 1: THE RESTING STAR WAKES

As the characters enter town, they pass by a large stone column that seems to mark the border to Resting Star. All along the old road are creatures carved from snow. They appear to have been made by people of varying talents. Some of these creatures look lifelike while others look like vague outlines of the creatures they're meant to represent. Though it's not currently snowing, it's clear this town sees a lot of snowfall.

If the characters attempt to investigate these snow creatures or the stone column, one of the creatures, a wolf, springs to life. It appears to be made entirely from snow and uses the **winter wolf** (BR) stat block (with the addition of vulnerability to fire damage).

After they defeat the wolf, **Luhida** (drow **priest** (MM), she/her, neutral good) comes to the road.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> "Welcome to the town of Resting Star, travelers. You should come inside."
> As she speaks, several howls rise up in the distance, and she glances over her shoulder.
> "It only gets worse at night."

Call of the Midwife

Luhida leads the characters to her home, a small dwelling behind the clinic, and offers them hot cocoa as she lights a fire to warm them. She asks the characters what brings them to such a small, out of the way place such as Resting Star.

If the characters lie, Luhida presses her lips together in a tight smile and wishes them a safe visit. She explains how to find the local inn where they might secure lodgings to wait out the night. If asked about what happens at night, she only tells them not to let themselves be caught outside after dark. Continue on to **Starry Inn** below.

If the characters show her the letter they received, she seems surprised at it but hands it back. With a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check**, the characters can tell she seems a little scared of the letter. With a successful **DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, she reveals the letter is in her own handwriting, but she doesn't recall ever writing that letter.

Even if they do not find out Luhida wrote the letter, she still explains that something evil is happening in town. Resting Star hasn't seen snow in generations, and no one has been able to figure out the cause of the heavy snowfall this year. While the town celebrated the unexpected snow at first, even holding a snow sculpture competition, they quickly learned to fear it. Some of the sculptures seemed to come to life on their own and attack people. It's dangerous to be out after dark, and worse, several children in town have gone missing over the last tenday—which is also when the mysterious snow first began to fall.

She doesn't volunteer information about the stone column the characters passed at the edge of town, but if they ask, she tells them the six columns—and she corrects herself and says five—have been part of the town for years. She suspects they were once part of some sort of festival, but no one who lives here now seems to remember. A successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that mention of the pillars makes her uncomfortable, but even if pressed she can't explain why. All she can say is that she feels a vague sense of unease around them, but she has never been able to figure out why.

A character who makes a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Religion) check** recalls information about Auril, the goddess of winter, who is associated with a six-pointed snowflake. However, Luhida mentioned there are only five pillars, not six, and Auril's tradition of running between pillars in the dead of winter required six.

Luhida's house isn't large, and she can't offer them more than cots on the floor, but if they're willing to help find the missing children and figure out what's causing the snow and the snow monsters, she offers to let them stay there for free. If they agree, she offers them more hot cocoa, and this second cup grants resistance to cold damage for 24 hours.

Starry Inn

If the characters lie to or anger Luhida, she sends them to the Starry Inn where they are greeted by a quiet tabaxi named Rustling Leaves (tabaxi **scout** (BR), she/her, chaotic neutral). This is a small but pleasant inn. It looks clean and well cared for, and if it weren't for the boarded-up windows and heavy iron locks on the door, it would look like a typical inn.

A room with two beds is 1 gp per night, and she locks the inn down tight before nightfall. If they want to stay, they must be inside before dark or they'll be locked out. Rustling Leaves is immovable on this.

If questioned on this policy, she looks toward the boarded-up windows and says: "It's dangerous outside at night. You don't want to be caught by the snow. And I won't risk my life for you."

If asked about the columns, she only shrugs and says the six—and she corrects herself to five—columns have been in the town longer than she has.

Development

As night falls, birds made of snow using the stat block of **ice mephits** (BR) break into the building where the characters are and attack. There is a number of snowbirds equal to the number of characters. When only one bird remains, it tries to escape to the south, leading the characters to an old, stone building that looks like a ruin.

If the characters defeat all the snowbirds, a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check** allows the characters to quickly and easily follow the path that brought the snowbirds to them. On a fail, the characters can still follow the path, but must make a **DC 17 Constitution saving throw** or take 2d4 cold damage.

Chapter 2: Winter's Kiss

As characters approach the old ruins, a successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals another stone column near the ruins. If they point it out to any of their party members who failed the check, they can try again to see it. On another fail, they don't see the stone pillar, even if they're looking directly at it. The illusion magic hiding this column can be broken with *dispel magic* or similar spells. Alternatively, if a character touches the column, they are able to see it.

A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check** reminds the character of a ritual to worship a winter goddess. If they succeed the check by 3 or more, they recall the goddess' name is Auril and her symbol is a six-pointed snowflake. With a successful **DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check**, they see a six-pointed snowflake made of rusted metal at the top of the pillar, deeply worn along the bottom points.

As the characters turn to face the temple, read or paraphrase the following:

> The ruins of a temple stand surrounded on all sides by deep mounds of snow. A cleared path leads to the front entrance—shards of old and rotted wood are all that remain of the door.

If characters attempt to enter the temple, the snow on the ground forms up into a humanoid creature using the **yeti** (BR) stat block. If they don't attempt to enter the temple and instead continue to look around it, the snow creature attacks as soon as the characters explore the area, but it seems to be guarding the temple.

Frozen Temple

The temple is old and looks like it hasn't been used in decades. The only sign anyone has been inside here are a few small, dirty footsteps inside the door. There's a faded rug covered in dirt a few steps inside and then the footsteps disappear. A successful **DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals the footprints appear to be child-sized and the child wiped their shoes on the rug to avoid tracking dirt inside the temple. On a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check**, the characters identify faint footsteps in the dust and dirt the temple has collected over its many years of disuse and can follow them.

If they don't find a trail to follow, they may wish to explore the temple. They originally entered into a large antechamber with three doors around the edge: one to the left and two to the right. The door to the left hides a flock of small snow creatures (one per character) that use the **ice mephit** stat block and attack when the characters open the door.

The first door on the right is a mostly empty room with an old and faded tapestry of a six-pointed snowflake. If characters haven't already identified this as the symbol of Auril, a successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check** reminds them of Auril's name: a cruel goddess of winter, known for the harsh rituals she demands of her worshippers.

Ice Tunnels

The final door from the antechamber opens easily, and as soon as it does, a blast of frigid air hits the characters. Characters must succeed on a **DC 13 Constitution saving throw** or take 1d6 cold damage as they're hit with a blast of frigid air.

In the back of this room is a tapestry similar to the one in the last room showcasing a six-pointed snowflake. This one, however, has been pulled aside to reveal a staircase leading below the temple.

> ***Ice Tunnel Traps***
> As the characters travel through the ice tunnels, the temperature slowly drops. They're hit with cold blasts of air 1d4 times as they walk along the tunnel. They must make a **DC 13 Constitution saving throw** to avoid being hit with the cold damage, and the DC goes up by 1 after each blast of cold air.

Snow Chamber

Beneath the temple, the characters find themselves in a large, frozen chamber full of snow, though there is no clear exit to outside aside from the tunnel they took—it's not clear how snow made its way all the way down here.

As soon as the characters enter, they see twelve children sleeping in the snow in the center of the chamber surrounded by more snow creatures. There's another humanoid snow creature using the **yeti** stat block and twelve smaller snow creatures like birds and cats which use the **ice mephit** stat block. Half of the smaller creatures immediately circle around the children, guarding them, while the other six follow the humanoid creature into battle. The humanoid creature stays out of range as much as possible, letting the smaller creatures go in first. If the characters attempt to target the larger creature, it moves farther out of range.

The snow creatures do not attempt to harm the children, though they do try to keep the characters away from them. Each time the characters defeat another of the smaller creatures, one of the children wakes.

Characters can attempt to lower the number of ice creatures by waking one child at a time with a successful **DC 19 Wisdom (Medicine) check** if they can get close enough or with a successful **DC 17 Charisma (Performance) check** by making loud noises to get their attention. If characters have other creative ways to attempt to wake the children from a distance, it becomes **DC 17**. The DC decreases by 1 for every two children the characters successfully wake or for every two small snow creatures they defeat.

For every child that wakes up, another of the smaller ice creatures drops to the ground and melts. When the children wake, they don't run or fight as they're too scared. Once there are more children awake than there are small ice creatures, the children rally, and they can help wake the remaining children.

If the characters damage the larger ice creature during this time, it immediately sends a child back to sleep, and a new ice creature forms out of the ice: a wolf, using the **winter wolf** stat block. The wolves don't join the fight immediately and instead stay back to protect the large ice creature.

If any children are awake and see the characters attempting to damage the large snow creature, they say "Please don't hurt him! He needs our help."

Development

Once all the children wake, the humanoid snow creature finally steps up to fight, but the newly awoken children refuse to let the characters near the last snow creature. "This is our friend," they say. "Don't hurt him—wake him up."

Chapter 3 – The Midwife's Message

Characters can try to restrain the children to defeat the final snow creature or promise they won't hurt it and try to "wake" him. If they fight the creature, the snow starts to drop away with each hit it takes. At half health, the characters can see a child inside the creature. His eyes are closed, and his lips and limbs are blue from the cold.

Without fighting him, they can only trust that the children know what they're doing, and if characters hesitate or don't seem to know what to do, one of the children suggests melting the snow away.

Once the characters see the boy inside the creature, they can attempt to wake him. **Attempting to wake the child is DC 15**. For every attempt the characters make to wake him, the DC lowers by 1. After three successful checks, the remaining snow melts away and the child wakes.

A Friend Indeed

When he finally wakes, Merin's (elf **commoner** (BR), he/him, neutral good) eyes are cloudy white, and he can't seem to hear or speak. He wears a metal amulet with a six-pointed snowflake that must be removed. A successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals the danger. If he keeps it on for longer than 1 hour, he again becomes the large snow creature. If the transformation occurs again, any magic user can determine the amulet is the cause without a check.

Once the amulet loses its hold on Merin, he shares his story. Out of curiosity, he decided to explore the old ruins and discovered the hidden tunnel. In this snow chamber, he found this metal amulet. It spoke to him, promising to be his friend for as long as wore it and to welcome all of his friends into an eternal game.

Answers from Auril

The secret tunnel to the temple above it is the only way in or out of this chamber. Back up the stairs and inside the temple, Luhida is looking curiously around the antechamber. She is startled at the sight of the children and the characters but receives them happily.



If the characters didn't already learn that she was the one who wrote the letter calling them there, she tells them now.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> "After you left my home, I communed with my goddess, Chauntea. I wrote the letter in a trance and sent it to a trusted friend, which is why I didn't remember sending it. But as soon as I remembered this, I knew I had to find you and followed your trail here. Chauntea allowed me to see the column outside and revealed to me the dangers of this place—of Auril's temple."

Luhida can also explain the new information her goddess provided about the temple and pillars if the characters haven't already figured it out. Many generations ago, Frozen Star was a town built on a snowy tundra to worship Auril. The six columns around the town were a harsh ritual in which worshippers of Auril trekked between them in the dead of winter to show their devotion. Something happened, and snow stopped falling in Frozen Star. The town was renamed to Resting Star, and many generations later, Luhida came to be a midwife here and brought with her a love and worship of Chauntea.

Though Luhida can't explain it, she knows some force protected the sixth column outside the temple to prevent people from seeing or remembering it. The supposed absence of a sixth column meant no one associated this temple with Auril, and over the generations, the townsfolk forgot the origins of this place. She suspects someone buried the amulet that allowed them to commune with Auril in an attempt to bring an end to the harsh winters, and when Merin went exploring, he found it by accident and summoned her wrath.

Development

Luhida thanks the characters for their help and asks for one last favor: to help her escort each of the children back home.

CONCLUSION

This is a small farming village, and the people who live here don't have much. Still, the villagers are happy to provide what they can to the characters in thanks for their help. If they befriended Luhida when they first met her, she rewards them now with a *ring of warmth* (BR). If they saved all of the children without hurting or restraining any of them, Merin tentatively approaches the characters and hands them a spell scroll for *control flames* he found during his exploring.

The snow melts away by morning, and the town welcomes the characters to join them for an afternoon feast and celebration.

If the characters don't offer to take and destroy the amulet, Luhida offers to take it to a friend and wizard she knows in a nearby city who can destroy it. Luhida suggests characters should not attempt to use it, as it is a cursed item. If characters choose to keep it anyway, it allows the wearer to cast ice storm twice per long rest. Because it's cursed, the caster always takes damage from using it—each time the caster uses the amulet to cast *ice storm*, they also suffer the effects of it (i.e. they must make the same saving throw as their target and take damage).

The characters have returned the town's children and restored the weather. They have made allies in the town of Resting Star, and these people won't soon forget them. They reward the characters with a free stay at the inn for as long as they'd like, as well as 2 sp each and 2 *potions of healing*.

Rewards

XP Rewards

Event	XP
Defeat ice mephit creatures	100 per creature
Defeat winter wolf	700
Defeat yeti	700
Wake the children and avoid harming them	50 per child
Save Merin	700
Befriend Luhida	500

Items

Event	Item
Befriend Luhida in part I	Ring of Warmth
Save Merin without hurting or restraining the other children	Spell scroll Control Flames
Save the children and restore the weather	2sp each and 2 potions of healing

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who supported me and helped me make this adventure happen, including my coworking buddies Jen Vaughn and Kat Kruger, my brainstorming friend Robin Michele, and my playtesting group at Outsider Comics.

Author Bio

Jessica is an editor, writer, podcaster, and recovering procrastinator. She spends most of her time working because she's a freelancer and that's what freelancers do, but when she's not working, she's watching bad movies (and live-tweeting them) and learning and playing every game she can get her hands on. She has adventures and work in *Uncaged Volume I, Beyond the Basics, Morty Corgi's Scroll of Mysteries*, and more. You can find all of her work on her website writejess.com and you can follow all the daily nonsense she gets up to on Twitter @writejessr.



Before the Pitchforks Come

Written by Alison Huang

Levels: 6 Content Warnings: Misogyny, Xenophobia, Witch Hunting

SYNOPSIS

Days before Midwinter, two children have gone missing from the frozen city of Koelheid. Fingers are being pointed at people. Or rather, one person in particular: the woman living on Mount Spitsber.

A woman who's nearly 8 feet tall. A woman who's undeterred by the freezing cold. A witch no doubt, who probably wants to sacrifice the children for some dark ritual if she hasn't already.

But Ida, the grandmother of one of the missing children, insists that she's not the culprit. She's asked you to rescue them and find out what really is going on.

Before the children die of exposure.

Before the pitchforks come.

This adventure is written for four 6th-level characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

No matter their reason for being in Koelheid, the characters quickly realise that there is a feeling of unease and anger in the city. As Koelheid is wary of strangers, Ida soon hears about their arrival.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Systemic misogyny and xenophobia has always existed in Koelheid. Isolated from the rest of the world and subject to the unrelenting cold of their surroundings, many of the city's inhabitants wouldn't even think of questioning these values.

Gerda, a human girl, was however frustrated with Koelheid's bigotry, something she told her best friend, a dwarf boy named Kai. Having heard that there were giants on top of Mount Spitsber, at the foot of which sits Koelheid, Gerda started to daydream about living with them. With the help of Kai, she gathered supplies to venture up Mount Spitsber. Together, they fled the city.

On the mountain, they encountered a manticore. Their journey would have ended there, had it not been for a silver dragon that swooped down and killed the creature. Alarmed that there were two children on the mountain, the dragon brought them to the safety of her lair. There, Gerda and Kai told the dragon, Snedronningen, their tale. Quickly becoming attached to them, Sned vowed to be a better mother to them.

Unaware of the truth and fueled by their xenophobia, Koelheid's inhabitants quickly decided that Mechteld, a goliath woman living alone up the mountain, was responsible. Ida, Kai's grandmother and guardian, doubts this is the truth.

CHAPTER 1: A HOSTILE CITY

> The tension in Koelheid is palpable; you could cut it with a knife. Around you, pitchforks are being sharpened and torches are being assembled. Everyone eyes you suspiciously as you pass. The only friendly face is the one leading you to her home, Ida, an old dwarven woman.

If there are any goliaths in the party, address the following to them:

> You seem to be garnering more hostility than the rest of your group. People whisper to each other behind your back. You can faintly make out the word "witch."

Ida

Ida (dwarf **commoner** (MM), she/her, neutral good) ushers the party into her house, which is situated above a store renting cold weather gear. She invites them to sit by the fireplace.

Roleplaying Ida

Both Ida's age, and time in Koelheid, clearly weigh down on her. She is resigned and tired, and tries to keep her head down. This allows her to go unnoticed, but also means the rest of Koelheid doesn't take her seriously.

This weariness is evident when Ida speaks with the party. Naturally, she is quite worried not only for the children, but also for the 'witch' on the mountain.

A Grandmother's Plea

Once everyone is warm and comfortable, she explains why Koelheid is so hostile at the moment, providing the following pieces of information:

- Two children went missing about a day ago
- The children were Kai, Ida's grandson, and Gerda, the blacksmith's daughter
- Kai is a dwarven boy. He is 11
- Gerda is a human girl. She is 12
- Jasper, Gerda's father, realised that she was missing first. After not finding her or Kai in Koelheid, he accused the 'witch' of stealing both children
- "The witch" refers to a woman living on Mount Spitsberg. Koelheid's inhabitants don't trust her due to her unusual height and ability to withstand the cold
- Jasper is planning on climbing up to the witch's house with some other civilians to lynch her
- Ida does not believe that the woman on the mountain is responsible or malicious
- In addition, two of her smaller sets of cold weather gear were taken, leading her to believe the children chose to leave

She begs the party to go find both children before they die of exposure, and before the woman in the mountains is killed by angry civilians.

Ida informs the party that she will pay the party 1000 gp if both children are returned safely. If only one child is recovered, or the children are discovered to have died, she instead pays 500 gp. She offers an additional 500 gp if the woman on the mountain survives the ordeal.

If the party accepts, Ida brings them down to her rental store and lends them all sets of cold weather gear.

Jasper

Soon after exiting the store, and bidding farewell to Ida, the party encounters Jasper, Gerda's father. He stands on the street before them, arms crossed.

Roleplaying Jasper

A blacksmith, Jasper (human **commoner**, he/him, lawful neutral) is a tall and muscular human man with a dominating presence. He embodies the xenophobic and misogynistic values of Koelheid. He speaks bluntly and without hesitation.

If there are any men in the party, Jasper addresses them, ignoring anyone else. If the party only contains people of marginalised genders and women, he acts even more condescendingly.

A Father's Warning

> "So you've chosen to believe Ida huh?" he comments bluntly. "Well, as long as you don't stand in my way, you can pursue that useless theory of hers. But if you do stand in my way..." he moves his hand to the sword by his hip threateningly. "We have a problem. Clear?"

He shoulders past the party once his warning is acknowledged and disappears down the street. If the party asks him if he would pay the party for Gerda's safe return, he offhandedly says he would pay them 500 gp. He clearly does not expect them to succeed.

Development

Once the party is ready to ascend Mount Spitsber, proceed to Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: MOUNT SPITSBER

Mount Spitsber towers over Koelheid and stretches up into the clouds. You can't see its peak at all. The mountain itself is cloaked in snow and covered with various kinds of trees. Looking up, the only notable feature you can spot is a small wooden cabin some ways up, chimney smoke billowing up into the air.

Beginning The Climb

The foothills of the mountain are relatively easy to navigate, making the first hour of travel uneventful and somewhat relaxing. Wind rustles through the trees. 2d4 **Giant Elk** (MM) graze peacefully nearby.

Eventually, however, the mountain's terrain becomes more vertical than horizontal.

Traversing The Mountain

At around 5 miles (or 26,400 feet) tall, Mount Spitsber is huge. The party should be acutely aware of how much time and effort it takes to scale it.

Due to the tedious and repetitive nature of climbing such a large mountain, this process is treated with a level of abstraction. This means that the areas and encounters on the mountain are not necessarily close to each other.

The Real Climb Begins

There are two clear routes to Mechteld's cabin: climbing the cliffs up to her or navigating up a natural rocky path. This path leads away from the cabin, but reaching it is easier.

A **DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) check** is needed to locate any remaining signs of the children in this location. A successful check reveals that there are some strands of fur clinging to a nearby tree near the easier slope. It matches the fur on the gear borrowed from Ida.

The Direct Route

Characters need to make a successful **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check** to climb the cliffs safely. Characters that fail this check still manage to climb up, but take 3d6 bludgeoning damage while doing so.

Rocky Path

No check is required to ascend the rocky path. It leads to a ledge that has two **sabre-toothed tigers** (MM) prowling around. A character with a passive Perception of 12 or higher notices that there is a frayed scarf half buried in the snow here.

They can scale down to the cabin from here without any checks.

Mechteld's Cabin

The scent of roast boar drifts towards the party as they reach the cabin. Mechteld, the woman Koelheid's inhabitants describe as being a witch, chops firewood outside. She is surprised to see the party, but is friendly towards them. She invites them inside her cabin.

Roleplaying Mechteld

Mechteld (goliath **commoner**, she/her, neutral good) is a goliath woman. Her skin is light blue due to her frost giant heritage. Even though Koelheid's inhabitants consider her a witch because of her appearance, she does not have any magical powers.

As evidenced by her secluded home, she keeps to herself and minds her own business. She does not harbour any malicious intent towards Koelheid, even though the city treats her poorly.

An Innocent's Decision

After serving the party portions of roast boar, she asks them why they're there. If she is told that people from Koelheid are blaming her for the disappearances of two children and they plan on killing her, she is alarmed. However, because she isn't responsible, she decides to stay and stand her ground, even if it kills her.

Mechteld also comments that the name Gerda is familiar. After thinking it over, she remembers that she met Gerda when she came to Koelheid a few years ago. Gerda was interested in learning about her homeland. Mechteld used to live on Spitsberg Peak above the clouds with other goliath and giants before she chose to leave. Koelheid's attitudes led Mechteld to establish her home between the two civilisations.

The slopes near Mechteld's home are all fairly easy to climb. When the party wants to ascend further up the mountain, they can do so without any checks.

Freezing Lake

The party eventually reaches a large ledge with a freezing lake surrounded by trees. A waterfall streams down a cliff face.

A successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** is required to notice that there is a skeleton wearing a belt of frost giant strength is at the bottom of the lake. The lake is filled with frigid water.

Frigid Water
A creature can be immersed in frigid water for a number of minutes equal to its Constitution score before suffering any ill effects. Each additional minute spent in frigid water requires the creature to succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** or gain one level of exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures that are naturally adapted to living in ice-cold water.

Up The Cliff

Scaling the cliff face is certainly possible. A successful **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check** is enough to climb most of the way up safely. Characters that fail this check take 2d6 bludgeoning damage on the way up.

Some of the rocks near the top of the cliff are loose. The character who is the furthest up the cliff must successfully make a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** or fall down onto a lower ledge and take 2d6 bludgeoning damage. Other characters can successfully make a **DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check** to spot safer ways up. If they fail this check, they must make the same Dexterity saving throw.

Hunting Grounds

Further into this slope, there is a tree-filled nook where 2d6 **boars** (MM) wander around. The slope at the back of the nook has a lot of outcroppings to hold onto. However, halfway up, two **griffons** (MM) swoop down from a nest at the top of a cliff.

Once the griffons are dead, climbing up to the nest is possible, requiring a successful **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check**. 100 gp worth of coins from unfortunate victims are scattered amongst the twigs and bones.

Hidden Cave

A character that makes a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** discovers that there is a cave at the back of the lake, behind the waterfall. A character passing through this waterfall must make a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw**, taking 3d6 cold damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

A makeshift campfire has been set up in here. A successful **DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check** reveals that it was last used about a day ago.

Manticore's Grave

After some climbing, the party reaches a ledge with a manticore's corpse lying on it. A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals that it was crushed to death by something large and with claws. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Medicine) check** confirms that it was killed recently.

Development

Once the party is ready to climb up from the Manticore's Grave, proceed to Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 – SNOW QUEEN'S DOMAIN

The air becomes colder and colder as you climb further up onto the mountain. While the whole mountain is covered in snow, the amount of it is piling up. Ice coats any visible rocks with a slippery sheen. Your ascent grows more difficult, and there aren't any obvious paths to make it easier.

Getting Colder

The party is now within a mile of Snedronningen's lair. There are no longer any choices as to how the party ascends the mountain. However, optional encounters may be used to make this final climb more interesting.

A Glimpse of the Queen

While scaling the mountain, the character with the highest passive Perception notices Snedronningen, an **adult silver dragon** (MM), flying through the air. The dragon does not seem to be headed towards the party.

Avalanche

Climbing these ice covered slopes is challenging due to how slippery they are. A successful **DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** is needed to keep a grip on the ice outcroppings. Partway up, an avalanche rushes down the slope. Characters must succeed on a **DC 10 Dexterity saving throw** to get out of the way, or get carried by the avalanche down to the bottom of the slope, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage and 2d6 cold damage.

Winter Wolves

As they ascend, the party reaches a ledge obscured by cold fog. Ranged attacks are made with disadvantage in this area. Three **winter wolves** (MM) lay waiting, camouflaged by their snowy environment. They ambush the party once they get close.

Home

Eventually, the party reaches a cliff face with a large cave in its side. The sound of children laughing happily echoes from within.

Before they can approach the cave, Snedronningen swoops down from the sky, barring their way. She uses her Frightful

Presence action to intimidate the party. It should be clear that if the party were to fight her, their chances of winning are incredibly slim.

Roleplaying Sned, Gerda and Kai

Sned (**adult silver dragon**, she/her, neutral good) is kind and protective, especially to children and people without friends and family. She is selfless, and not as concerned about her own wellbeing, though as she is a powerful dragon, there are few things she needs to worry about.

Gerda (human **commoner**, she/her, neutral good) is headstrong and brash. She quickly jumps to the defense of Sned and Kai if she feels that the party is falsely accusing them of anything.

Kai (dwarf **commoner**, he/him, neutral good) is patient and attentive. Compared to Gerda, he doesn't speak up much, but when he does, it is obvious he has put thought into it.



The Truth Revealed

Sned asks the party why they're there. Having heard the commotion, Gerda and Kai peek out curiously from inside the cave. If their names are mentioned, they join Sned, hiding behind her back.

If the party accuses Sned of kidnapping the children, Gerda explains that she and Kai chose to leave Koelheid due to its rampant bigotry, and that if Sned hadn't saved them from a manticore, they'd be dead. She also declares that, despite the short amount of time they've been together, Sned is already proving to be a better parent than her father ever was.

Kai agrees with Gerda's statements, though a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that he is slightly hesitant. A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check** is needed to realise that he misses Ida, his grandmother.

The party should be reminded that if the children remain there, Mechteld will be lynched by Koelheid's inhabitants.

There are many ways to resolve this dilemma, such as asking Gerda and Kai to come down to Mechteld's cabin prove that they're alive or urging Sned to assist Mechteld.

In most cases, convincing them requires a successful **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. This DC can be reduced by 5 by appealing to Gerda's hatred of her father, Kai's of his love for his grandmother, or Sned's motherly personality.

If the children willingly decide to go with the party, Sned allows them to do so on the condition she accompanies them.

As long as the party remains on good terms with her and the children, Sned offers to fly the party down.

Development

Once the party has come to a decision with Snedronningen, Gerda, and Kai, proceed to the Conclusion.

Conclusion

> As you descend, specks of light come into view, then the gleam of steel and a swarm of angry people. They climb the cliffs up to the cabin where their innocent target resides. The woman herself, Mechteld, stands ready, holding a hatchet with both hands.

Depending on the plan, the ways this adventure can end are drastically different.

If Gerda and Kai were brought down Jasper commands the mob to stop. However, he insists on bringing Gerda back home. Gerda tells her father that she won't, no matter what. Provided that the party supports her, Jasper is forced to leave without her.

If Sned came to defend Mechteld, the mob flees.

If the party fails to resolve the situation in a way that would keep Mechteld alive, Mechteld is killed by the mob.

Otherwise, if Mechteld survives, Sned offers to bring her into her home, which she accepts. If Kai is also present, he requests that Sned goes down to Koelheid and brings Ida up to her home as well.

If the party returns to Koelheid, Ida gives them their reward as promised. If he was asked and he is still alive, Jasper begrudgingly gives them his reward as well.

Rewards

Characters who complete this adventure may earn the following rewards:

XP Rewards:

Add the total XP of creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle	XP
Giant Elk	450
Sabre-Toothed Tiger	450
Boar	50
Griffon	450
Climbing the Harder Routes	900
Winter Wolf	700
Negotiating with Snedronningen	1,800
Saving Mechtel	1,800

Treasure Rewards

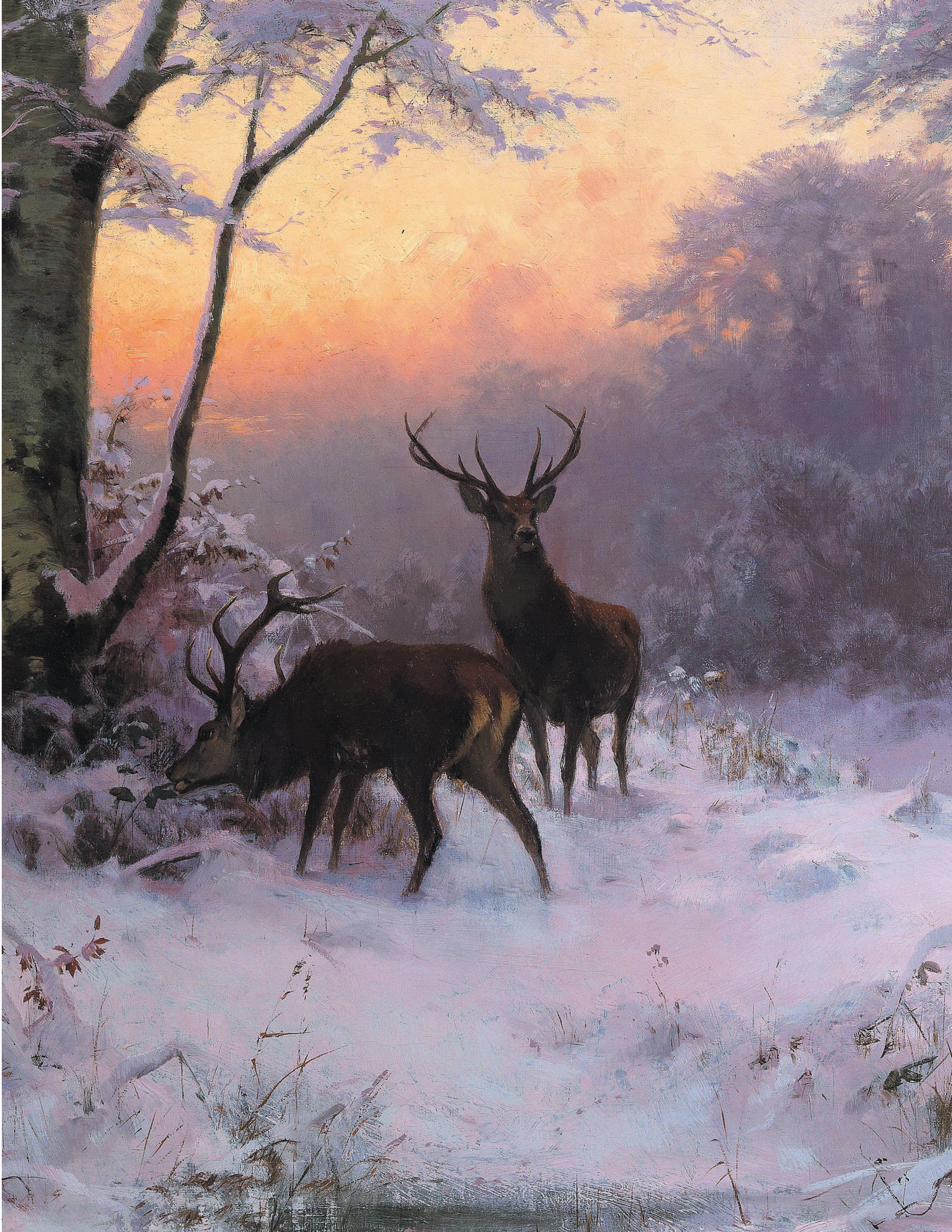
Item	Value
Ida's Reward for saving Kai	500gp
Ida's Reward for saving Gerda	500gp
Ida's Reward for saving Mechteld	500gp
Jasper's Reward for saving Gerda	500gp

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

In Hans Christen Andersen's The Snow Queen, Kai became full of hate because of a shard of magical mirror. I've always felt that that cheapens Kai's decision to go with the Snow Queen. This adventure arose from me asking myself the following question: What if the source of hate was instead something closer to home like bigotry?

Author Bio

Alison Huang is an Australian-based writer and illustrator. She is deeply interested in queer and feminist narratives that subvert expectations. She contributes to many other D&D projects, such as the Uncaged Anthology, and Friends, Foes and Other Fine Folks. Her twitter handle is @Drazillion.





The Coldest Revenge

Written by Alicia Furness

Levels: 7 - 9 Content Warnings: Death of Children, Stillbirth, Winter Dangers, Sexism

SYNOPSIS

The town of Frostsveld has always had an uneasy relationship with the yetis that live in the mountain above. Monthly offerings to the gods have kept the peace, but suddenly, on the eve of the worst storm of the century, things fall apart. What incited the yetis to violence? The answer lies on the dangerous mountain. Can the adventurers survive the elements and climb the mountain to find answers and keep Frostsveld safe? This adventure is suitable for a party of 4-5 characters of levels 7-9.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure works best if the characters are already town residents. They might be renowned adventurers, members of the town watch, or enthusiastic volunteers.

If the characters are not from Frostsveld, they might be spending time there before going to explore the mountains, or elect to stop there to wait out the impending storm.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Frostsveld is nestled at the base of a huge mountain, on a continent covered by snow and ice for most of the year. Frostsveld is beautiful and peaceful, but residents know the dangers of near perpetual winter. The town has perfected year round greenhouses and food preservation in order to survive the harsh winter weather. A portion of that food is given as offerings to the mountain god every month, so that Frostsveld will be spared the violence of the yetis who live on the mountain. These offerings have worked for three decades.

Suddenly, on the eve of this year's winter festival, the yetis have made their way down the mountain to attack Frostsveld.

The yetis have been commanded by Auntie Hesla, the Bheur Hag who lives at the top of the mountain. Years ago, Auntie Hesla was an elderly woman who lived in Frostsveld. She served as the local midwife and nurse. After overseeing the birth of the mayor's first child, who didn't survive, Auntie Hesla was accused of being a witch and chased out of town. Bitter and angry at her betrayal by the town she loved and served, Auntie Hesla made a pact with a dark power and became a hag. She has been plotting her vengeance ever since, and the howling winds of the winter storm signal that it is time to begin.

CHAPTER 1: ATTACK ON FROSTSVELD

The characters must defend the town from attacking yetis, then attend a meeting with the town elders who ask them to undertake a dangerous mission.

Surprise attack

Begin the adventure with the group together in a tavern or inn, or in different areas of the town each making their own preparations for the impending storm.

The town of Frostsveld is buzzing this afternoon, as residents hurry to and fro making preparations for the impending storm. The temperature is dropping by the hour, and frost crackles across the windows of the buildings. It's the worst storm of the century, and you feel it in the air. Suddenly, you hear yelling from the northern edge of town, and people shouting for help.

The northern edge of Frostsveld has the schoolhouse and a rustic playground. School has finished for the day due to the storm but some children remain, playing on the playground. The shouting is in response to a group of yetis (one **abominable yeti** (MM) and two **yetis** (MM)) that have come down the mountain and are attacking buildings and people.

If the characters do not investigate the sounds, or if they choose not to stop the yetis, the yetis eat 1d4 children, and move further into town. If the characters still do not engage with the yetis, the town watch manage to drive them out of town but the death toll is high. If the characters visibly failed to step in, the residents blame them for the resulting deaths, and the elders use this as leverage in the next encounter.

If the characters engage with the yetis, they flee when the abominable yeti is reduced to 50 hit points or less. After the yetis are defeated, the town elders summon the characters to a meeting by one of the town guards.

They Came from the Mountain

The characters are summoned to the mayor's residence in the middle of town.

Servants hurry to and fro as the mayor's household prepares for the storm. You are led through the busy house to a cozy room on the first floor, the mayor's study. The room features oversized chairs, large bookcases, and a large ornate desk. A fire roars in the fireplace. Three humans are inside the room. An older woman looks up at you and says, "Thank you for coming, please sit, we have something important to discuss."

The woman is Marilla Halloran (human **veteran** (MM), she/her, lawful good), the mayor of Frostsveld. The other two elders are France Laskin (human **priest** (MM), he/him, lawful good), (the religious leader, and Ohana Okoyo (human **veteran** (MM), they/them, lawful good), leader of the watch. The elders jointly make all decisions for Frostsveld.

The elders ask the characters to venture up the mountain to bring another offering to the mountain god. In return, the elders offer each of the characters a special magical item from the town's collection of artifacts retrieved from the mountain over the years (see Conclusion).

The elders give the following information:

- The yetis came down from the mountain for the first time in almost 50 years
- If the yetis come again during the storm, the town won't be able to defend itself
- The mountain god is suspected to live near the mountain peak
- The offering must be brought up in a sled

Development

If the characters agree to the task, the elders send them to The Frosty Boot to outfit for the trip (continue to Chapter 2: The Frosty Boot). If not, the elders banish the characters into the storm (the adventure ends here in this case).

CHAPTER 2: UP THE MOUNTAIN

The characters equip themselves, and face the dangerous mountain. At the top they don't find the mountain god, but a horrifying hag.

The Frosty Boot

The shop is warm and inviting. It's filled to the brim with outdoor expedition supplies. There are sleds, piles of furs, rations, ice picks, and snowshoes. Yolanda shouts out above the noise of the shoppers, "Oh good! Marilla told me you were coming in! Come in!"

Yolanda Glitterstick (gnome **commoner** (MM), she/her, chaotic good,) a chubby, friendly gnome, has a pack ready to go. It contains a sled, pitons and rope, snowshoes and ice picks for each character, a hooded oil lamp, a stack of furs, rations, and warm coats and boots. These items are provided at no cost.

Yolanda provides the following advice:

- There are two paths up the mountain: one is quicker but much more dangerous, the other longer but more frequently travelled and safer
- The storm will arrive near midnight, and will make the journey more treacherous

- One week ago, an adventuring party attempted to climb the more difficult ascent. They have not returned

The trek up the mountain is divided into three areas: the ridge, the pass, and the summit. Each area has specific dangers. The route the characters take determines how many encounters occur.

The temperature on the mountain drops as the characters ascend. Any character not properly outfitted for the cold must succeed a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** or take one level of exhaustion for each area of the mountain they traverse. Characters who are naturally adapted to cold climates are not required to make this check.

The Ridge

The characters' first obstacle is the ridge that makes up the bulk of the slope. The ridge is narrow at the top and unstable.

It takes two (short route) or four (long route) hours to ascend the ridge during which time a number of ridge-specific encounters occur. Characters taking the slower, safer route have two encounters. Characters who have chosen the more difficult long route have three encounters. These encounters can occur at the same time (for example, an environmental hazard may happen concurrently with a combat encounter). Roll 1d4 or choose from the table below.

1d4	Hazard
1	Blizzard
2	Ice mephits
3	Abandoned cave
4	Slippery ridge

Blizzard

The storm winds bring a localized blizzard to the ridge. The blizzard reduces visibility, giving creatures in this area disadvantage to **Wisdom (Perception) checks** that rely on sight. Additionally, the strong wind imposes disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls. The wind extinguishes any open flames and disperses fog. The blizzard lasts for 1d4 hours.

Ice Mephits

A swarm of 1d10 +4 **ice mephits** (MM) emerge out of the ice and snow. Perceiving the ice mephits before they swarm requires a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check or Passive Perception 16+**, otherwise the characters are surprised. The mephits surround the characters and work together to push them off the ridge. Characters must succeed on an opposed **Strength (Athletics) check** against the combined strength of the mephits trying to push them off the ridge. For rules about sliding off the ridge, refer to Slippery Ridge, below. The mephits fight to the death.

Abandoned Cave

The characters come across a cave, which contains an old fire pit, ripped clothes and furs, and an abandoned knapsack. Characters who investigate the knapsack find five days' worth of stale rations and an old pan flute. Playing the pan flute releases a **djinni** (MM), trapped there by a cruel wizard. The djinni can be persuaded to accompany the group on their travels as an ally in exchange for a gift worth at least 250 gp. The djinni does not grant wishes.

Slippery Ridge

A portion of the ridge is slippery. The next sixty feet is considered difficult terrain. Characters must succeed on a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw** or fall prone and begin sliding down the ridge. Characters can prevent themselves from sliding too far with their ice picks with a successful **DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check**, otherwise they slide fifty feet before smashing into rocks. Characters who fall onto the rocks take 5d6 bludgeoning damage.





The Pass

After the ridge, the characters reach the pass. The pass is a gap between two 300 ft high peaks in the mountain ridge, which occurs just before the summit.

> You can see the pass from a distance, but as you get closer you fully appreciate the height of the crags on each side. The rocks are snow covered, and passing through them feels claustrophobic.

If the characters have taken the slower, safer route, the storm arrives while they traverse the pass. Increase the difficulty of ability checks and saves by 1.

It takes one hour on the short route/two hours on the long route to ascend the pass. As characters are making their climb, they have a number of pass-specific encounters. Characters who are taking the slower, safer route have one encounter. Characters who have chosen the more difficult path have 2 encounters. Roll or choose on the table below:

1d4	Hazard
1	Young White Dragon
2	Avalanche
3	Frost Giant
4	Deep Snow

Young White Dragon

Two-hundred feet up the western rock that looms over the pass is a small cave, in which lives a **young white dragon** (MM). Freezing rain falls in a three mile radius around the dragon's lair, imposing disadvantage to **Wisdom (Perception) checks** that rely on sight. Characters who make a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check or who have Passive Perception 13+** notice the cave. Below the lair, a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals a number of frozen, dead, humanoids and other creatures buried in the snow. This is where the dragon preserves their food. A successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check** reveals that this is a dragon lair. Any attempt to reach the lair causes the dragon to attack. The dragon is named Avne. Characters who reach the lair can find assorted gems worth a total of 1000gp, a set of snow shoes, and a *carpet of flying* (DMG, Chapter 7).

Avalanche

The ground rumbles as a wave of snow and ice chunks comes cascading through the centre of the pass. The avalanche lasts 1d6 rounds. Characters must succeed on a **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw** to get out of the way. Characters who fail are swept up in the avalanche, dragged for one-hundred feet, and buried in the snow. A buried character takes 1d10 cold damage and must succeed on a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check** to dig themselves out. Alternatively an ally can dig them out, after they succeed a **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check** to locate the character.



Frost Giant

A horn bellows as two **frost giants** (MM) rappel down the peaks, one on each side of the pass. They are enraged that the characters have entered their territory. The frost giants engage in battle, or chase the characters until they leave the pass and enter the summit. If the characters defeat the giants, they find a war horn (*horn of silent alarm* (DMG, Chapter 7)), dried meat, and a necklace of bone on the bodies.

Deep Snow

The wind has blown a huge snow drift across the pass. The snow is almost five feet deep in this area and is difficult terrain. A character without snowshoes becomes stuck and cannot move. They must succeed a **DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check** to move at all, and if successful can move only 5ft. A character with snowshoes does not become stuck, but follows the usual rules for difficult terrain.

The Summit

The summit is the highest part of the mountain leading to the peak.

> As you leave the pass you can see the final challenge, one last ascent up the summit to the peak. The storm has arrived in full, and you can tell the last push will not be easy.

It takes one hour on the short path or two hours on the long path to ascend the summit. The following environmental hazards are in play on the summit:

Blizzard. The blizzard reduces visibility, giving creatures in this area disadvantage to **Wisdom (Perception) checks** that rely on sight. Additionally, the strong wind imposes disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls. The wind also extinguishes any open flames and disperses fog

Slippery Ice. The slippery ice is difficult terrain. Each time the character moves for the first time on a turn, they must succeed on a **DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** or fall prone. For long periods of travel, use periodic checks to remind players of the danger.

After navigating the environmental hazards, the characters encounter six yetis. The yetis stalk the characters up the summit, but do not engage unless the characters engage first. In this case, the yetis defend themselves. If the yetis are reduced to half their hit points they flee towards the peak and seeking refuge with the hag.

Development

When the characters successfully navigate the summit, they reach Auntie Hesla.

CHAPTER 3 – THE WITCH

The characters confront Aunite Hesla, learn her story, and are forced to make a difficult choice.

At the peak of the mountain, the characters find a cave. Milling around the outside of the cave are five yetis and one abominable yeti (if the yetis fled from the summit encounter, these are the same yetis). The yetis take no action against the characters unless they attempt to harm Auntie Hesla.

> A warm glow emanates from the cave. The scent of apples and allspice floats on the wind and entices you inside. A voice calls out, "It's taken you long enough. You should never keep Auntie waiting. Come in, weary travellers, so we may talk about what you want."

The cave feels warm, but all the furniture is made of ice and snow. Ice crawls up the sides of the cave and forms twisted screaming faces frozen in terror. A large glass cauldron bubbles with the appealing scent that helped lure the characters in. Peculiar items are strewn about the cave. Use the Peculiar Objects table to determine what players can find.

Standing near the bubbling cauldron is a grotesque, twisted, blue figure. She invites the party to have a seat and listen to her story.

Auntie Hesla.

Auntie Hesla was once a human midwife and healer of Frostsveld. As she aged, people began to gossip about her state of mind. Forty years ago she delivered mayor Marilla Halloran's baby, but it was stillborn. Auntie Hesla was accused of being a witch who had killed the baby on purpose, and she was chased out of town. She spent ten years alone in the frozen winterlands, growing bitter, until she met an odd old woman in the middle of the woods. The woman promised her great power in exchange for her loyalty. She gave Auntie Hesla a potion that froze her to her bones. The next day, Auntie Hesla awoke as a **bheur hag** (VGtM), and began plotting her revenge on Frostsveld using her new powers. She is using the yetis as minions to do her dark bidding, eating children and laying waste to the town.

Auntie Hesla's primary goal is to inflict pain on the townsfolk in revenge for the way they treated her, but that doesn't have to mean more yeti attacks. Auntie Hesla offers a deal: she will leave the town alone in exchange for a child, sent to her lair each year on the coldest and longest night of the year.

Peculiar Objects Table

1d6	Object
1	A kenku skull with two false crystal eyes in its sockets. The skull repeats the last word spoken to it
2	A large charcoal coloured wax candle whose flame burns sapphire blue. It smells slightly of cinnamon
3	A hanging basket holding a veritas plant. If the smoke from the leaves of this plant is inhaled a character must make a DC 18 Charisma saving throw or be compelled to tell only the truth for three minutes. A character who succeeds a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature/Arcana) check recognizes the plant
4	A glass globe with blue smoke swirling within it. If one stares at the smoke for one minute, the viewer sees a vision of that which they fear most
5	A small wooden box with a snowy owl engraved on the lid. The box emits a high pitched screech (as per the alarm spell) if opened by anyone other than the owner
6	A small, ornate, medicine cabinet with bottles labeled as various potion or ritual components. One bottle labeled "a child's teeth" is empty



The Cave. The floor of the cave is covered in ice, and is therefore slippery. The cave is difficult terrain. Each time a character moves for the first time on a turn, they must succeed on a **DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) save** or fall prone.
Auntie Hesla's cave has the following lair action: on initiative count 20 (losing ties), one of the screaming frozen faces animates. A **wraith** (MM) floats from the frozen face and enters combat, fighting alongside Auntie Hesla. A total of five wraiths will enter the battle.

Auntie Hesla Tactics. Auntie Hesla prefers to keep the characters talking in an effort to trick them into making the deal. If they do, Auntie Hesla makes no more moves against the town, unless they fail to deliver the children they promise.

If the characters make an aggressive move against Auntie Hesla, she summons her yetis into battle to protect her. The yetis and the wraiths from the lair fight to the death in Auntie Hesla's defence. If Auntie Hesla is reduced to 20 hit points, she tries to flee on her staff. If Auntie Hesla flees, the yetis and wraiths stand down.

Development

Once the characters have made a deal, defeated Auntie Hesla, or died in battle, move to the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

If the characters accepted Auntie Hesla's deal, they must report back to the town. The elders are furious, but can be convinced that the plan is in the best interests of the town with a successful **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. If the characters are successful, Frostsveld sends a child up the mountain each year, as requested, and the characters are celebrated as heroes. If they cannot successfully convince the elders of the plan, the town does not send the first child, and Auntie Hesla leads an attack on the town (this could be a way to continue the adventure).

If the characters kill Auntie Hesla, the town holds a celebration in their honour for defeating the witch and saving Frostsveld from certain destruction.

If Auntie Hesla killed all the characters, or escaped, she regroups, and waits one year before beginning the process of her revenge again. The town never sends anyone to search for the characters' bodies, and Auntie Hesla inters them in her ice wall to become wraiths as part of her defence team.

Rewards

If using the XP system, characters should gain relevant XP for each creature they defeated on the adventure.

If using the milestone system, characters level up if they survive the adventure and bring it to a peaceful conclusion for Frostsveld.

Characters keep any of the Peculiar Objects they take from Auntie Hesla's lair. Additionally, if the town is saved (either by defeating Auntie Hesla, or by convincing the town to sacrifice children to appease her), characters choose one uncommon magic item each (DMG, Chapter 7), provided to them from Frostsveld's collection.

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments:

Being a Canadian, I have a serious relationship with winter. It can be beautiful and peaceful, but it can also be deadly. I wanted to capture the deadliness in this adventure. This adventure is intended to be very difficult. There is a high likelihood the characters will not survive, and if they do, they have to make some very tough choices. Auntie Hesla is of course a villain, but I hope your group will reflect on why she is the way she is. She isn't necessarily sympathetic, but I hope that it's clear that her choices are made within a particular set of circumstances. If treated differently, would Auntie Hesla still have turned to evil? It's hard to say.

Author Bio

Alicia grew up in rural Ontario, Canada. She actually loves the winter a lot. She makes games about queerness, sexism, and feminism. She is also the producer of SideQuestRPG, a twitch channel where she streams TTRPGs with cool people. Find Alicia on twitter @aliciafurness where she will be happy to talk about hags with you.



The Spirit of Midwinter

Written by Lynne M. Meyer

Levels: 8 - 9 Content Warnings: Attempted Child Kidnapping, Depression

SYNOPSIS

The local Midwinter celebrations culminate every year with Grandfather Frost and the Snowmaiden bringing gifts to the town's residents, particularly children. However, this year, something is amiss. Someone is spreading gloom where there should be joy. The gifts that Grandfather Frost has been preparing? Disappearing. And to make matters worse, the kind-hearted winter wizard is starting to get a bad reputation, as people are mistaking the imposter for the real thing! As Grandfather Frost and the Snowmaiden continue to prepare for what should be a joyous holiday, they hire the characters to solve the mystery and restore the spirit of Midwinter before it's too late.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Spirit of Midwinter is intended for 4-5 characters of 8th - 9th level. The party may be returning from another adventure, or perhaps on their way to Midwinter celebrations, when they arrive in Bereysk and decide to take respite from the cold in the only inn available for miles.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Deep in the forests outside the modest town of Bereysk lives an ancient wizard known to the locals as Grandfather Frost, and a young druid they call the Snowmaiden. Grandfather Frost has brought joy to the children of Bereysk every Midwinter for centuries, becoming a beloved fixture of the remote community's celebrations. When the Snowmaiden - whom some suspect to be his granddaughter - arrived many years ago, she quickly became his trusted assistant, guiding him on his rounds in a troika full of presents and caring for their arboreal home.

One tenday ago - unnoticed by wizard or druid, both so busy with their holiday preparations - a new resident made his way into the woods outside Bereysk on the night of the darkest moon. In this beautiful, snow-covered forest, a fey crossing had opened, and through it entered a winter eladrin drawn to the silence and pristine wilderness before him. Soon, however, he discovered the people of Bereysk and saw the great happiness they possessed as they prepared for the upcoming holiday. To the sad and lonely eladrin, their laughter, warm fires, colorful decorations, were a mockery of his pain. With the fey crossing now closed, and unable to leave, Eryn Ereglind turned his bitter heart towards the town.

> **Note:** To run this adventure, you should have, in addition to the Monster Manual, Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes and the Elemental Evil Player's Companion (a WoTC resource available for free on their website). Xanathar's Guide to Everything is helpful, but not required.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Grandfather Frost/Alinar Agathaess
(Ah-lin-ahr Ah-gah-thay-yes)
CG male elf modified **evoker** (VGtM, pg 214)
A powerful winter wizard who came to this forest so long ago that no one remembers his true name any more. Initially aloof, he came to love the people of the Bereysk as he watched the town grow. He delights in bringing joy to them each year during Midwinter.

The Snowmaiden/Beriadhwen Beithe
(Bear-ee-ath-wehn Bayh)
CG female half-elf modified **druid**
The guardian of the forest and Grandfather Frost's assistant during Midwinter. She carries the *Staff of the Snowmaiden* (see Rewards).



Eryn Ereglind
(Eh-rin Eh-eh-glind)
CN male **Winter Eladrin** (MToF, pg. 197), wearing *Gloves of Frostbite* (see Rewards)
White hair tipped in blue cascades past his shoulders. His skin is the palest of blues, and his eyes the color of a frozen lake. He's clad in shades of dark blue, white, and silver.

Vitaliy Filippovich Varkov (Veh-tah-ly Feh-lip-oh-vich Var-kohv)
NG male human **commoner**
35 year old co-owner of The Better Apples Inn, he has short, wavy, brown hair, green eyes, and a medium-length beard. Vitaliy is adept at defusing tensions, well-known for his optimism and talent for making others smile. Husband to Celestyna.

Celestyna Olegovna Varkova
(Seh-leh-steen-a Oh-eh-gohv-nah Var-koh-va)
NG female human **commoner**
34 year old co-owner of The Better Apples Inn along with her husband, blue-eyed Celestyna keeps her long blonde hair up in intricate braids. She is generous and kind, and often gives food to those in need.

CHAPTER 1: A CREEPING GLOOM

The characters begin to realize that something is amiss with the Midwinter spirit in Breysk. They meet the Snowmaiden and get their first indication of what's causing trouble for this peaceful community.

Warm Welcomes

Read or paraphrase the following:

> Shaking off the cold and the snow, you push open the doors of The Better Apples Inn. A trio of young children are placing Midwinter decorations in various places around the common room, disagreeing with each other somewhat on the right way to do so. One of them, a little boy, scurries past you with an evergreen branch in his hand as his sisters tell him to find more ribbon. A woman whose smile is as warm as the hearth she's tending looks up at you. "Welcome, travelers! What can I get you?"

This is **Celestyna Varkova**, quite happy to see guests arrive. Characters engaging her in conversation over the course of the evening can learn the following:

- The three children are her daughters Elena (age 7) and Sofiya (age 4), and her son Viktor (age 3).
- She and her husband inherited the inn from his father; it's been a part of the community for many years.
- They're preparing for Midwinter celebrations. Normally at this time of the year, they would have far more customers; for some reason this year, the mood in the town is more subdued. She insists on trying to keep the spirit up anyway.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> As you settle into your rooms, Vitaliy approaches you with bundles in his arms. "Excuse me, but I believe that these are for you. They arrived last night. Oh, and this." He gives you a single note, sealed with wax.

Each character discovers a beautifully wrapped package with their name on it; inside is a common but fun magic item that seems perfectly tailored to that character's personality.

DM Note: A perfect selection of items for this purpose can be found in Xanathar's Guide to Everything.

The unsigned note is written in flawless calligraphy. The sender offers Midwinter tidings, and asks the characters to meet him at his castle in the morning. Transportation will be provided.

If asked about the sender's identity, Vitaliy and Celestyna tell you that they do not know, but the packages and note appeared in the inn last night. A **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** suggests that they know who it was, but are hesitant to say; Celestyna seems to fear she won't be believed, but Vitaliy appears irritated with the individual in question and doesn't want to speak ill of them. On a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, you learn:

- The gifts were almost assuredly sent by Grandfather Frost.
- Some say he's a wizard; others say he's something more like a god.
- Each Midwinter for hundreds of years, Grandfather Frost has brought presents to good children and joy to the adults of Bereysk. He is helped in his work by a beautiful young woman called the Snowmaiden, who also cares for the animals of the forest.
- It's unusual to receive presents before Midwinter. But then again, this year, Grandfather Frost appears to be acting strangely.



If informed of the note and asked about the castle, they answer that yes, they know it. They tell you:

- Castle Moroz (Moh-rohz) is the home of Grandfather Frost and the Snowmaiden. No one alive has ever actually been inside, but stories exist of some who had visited. It's said to be beautiful.
- This is where Grandfather Frost makes the presents that he gives each year at Midwinter.

To the Castle

The next morning, the promised transportation arrives, ready to take the party to Castle Moroz.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> You awaken from a good night's rest, and head downstairs to see what the innkeepers are preparing for breakfast. Celestyna bids you all a good morning as you arrive. "You've got a visitor," she says excitedly as all three of her children look out the window in amazement. Celestyna continues, "I've been told that you'll have breakfast at your appointment, so you best not delay."
>
> An ornately carved sleigh drawn by a team of three horses abreast awaits you outside. It is large enough for all of you to fit comfortably. The driver is a radiant young woman with bright blue eyes, and light brown hair hanging in a loose braid. She wears a long white and silver coat trimmed in white fur, with a round cap to match.

The **Snowmaiden** is friendly and eager to meet the party. If for any reason the characters decline Grandfather Frost's offer, she attempts to persuade them herself. If that fails and they insist on leaving Bereysk, she follows them at some distance, knowing that they are about to run into some trouble and could use additional help.

Should that happen, adjust the following encounter so the party is the first to arrive on the scene, with the Snowmaiden coming upon them to speak with the villagers, and offer insight and assistance.

> Making your way out of Bereysk, you're quickly reminded that it will be many miles before you come across another town. Snow crunches beneath you with your every movement, and the icy air fills your lungs with every breath you take. Did it get colder overnight?
>
> Your thoughts are interrupted by the sounds of an argument up ahead.

Two **commoners**, one with a sleigh similar to the Snowmaiden's (but more modest in detail and construction), are embroiled in a fierce argument. The 3 **draft horses** are visibly distressed.

The Snowmaiden stops her sleigh, and approaches the men to assess and calm the situation, using a combination of **Wisdom (Animal Handling)** and *speak with animals* to put the horses at ease before they can hurt themselves or others.

Characters wishing to talk to the men must succeed on a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** to calm them down. Otherwise, they glean the following from the argument which continues:

- The two men are brothers. They were traveling together when they were approached by an elf in blue robes, who seemed to be in need.
- As soon as they got close, one of the men started acting strangely and attacked the other, stealing his parcels from his sleigh and giving them to the elf.
- The two brothers started to fight, only to look up and see that the blue elf had disappeared along with one of the sleighs and all their items.

Suddenly, one of the men realizes who's in front of him. "You're the Snowmaiden! What was this? Some kind of cruel trick from your boss?" He spits the words out like venom. "Living in a castle's not enough for him now? Instead of giving, he's decided to start taking?" He grumbles and clambors into the remaining sleigh with his brother, still angry. Genuine pain and concern washes over the Snowmaiden. "It wasn't him! I'm so sorry, but it wasn't him. He would never -"

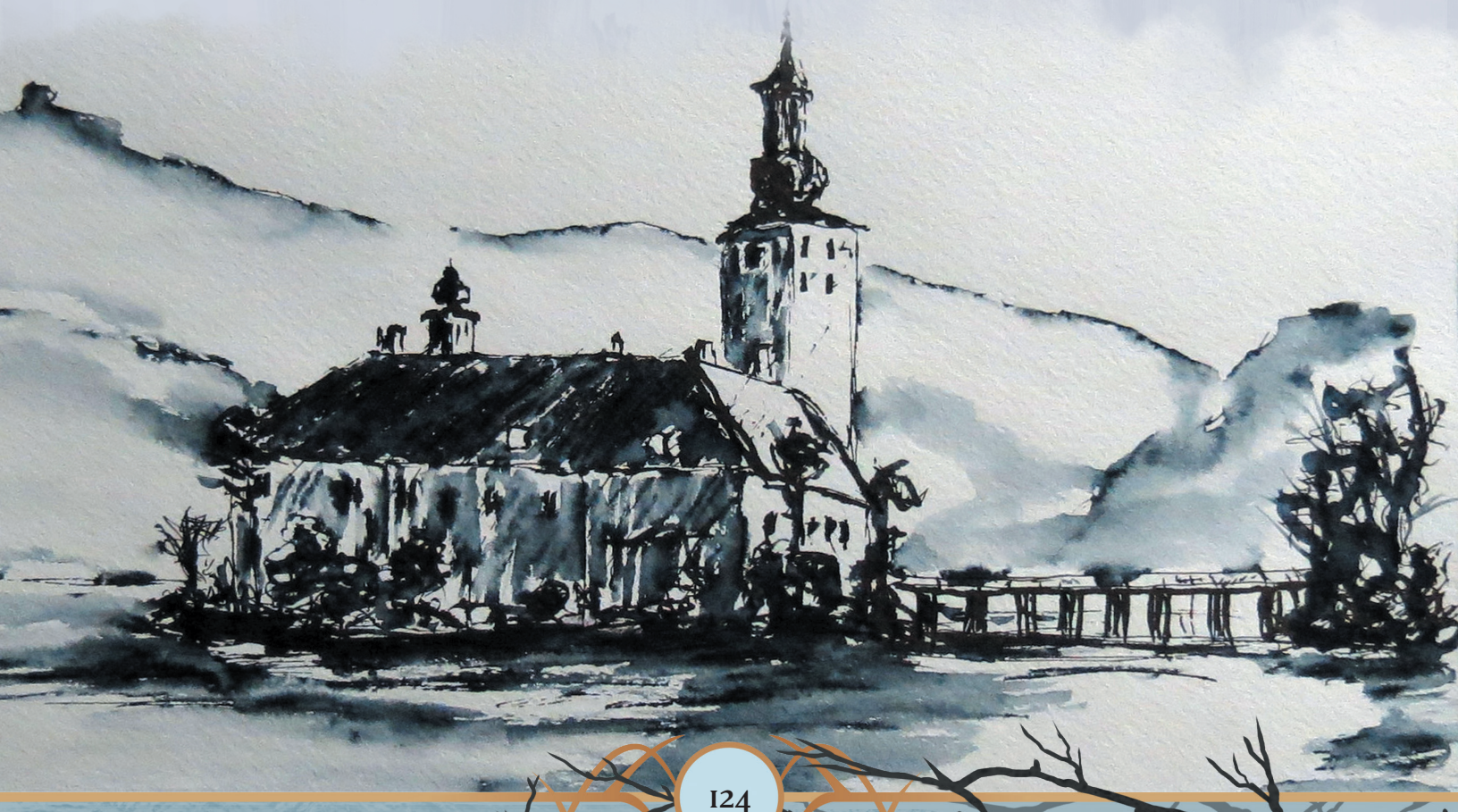
The brothers leave in a huff, ignoring her words.

She steels herself, and looks to you. "This is why we need you." She climbs into the sleigh, and readies the horses.

"Come."

Development

On to Castle Moroz.



CHAPTER 2: MIRROR, MIRROR

The party meets their benefactor and learn that, for all his power, this winter wizard has a problem and needs some assistance.

Are You a Good Wizard?

Read or paraphrase the following:

> You've been traveling some distance when you realize that the composition of the forest has changed. Instead of a preponderance of evergreens, here you're in a thick grove of tall birch trees. The white bark amidst the glistening snow creates an almost ethereal effect as you glide by on the sleigh. At first, you're not sure if your eyes are playing tricks on you, but another moment or two passes and you clearly see it up ahead: Castle Moroz. The stories were right. Constructed of gleaming white stone with pale blue rooftops, it's a stunning contrast to anything you've seen in or near Bereysk.
>
> Before long, the Snowmaiden is leading you inside. "He's probably in his study," she explains. You make your way up a flight of stairs and down a hall, and she respectfully knocks. "Alinar! We're here. Come down for breakfast and meet your guests." You hear a shuffle of papers, and the quick mewing of a cat being disturbed from its napping place. "Coming! Hold your horses, Beriadhwen." The doors fling open, and you see Grandfather Frost standing there with a twinkle in his eyes as he realizes his unintentional joke. He laughs; she smirks.
>
> Seemingly ageless, he somehow appears both old and youthful, with his long, white beard and sparkling sapphire eyes. He wears a long, light blue coat trimmed in white fur and richly detailed in silver stars and swirls. On his head is a matching round cap. He looks at you all, as if recognizing old friends. "Welcome! Let's have breakfast, shall we?"

Grandfather Frost and the Snowmaiden explain that they were excited to find capable adventuring folks coming to town, because they have a problem but no time to attend to it themselves with Midwinter being just days away.

They tell you:

- Someone has been impersonating Grandfather Frost - intentionally or otherwise, they're not sure - and harassing the residents of Bereysk.
- It started just over one tenday ago, and with every day that passes, the harassment gets worse. What started off as seemingly mere pranks have become serious, even dangerous. Parents speak of their children acting as if charmed by an outside force, and starting to wander away into the cold on their own. People aregetting angry, sad, and scared, and they think Grandfather is to blame.
- A few days ago, someone broke into Grandfather Frost's workshop and stole a bag full of presents that were to go to the town's children. Grandfather Frost is working hard to replace the lost items and ensure that every child still has a present in time for Midwinter.
- They need you to find the imposter and put an end to all this, and to do so before Midwinter.

The presents he gave the characters are theirs to keep whether or not they take the job. However, if the party agrees to help Grandfather Frost, he gives them each one additional item: a *Talisman of Endurance* (see Rewards).

After breakfast, Snowmaiden takes them back to the village or wherever they decide to go first.

...Or Are You an Evil Wizard?

Time for the party to figure out next steps, based on what little they know. Going back into Bereysk and talking to various townspeople can help them get an idea for where to look for, and how to potentially lure, their target. For example:

- On a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check** while talking with a group of parents, the party convinces them to share what they know about what appear to be attempted kidnapping by way of magic. In each case, it was a child under the age of 7. All the children love to sing, but since then have been shy to do so.
- When back at the inn, on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check** the party realizes that some of the holiday decorations are now missing. If asked about them, neither Celestyna nor Vitaliy knows what happened. On a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Persuasion) check**, the youngest child, Viktor, however, tells the party what he saw: a man dressed in blue took them and then popped out of the room.
- Merchants readily tell the party that they're having a harder time than usual selling their Midwinter festival goods. Every time a family comes in to buy, something seems to inexplicably make one or all of them suddenly grumpy or sad, and they leave without buying anything.

The primary takeaway should be this: Displays of happiness, joy, and anything to do with the Midwinter spirit trigger the appearance - and the wrath and spite - of this imposter. The



more that characters can convince the townspeople to keep up the Midwinter Spirit, the more assuredly they'll draw out their target and make him reveal himself to them. If the party is having a difficult time coming to this conclusion, feel free to have the suggestion come from Celestyna or one of the children.

Tactics: If confronted, Eryn first uses his Sorrowful Presence ability and Fey Step, and only after that will attempt his spells. His longbow and sword are absolute last resort for him.

Once they lay eyes on him, the party may identify him as a **Winter Eladrin**, and attempt to track him as he escapes into what he sees as the safety of the forest.

Development

Eryn flees to the forest. If the party is to complete their task, this is their best and perhaps only chance to find him.

CHAPTER 3: PREY IN THE SNOW

To prevent the characters from thwarting him, Eryn enlists the aid of various wintery animals and monsters. Tracking him through the forest, the characters finally find the Eryn at his makeshift home - a beautiful icy cave at a river. Somewhere here was the fey crossing through which he came. He's not going back, though. At first he was content to just spoil the fun. But now he has bigger aims - to replace Grandfather Frost and quell the joyful spirit of Midwinter here forever.

Into the Wilds

Read or paraphrase the following:

> The path through through the woods is arduous. You're grateful for the Talisman that hangs around your neck, knowing that without it, you may very likely freeze to death. This is not a place to get lost. But of course, the cold isn't the only danger out here...

A pack of 5 **winter wolves** watch silently from behind some fallen trees. Characters must succeed on a **DC 20 Dexterity (Stealth) check** or be surprised at the start of the encounter.

If the fight is going badly for the party, have the Snowmaiden appear and aid them, using her *Staff of the Snowmaiden*.

A Fey Crossing

> Pressing forward, you find the tracks again and follow them to their source: A beautiful ice cave at the mouth of a river that cuts through the forest. Everything that the winter eladrin stole is here: Wrapped presents from Grandfather Frost's workshop; the sleigh; household decorations; food for Midwinter parties; finery; and so much more. But you do not see the eladrin himself.

Eryn Ereglind uses Fey Step and appears behind the party at the cave opening. His eyes are full of sadness and rage.

Tactics: Eryn realizes that the party is here to stop him, and will use every means to his avail to ensure his success.

The party has a few options: While they could simply fight to kill, astute or empathetic characters may discern another possible outcome.

On a successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check**, they realize that at his core, Eryn is sad and wants to go home; if that's not possible, he could at least go somewhere that isn't filled with all of this Midwinter festivity that's causing him so much pain.

Characters may attempt a **DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check** to ask Eryn how he arrived - if he has not mentioned it - and determine the next time that the portal will likely be open - one month to the day from when it first appeared, i.e., the next new moon.

He may be willing to listen - particularly if he's on the losing end of the fight, and if the party is truly sympathetic to his plight. A successful **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check** can convince him to wait for the next new moon and go home, or leave this town alone and never come back.

CONCLUSION

If the Winter Eladrin has been defeated or sent home, the mood in Bereysk lifts almost immediately. With the truth of the imposter's deeds now known, Grandfather Frost's reputation is restored, and the townspeople celebrate Midwinter in especially robust spirits.

As a thank you for your aid, Snowmaiden gives the party her Staff.

Rewards

Gloves of Frostbite

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

These elegant white gloves are decorated with small silver snowflakes. While wearing the gloves, you can use an action to cast the frostbite cantrip on one creature that you can see within range.

Staff of the Snowmaiden

Staff, rare (requires attunement)

This lightweight birch staff is elaborately adorned with symbols evoking the beauty of winter. Half the normal weight, it can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you gain the following additional benefits:

- +1 bonus to Armor Class
- Resistance to cold damage
- Advantage on Constitution saving throws
- Advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks

Imbued with the **Guardian** property, the staff whispers warnings to its bearer, granting a +2 bonus to initiative if the bearer isn't incapacitated.

Talisman of Endurance

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

Stars and swirls matching the pattern of Grandfather Frost's coat are etched into this shiny silver disc-shaped amulet, which is imbued with the **Temperate** property. While wearing it, the bearer suffers no harm in temperatures as cold as -20 degrees Fahrenheit or as warm as 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

When I was a child, I fell in love with what I thought was simply Santa Claus as depicted in a Russian forest; the imagery was beautiful and captivated much of what I love about winter. It wasn't until much later in life that I realized that I was actually seeing a distinct figure - Grandfather Frost, or Ded Moroz, who is usually accompanied by his granddaughter Snegurochka, the Snow Maiden. For this story, I wanted to pay homage to some of the traditional aspects of Grandfather Frost, while also giving more depth and agency to the Snowmaiden. In his earliest iterations in Slavic lore, Ded Moroz was depicted as a snow demon or winter wizard; sometimes kind, often cruel, the ambiguous nature of Ded Moroz seems reflective of winter itself. Today, he is a beloved figure associated with New Year celebrations and the giving of presents. I honor his historical dual nature by introducing an adversarial polar opposite as the "true" origin for the conflicted tales told over the centuries. The Snow Maiden, a later addition to the Grandfather Frost lore, is here given a greatly expanded role. Still a "helper" to Grandfather Frost, she now has her own skills, talents, and history, and provides essential care to the forest in which they dwell. Notably, both she and Grandfather Frost are given proper names, not just titles. The Snow Maiden's surname is derived from the Irish word for birch, a tree of tremendous religious and cultural significance to the Celts. In Russia, the birch tree is the very symbol of winter and Russia itself.

Author Bio

Bisexual interfaith and diversity educator and activist Lynne M. Meyer holds a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School, and a Master of Jewish Studies from Spertus Institute. An advocate for inclusivity in gaming, Lynne brings her professional background to her work as a game designer. Named a 2019 New Voices in Gaming scholar, she is best known as a writer and editor for the acclaimed Uncaged anthology, a collection of myth- and folklore-themed adventures written for Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition. Lynne is a chronic illness warrior, devotee of Hekate, and lover of cats and good coffee. Connect with Lynne on Twitter at @Lynne_M_Meyer.

Grandfather Frost (Alinar Agathaess)

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral good

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)
Hit Points 66
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Con +5
Skills Arcana +7, History +7
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Elvish

Spellcasting. Grandfather Frost is a 12th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks. Grandfather Frost has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *frostbite,* light,* prestidigitation, ray of frost**
1st Level (4 slots): *comprehend languages, mage armor, identify*
2nd Level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, invisibility, snilloc's snowball swarm**
3rd Level (3 slots): *counterspell, leomund's tiny hut, sleet storm*
4th Level (3 slots): *conjure minor elementals, ice storm,**
5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold,* scrying*
6th level (1 slot): *investiture of ice, wall of ice**

Sculpt Spells. When Grandfather Frost casts an evocation spell that forces other creatures it can see to make a saving throw, it can choose a number of them equal to 1 + the spell's level. These creatures automatically succeed on their saves against the spell. If a successful save means a chosen creature would take half damage from the spell, it instead takes no damage from it.

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d6 – 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 – 1) bludgeoning damage if used with both hands.

The Snowmaiden (Beriadhwen Beithe)

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral good

Armor Class 12 (17 with barkskin)
Hit Points 27
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	12(+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (0)

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Druidic, Elvish
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The Snowmaiden is a 4th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The Snowmaiden has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, mending, shillelagh*
1st Level (4 slots): *animal friendship, cure wounds, longstrider, speak with animals*
2nd Level (3 slots): *barkskin, pass without a trace*

Ability. While attuned to and wielding her staff, the Snowmaiden has advantage on Constitution saving throws, advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks, and +2 to initiative.

Actions

Staff of the Snowmaiden. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit (+5 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage, 5 (1d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 7 (1d8 +3) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh.





Into the Ghosts who Have Walked Here Before

Written by Annamyriah de Jong

Level: 10

SYNOPSIS

A silent city sits on the outskirts of civilizations, long ago abandoned. The local communities have used the space as a resting place for their dead for hundreds of years without issue. But now, something seems to have woken the spirits resting inside, and the silence of the city has been broken.

Into The Ghosts is a mid-level adventure intended for 3-6 10th level characters, but could be easily adjusted for slightly higher or lower levels by adjusting the amount of enemies involved in combat.

It can be easily placed into any campaign where the party is doing some amount of long-distance travelling and can hear about or stumble across the city.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Either the adventurers stumble across Hiemal themselves, or are asked by members of one of the communities that utilize it as a graveyard to investigate the strange occurrences that they've noticed: loud sounds and screams coming from the city, a feeling of being watched or followed from people that enter it, and more.

If a member of a local community asks them to investigate or deal with the disturbances, they promise that they'll provide some sort of monetary reward of at least 10 GP per party member. They also promise to ask around town to see if anyone else will contribute to the reward.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Hiemal is usually as still as the grave. For about the last month, it has been much more lively. Ghosts roam the buildings and streets, causing the the events that people in the nearby towns have noticed.

Living statues and gargoyles protect the city from graverobbers and the like. They are still unless there is a threat to the city's peace. With these recent developments, they're far more active than usual and can be found roaming the city searching for the cause of the disturbance.

The cause of this disturbance is a poltergeist wreaking havoc on her surroundings because she wasn't buried according to her wishes.

In life, she was Elyse Greene, a warlock who took a vow of solitude to serve her patron. This vow led her to live in a small cabin nestled in the nearby hills, where, eventually, she met Laurel Hartel. Laurel was a cartographer who stumbled across Elyse's home while mapping the local area. The two hit it off and continued writing letters to each other through the years. They fell deeply in love, but Elyse's vow kept steady. They promised each other that while they couldn't spend their lives together, they would spend their deaths together, buried beside each other. Laurel passed away first and was buried in Hiemal some years ago. About a month ago, Elyse passed away as well, and was also buried in the city as anyone who dies in the area is - though not beside Laurel as the two had wanted. She never spoke her wishes to anyone, and so it was never carried out. She has roamed the city at night ever since, searching for her love and leaving destruction in her wake.

To end the chaos and return the city to its usual quiet, the two must be buried together.

CITY HISTORY

At one point Hiemal was decently populated, but a series of bad harvests, famine, and sickness led to everyone fleeing to nearby towns.

Since then, it has been used as a cemetery for those civilizations. Over the years it has filled up, and they've gone from burying bodies in parks to burying bodies in any scrap of dirt, to turning the buildings themselves into makeshift mausoleums.

GRAVE NAME GENERATOR

The city is filled with gravestones. Some of the names on them are still readable. If you need a name, roll 1d10 twice - once for the first name and once for the surname. The dates on any gravestones, if the party can read them, vary from decades old to within the past year.

First Name	Surname
Rebekka	Pruitt
Darragh	Juarez
Celyn	Morin
Cassius	Walton
Ewen	Burch
Donnic	Stonebreaker
Elaiana	Bellamy
Ophelia	Voci
Sufyaan	Moretti
Jamie	Rowley

MONSTER STATS

- **Elyse** uses the the poltergeist variant **specter** (MM) statblock.
- **Laurel** uses the **ghost** (MM) statblock.

A NOTE ABOUT LAUREL

It is possible for the party to encounter Laurel's ghost or grave at any point in this adventure. It is written as occurring in chapter 2 (see **Encountering Laurel** for details), but any grave they come across could be hers, and they can see her ghost near her grave.

CHAPTER 1

When the party enters Hiemal, read or paraphrase the following:

> The city looks like it may have been something notable at some point in time, but now the elements and years have taken their toll on it. Once-tall buildings lay in crumpled, snow-covered heaps against the ground, and dark red vines have crept their way up the wreckage. Any clear patch of land has been haphazardly used as a burial site; flat stones engraved with names, wordless makeshift markers, and proper headstones litter the landscape. The snow that lays like a heavy blanket over its features give everything an unnatural softness and stillness - like the city is simply on pause, waiting for something.

Watchers Among The Snow

If the party enters the city during the day, the character with the highest passive Perception notice that they're being watched by various stone **statues** and **gargoyles** who seem to be following them as they walk. A **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that the statues, for now, are simply keeping an eye on the party.

A **DC 17 Intelligence (History) check** allows a character to know the information in the City History section.

Neither move while they're being actively looked at, but are capable of it. When they move, they leave heavy trails through the snow, scraping up the dirt and grass beneath. If the party purposefully damages any part of the city or any of the figures, the statues and gargoyles attack the party, but otherwise they are non-combative.

See **City Encounters** for other optional events that can happen at this time.

City Encounters

Statues. In the event that the party draws the ire of the statues by damaging any structure in the city, combat proceeds with a group of 5 to 7 **statues** and **gargoyles** attacking the party (scaled for desired difficulty and party level/size.) They don't fight intelligently; they're little more than enchanted hunks of stone, and go after what they perceive to be the target that threatens the city the most. They cannot be reasoned with, but might be dissuaded from combat if the party fixes whatever they interacted with to gain the attention. The city's guardians do everything they can not to further harm the city, so it is possible to trap them.

The **statues** use the default **gargoyle** (MM) statblock, with the following adjustments: The Bite attack is removed and replaced with another Claw attack. Instead of dealing damage, the statues

can grapple the target (escape DC 13).

The **gargoyles** also use the default gargoyle statblock, but gain Spider Climb as an ability. The gargoyle can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Will-o'-Wisps. The city contains a handful of brightly colored lights (**Will-O'-Wisps** (MM)) who do what they can to lure the party into trouble; they employ their blinking lights or speak in repetitive, pleading whispers from off in the distance to do this. They lead the party into buildings that collapse upon entering (**DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** to avoid being hit, taking 3d6 bludgeoning damage on a failure), guide them deeper into the city and try to get them lost (**DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) check** to find a familiar area in a timely manner), or attempt to split the party. They may also lead them under large, precariously hanging icicles which will fall as the result of any average or louder sound - normal speaking, etc, will trigger them. **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** to avoid being hit, taking 2d6 piercing damage on a failure.

If one of the party is injured as a result of the wisp's actions, the wisps Shock the party member until the wisps are defeated, driven away, or until the party member is unconscious - in which case, the wisps use their Consume Life ability.

Ghosts. The **ghosts** (MM) are not usually as active as they currently are - their long sleep is being interrupted by the chaos that Elyse is causing. The party may see them in windows of buildings, travelling listlessly down the downtrodden roads, or trying to carry out various tasks they did in life.

Some may outright attack the party, thinking that they're the cause of the trouble, others may simply watch the party, and others yet may try to speak to the party, incoherently begging them to sort out whatever's going on, pass messages onto family members, or offer warnings that may or may not be useful - typical unsettling ghost communication.

A Decorated Grave. The party stumbles across a grave (which a **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals to have been dug within the past week or so) that has been decorated with holiday trappings. A garland of evergreen boughs and holly berries rests across the top of the gravestone, lightly dusted with snow. A small pile of wrapped presents sits in front of it, also lightly covered with snow. Within these presents are:

- A warm knitted sweater
- A small collection of gemstones worth 20 gold
- A cheap romance novel
- A small raven statuette (a Silver Raven Figurine of Wondrous Power (DMG))

An Incoming Chill

When the sun entirely sets, **Elyse** (human **ghost** (MM), she/her, chaotic good) begins her wreaking of havoc around the city as she searches for her lover's grave. The party hears sounds of destruction - shattering windows, collapsing buildings, horrifying shrieks and screaming - off in the distance, but coming closer to them by the minute. Eventually the party and Elyse end up in the same area. When they do, the gargoyles and statues that have been following her, aware of the destruction but unaware of its invisible perpetrator, assume that the characters are responsible for the broken windows, thrown bricks, and shattered (non-living) statues that she creates. They attack.

Use the statue encounter information from **City Encounters**, but do not allow the statues to be dissuaded from their attacks. Elyse tries not to involve herself in the combat, and continues her path of destruction away from the party. If she is involved, she will leave before she is defeated. Destruction follows in her wake.

Development

If the party follows after Elyse, continue onto chapter two, Following Elyse.

If the party returns to rest, they continue to hear the poltergeist storming through Hiemal until it nears dawn. At this point, Elyse returns to her resting place. Continue onto chapter two, Encountering Laurel.



CHAPTER 2

These two events can happen in any order. Once both are completed, or when it feels natural to do so, move on to chapter 3.

Following Elyse

Elyse continues to storm through the city searching for her lover's grave for the rest of the night. The invisible force of destruction pauses occasionally to violently clear the snow from graves. When it doesn't bear the name of Laurel, she is furious and lashes out against something in the city.

As the first bits of daylight fill the sky, the party reaches Elyse's resting place. It is contained within a brick building on the southern edge of the city. Read or paraphrase the following.

> A snow drift nearly covers the entire left wall where wind has pushed it. Red vines stretch across the front of the building like crawling veins. The area around the entrance to the building Elye's coffin is easily the most destroyed section of the town. Shattered window glass glints against disturbed snow, gravestones lay in pieces, and the door lies in splinters with only a small part of it clinging to the hinges in the broken door frame.
>
> Inside the building is in no better repair. It was at one point a home - there is a ruined and damp couch pushed against one wall to be forgotten, a fireplace that has seen more rat nests than fire in the past decades, and a bookshelf that once held books but now only holds slumping and unreadable heaps of paper. Among all these things are four coffins, all seeming decently new.

Near the coffins on the floor of the room is Stoneslayer.

> ***Stoneslayer***
> This adamantine weapon has gone unused since its owner's burial here. What weapon it is depends on the party's needs: it is either a greatsword, a collection of two daggers, or a quiver of 10 arrows or crossbow bolts with adamantine-coated tips. The weapon is otherwise book standard (PHB).

A hallway that branches from the east of this room, and an open door sits on the south wall. The door leads to a kitchen that is in a similar state of disrepair, and also has a handful of coffins - much like the rest of the house.



Hopefully the party has learned not to mess with the coffins at this point, but if not, see Statues in **City Encounters**.

Elyse heads down the hallway, kicking up broken furniture and scraps of wallpaper in her wake. Once she reaches the edge of a doorway, she vanishes. She's oblivious to the party's following her if they do.

Elyse's Resting Place

This room is much like the rest of the house - in poor repair and looking like a heartbroken poltergeist swept through.

The one coffin inside sits on the remnants of a bedframe. It looks like someone picked up the dead person's entire life and shoved it into this room - papers and journals fill every surface, uncluttered and heaped. Unlabelled boxes line the far wall, covering the window in this room. A **DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check** allows a character to surmise these items have been here for about a month.

An inspection of the boxes reveal them to be full of personal belongings, such as clothing. On a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, a wooden box with two unlabelled and experimental potions is found.

- A *potion of cold resistance* held in an old wine bottle. It's partially crystallized, but still consumable
- A *potion of healing* contained in a dented metal flask

An inspection of the coffin or a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check** on the room in general reveals that this coffin belongs to Elyse Greene.

A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** on the journals reveals them to be Elyse's personal journals. They're primarily filled with accounts of her uneventful and lonely days, but some pages mention Laurel. Local flowers are pressed between these pages, staining the paper, but the text is still able to be read. The overall information is the same as what can be found in the letters. On a failure, the journal pages are worn from time and illegible.

A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check** on the papers reveals some of them to be mundane things - shopping lists, notes on wildlife, to-do lists - and some of them to be love letters between Elyse Greene and Laurel Hartel. On a failure, the papers are too destroyed to make out any of the writing.

The Letters

These letters span Laurel and Elyse's relationship. They include notes from the time they met and a handful of unsent letters written after Laurel's apparent death. More or less, they explain what was written in the Adventure Background between these two characters.

The important information in these letters are:

- Elyse and Laurel were in a romantic relationship
- Circumstances kept them physically apart
- They promised to be buried near each other to be together in death
- Laurel died unexpectedly
- Elyse learned that Laurel had passed away, but didn't find out where in the city she was buried
- Elyse didn't have a chance before her own death to go to the city and find Laurel's grave

Encountering Laurel

This encounter occurs during the day.

As the party journeys around Hiemal, a successful **DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check** allows them to notice the ghost of a woman lingering near a grave. She seems confused, like she is looking for something. Attempts to talk with her are met only with the question of "Where is she?" This is Laurel, and this is Laurel's grave.

If the party goes out looking intentionally for her gravestone, they have a 25 percent chance to find it.
Have them roll d100. If the number is 25 or below, the grave that they find is Laurel Hartel's. If it is higher than 25, it is a random grave. You can apply the two seperate d10 numbers to the gravestone name table.

Development

After both of these events have occurred, the party should have enough information to realise they need to move one or both of the coffins. When they reach one of the graves with the intent to move the coffin, continue on to chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

This is the very thing that the statues are here to guard against. They're not pleased.

A Horrible Thundering...

Nothing seems to happen until the party interacts with the coffin. Almost immediately after they change anything about it (open it, move it, etc,) a deafening rumble can be heard heading directly for the party's location.

This is a **Statue Abomination** - a shambling collection of statues and gargoyles that have formed one terrible mass. The abomination is at least twelve feet tall. It is a hunched-over, hulking form, made up of a dozen or so fused stone beings. It cannot move quietly or gracefully, and has no desire to do so.

The characters have only a few moments to prepare themselves for the fight before the abomination is smashing into the area. Provide them with one action of preparation each (i.e., cast a protection spell, hide, etc.)

Statue Abomination Encounter

The statue abomination uses the default **stone golem** (MM) statblock.

This monster functions much in the same way as the other constructs do. It is narrow-minded, focusing only on making sure that whoever caused its formation is defeated - whether that is run from the city or killed, it doesn't care. Where it differs from the other constructs, though, is that it will destroy parts of the city if it has to. It does not want to, but it will if forced to do so.

If the party has not harmed the city before this point, reversing whatever they did to invoke the abomination's wrath (moving the coffin back to its place, closing the lid, etc.) causes it to pause until they attempt to move the coffin again. This only works once.

If the party has harmed the city and was previously attacked by the constructs, this does not work. They've already proved themselves troublemakers.

With the abomination defeated, the party is free to do what they want to or need to with the bodies. The other constructs may still bother them (see **City Encounters**, and reduce the amount of constructs by one or two if you add in this encounter,) but another abomination doesn't form.

Development

Laying Elyse and Laurel to rest near each other ends this section of the story.

Conclusion

With the poltergeist sated, the city quiets down once more. The statues still defend it if anything is willfully harmed, but are less vigilant in their surveillance. The feeling of being watched is nearly entirely gone.

Rewards

XP Rewards

Add the total XP obstacles overcome by the party, then divide it evenly amongst the characters to find individual earnings.

Event	XP
Statues/Gargoyles - Combat	450 XP per 1
Statue Abomination - Combat	5,900 XP
Will-o'-Wisps - Combat	450 XP per 1

Item Rewards

If the party picked up the adamantine weapon, they gain Stoneslayer.

> ***Stoneslayer***
> This adamantine weapon has gone unused since its owner's burial here. What weapon it is depends on the party's needs: it is either a greatsword, a collection of two daggers, or a quiver of 10 arrows or crossbow bolts with adamantine-coated tips. The weapon is otherwise book standard (PHB).

If the party encountered the 'A Decorated Grave' encounter and took the gifts that were left at the grave, they gained:

- Assorted gems worth 20 GP
- A Silver Raven Figurine of Wondrous Power (DMG)
- A very warm sweater
- A bad romance novel

If the party looked through the boxes in Elyse's room, they gained:

- A potion of cold resistance
- A potion of healing

If the party ventured into the city on request of someone in a nearby town, upon returning and assuring them that the problem is dealt with, they gain:

- 250 GP, pooled together by members of the town
- An invitation to a warm, hearty meal

Author Bio

Annamyriah is currently a student in the PNW, where she lives with her cat, Yam, and plays a lot of games. Other D&D work of hers can be found dmsguild.com under the same name, other games can be found at annamdejong.itch.io, and she can be reached on Twitter at @annamdejong.





Revenge of the Forgotten

Written by Jessica Marcrum

Level: 10

Content Warnings: Possession, References to Harm and Death of Children, Undead, Vore

SYNOPSIS

A diverse mountain town has forgotten its roots until one solstice night when they are attacked by nearly all of their folklore monsters at once. Adventurers must find the cause of these attacks and end them one way or another. This is an adventure optimized for 4 level 10 characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Characters may be Schneedorfen residents or merely passing through on a mountaineering or hunting expedition.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Schneedorfen is a small but diverse village perched high in the mountains. Many mountain climbers passing through Schneedorfen for a quick drink and warm meal were so charmed by its rustic hospitality that they ended up settling down and building a life instead of returning to their valley homes. Each settler brought their traditions and gods, and now a large crop of fey, mythological beasts, and deities live in the mountains overlooking Schneedorfen. Over the centuries, the cultures have merged and beliefs are no longer as potent as they once were. The worshipped beings have begun to starve and have chosen this midwinter to remind Scheedorfen of their power.

CHAPTER 1: AN UNQUIET EVENING

It is the darkest night of winter. A light snow falls over Schneedorfen. The moon rises and townsfolk either head home or to the Yeti's Rest for a quick drink.

Combatants and Non-Player Characters of Note

Appleblossom Brandywine - (halfling CG **commoner** (MM), she/her), proprietor of Yeti's Rest
Algernon Blackclaw - (half-elf N **ghost** (MM), he/him), deceased adventurer and Yeti's Rest's former owner
Ghosts - (any race N **ghosts**, any pronouns)
Jólakötturinn, aka The Yule Cat -- (see Appendix), loves eating the unfashionable
Kimiko van der Hynde - (human NG **commoner**, they/them), proprietor of Frosted Fashions
Mari Lwyd - (see Appendix), an undead horse who enjoys riddles
Tachibana Ayumi - (human LG **ghost**, she/her), Kimiko's great-grandmother
The Hostler - (tiefling CN **ghost**, they/them), Mari Lwyd's caretaker, loves alcohol
Yule Lads - (**smoke mephits** (MM), he/him), they love pranks

The Yeti's Rest is bustling with a diverse group of patrons. Appleblossom happily serves drinks to adventurers and, if asked, explains that due to happy coincidence, she took over Yeti's Rest from an adventurer also initialed A. B. Appleblossom is knowledgeable of Schneedorfen's history and gladly tells adventurers that her grandmother and aunt used to take all sorts of precautions in the winter to ward against witches, monsters, and ghouls, but she views the old stories as silly superstition.

Most patrons of the Yeti's Rest are there to enjoy their drinks but, if asked, are happy to share that they believe most of their ancestor's superstitions are nonsense. No one can remember the last time anyone in town left out food, clothing, or offerings to the winter spirits.

Kimiko is drinking at the tavern, wearing up to the minute wintery couture. Adventurers who succeed on a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check** convince Kimiko to share that business is slower than usual, and they almost wish people were still afraid of Jólakötturinn, at least. Characters who succeed on a **DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check** see that Kimiko's statements are purely based on financial gain and that they don't believe in Jólakötturinn, either.

Adventurers with **passive Perception 15+** notice four areas of the tavern (up to the party, but ideal sports are a corner of the bar, an empty corner of the room, a table, and a strangely cold spot near the fire) that feel colder than others. Characters must succeed on a **DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana, Investigation) check** to ascertain the bar is haunted.

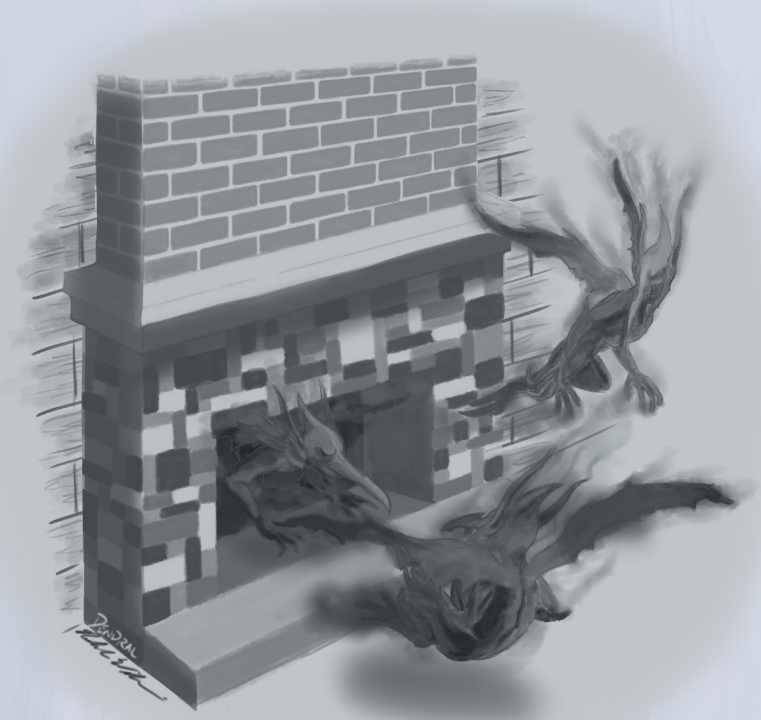
Adventurers with **passive Perception 18+** feel the ground begin to tremble and hear a shriek from outside. Any characters who go outside continue directly on to Riddles and Snacks.

Pranks and Ghost Stories

With a cackle of laughter, six of the Yule Lads (**smoke mephits**) tumble out of the fireplace. Algernon Blackclaw, Tachibana Ayumi, and two additional **ghosts** appear in the previously noted haunted locations. Adventurers with the Entertainer or Sage background or who succeed on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana, or History) check** know that these are only half of the Yule Lads.

The ghosts want to warn the town of impending doom. Algernon despairs that it is far too late to feed Gryla and "the three are furious." If asked, he shares that no one follows the rituals and the creatures are starving. If pressed, he reveals that he does not know the identity of "the three," only that they are powerful and are leading the other creatures. "The attacks won't stop until they're satisfied."

Ayumi begs Kimiko to provide free clothing to the townsfolk before "that dreadful cat eats them all." Kimiko is shocked at seeing her dead great-grandmother, but agrees to heed her warning and provide free clothing to the townsfolk if characters succeed on a **DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check**. If Ayumi's ghost has been killed, adventurers make this check at disadvantage. If successfully persuaded, Kimiko immediately leaves to begin dispensing clothing to townsfolk.



Tactics. Yule Lads want to cause chaos and are more interested in breaking things and irritating patrons than fighting. If reduced to 8 hit points, they attempt to flee by dashing up the fireplace.

Ghosts are here to warn, not to fight. If attacked, they attempt to scare their attackers off and continue to press their point, utilizing possession to open the tavern doors and reveal the chaos outside. If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, they utilize etherealness and flee.

Once the situation with the Yule Lads and ghosts has been dealt with in some way, there is a loud knock at the tavern door. Adventurers who have not previously gone outside the tavern now feel the ground shake beneath their feet.

> **Note:** If adventurers split their party, choosing to answer the door while also speaking to the ghosts, the Yule Lads leave once Mari Lwyd enters The Yeti's Rest.

Riddles and Snacks

Mari Lywd, accompanied by The Hostler, paws impatiently at the ground in front of the door. "Tell us a riddle / sing us a song / give us a drink / you may yet live long," the Hostler intones. Just behind

them, a sign for Frosted Fashions hangs on a closed building across the street. In the distance, Jólakötturinn is seen devouring townsfolk, the ground trembling with every step he takes.

Mari Lywd and The Hostler want to get inside Yeti's Rest and "drink" their fill of alcohol. They cannot enter until they first engage in a riddle battle with those at the door. Each character at the door must exchange riddles or songs with Mari Lywd and The Hostler. Mari Lywd and The Hostler attack anyone they notice pushing past them without first engaging them in a riddle contest, including bar patrons. Once each character at the door has exchanged a riddle, song, or joke with Mari Lywd and The Hostler, the duo enter the tavern and proceed to remember the effects of alcohol.

Sample Riddles and Songs for The Hostler

1. Three doors stand afore ye. One leads to a pit of boiling lava. One leads to a team of armed assassins. One leads to a cage of winter wolves wot haven't been fed in months. Which do you choose? Be wise! (A: The third door, the winter wolves are dead if they're caged and haven't been fed in months.)
2. Ye be in a cold, dark house in the winter. Ye have but one match. There is a candle and a wood burning stove. Which do ye light first, ken? (A: The match)
3. What bites ye with no teeth? (A: Frost)
4. A trio made of frigid hearts who laugh at your desires / They curse the town of Schneedorfen and put out all her fires / The kiddies 'et by trolls and cats, parents smothered by their grief / And Mari and her Hostler getting drunk beyond belief!
5. Knock knock! (Who's there?) Icy! (Icy who?) Icy a great big cat o'er there, now hurry up with your jokes afore it eats the whole bloody town!

Tactics. Mari Lywd does not attack anyone who uses their turn to tell a joke, riddle, or song. The Hostler responds to each joke, riddle, or song with one of their own. They only fight if they feel cheated out of a riddle. If Mari Lywd or The Hostler are reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, they fly away together.

If Kimiko is bringing new clothing to townsfolk, Frosted Fashions is left unlocked, otherwise, adventurers must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check** to pick the lock. Alternatively, the door or windows can be smashed. The door has an AC of 15 and 27 (5d10) hit points. The windows have an AC of 13 and 4 (1d8) hit points. Adventurers who go through a broken window must succeed on a **DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) saving throw** or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage from broken glass. The shop is packed with fashionable and warm winter clothing.

Once adventurers have acquired clothing, each adventurer may deliver a set of clothing to a family based on their walking speed. Each building is approximately 40 feet door to door, so the houses next to Frosted Fashions are 40 feet away, two houses away are 80 feet, and so on. When crossing the street, add an additional 20 feet to travel distance.

Jólakötturinn walks to a new home and devours an unfashionable family every 5 minutes until he has eaten 20 families. He refuses to fight anyone wearing clothing purchased in the last year unless directly attacked. Once 20 families of townsfolk are either given new clothes or eaten, Jólakötturinn goes home to Gryla's cave.

If previously convinced to give away her wares, Kimiko passes out new clothing to one family every 10 minutes

Tactics. Jólakötturinn only wants to eat the unfashionable, but concedes to eat any who bother him. If reduced to 25 hit points or fewer, Jólakötturinn flees home.

Scaling for Difficulty

For weak parties, reduce Jólakötturinn's claw attacks by 1.

For strong parties, add the following condition: Jólakötturinn shakes the ground when he walks. Characters must succeed on a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** or be knocked prone.

Development

The attack of the winter beasts survived, the adventurers must find out why these attacks suddenly began and how to stop them.

CHAPTER 2: A STEEP CLIMB

The remaining townsfolk gather to mourn their losses. Some share that they forgot how to prevent winter monsters from coming in the first place and blaming themselves, mourn the loss of connection to their cultures as well as the deaths of their friends.

Combatants and Non-Player Characters of Note

Dorotea "Granny" Holle -- (wood elf CN **evoker** (MM), she/her), the town's oldest resident and healer

Yule Lads -- (**ice mephits** (MM), he/him), they love pranks

> An older woman begins to laugh mirthlessly. "I bet you thought they'd bring candy, right? My gods. You're lucky to escape with your life when Frau Perchta comes calling! She's the one behind this, you can be sure of it."

Dorotea, an ancient elf, approaches the party. She reveals herself as the daughter of one of the town's founders. She presses that the party must go up the mountain and stop Frau Perchta and her companions before all Schneedorfen is destroyed. If asked, she shares that she herself was once revered as a goddess, though now she is seen as little more than the town's mad old woman. She founded the spinning industry in the town, paving the way for their profitable clothing line centuries later. She shares that she provided gifts to children who struggled in the winter and painlessly killed those who were too far gone to starvation, sickness, and frostbite.

Succeeding on a **DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that she truly believed the children she killed would die, and she has no regrets about easing their pain. Succeeding on a **DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that Dorotea feels immense guilt and fear regarding Frau Perchta. Adventurers must succeed on a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check** for her to reveal that she believes her family brought Frau Perchta to Schneedorfen in the first place. If asked for information about Frau Perchta, she shares they once bonded over spinning, but she quickly learned Perchta's true joy is slitting open a lazy person's stomach, filling it with rocks, and then sewing them back up. She suspects that as the town has grown, the Frau has gathered like-minded friends.



Dorotea knows Frau Perchta lives higher up the mountain. She warns the party that "bad things come in threes." If asked to guide them, Dorotea refuses to accompany the party on their journey, claiming she is too feeble to make it up the mountain. Adventurers must succeed on a **DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check** to convince her to accompany them.

If adventurers do not wish to further investigate the problem at this point, Appleblossom and Kimiko offer to pay each party member 500 gp each for solving the problem.

An Icy Escapade

The ground is icy and should be treated as Difficult Terrain. Any character not wearing warm clothing or otherwise immune to cold weather effects must succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** every hour or suffer one level of exhaustion. Adventurers not wearing boots or utilizing hiking gear must succeed on a **DC 15 Strength or Dexterity save** every 3 hours to stay aloft. Those who fail fall several feet down the mountain onto icy rocks, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall plus 4 (2d4) piercing damage.

With Dorotea's directions, or possibly with her guidance, it is easy to find the way up the mountain, though the journey is lengthy. After the first hour, seven Yule Lads appear to pester the characters on their journey. Laughing throughout, they are intent on dissuading them from climbing the mountain and want adventurers to lose their footing.

Tactics. The Yule Lads avoid melee engagement and only utilize claws in attempts to shove adventurers off the mountain. If reduced to 8 hit points or fewer, they cast fog cloud and flee. If present, Dorotea fights on the party's side.

Development

Having survived their climb, the adventurers reach a massive cave. The glow of a fire dances before them.

CHAPTER 3: A WINTRY RECKONING

The wind turns bitter, and it becomes difficult to breathe. A massive troll walks to the front of the cave, arms crossed in front of her chest. She smiles hungrily.

Combatants and Non-Player Characters of Note

La Befana -- (**annis hag** (VGtM), she/her), gives candy to children to encourage bad behavior

Frau Perchta -- (**bheur hag** (VGtM), she/her), slits children's throats and stuffs their bodies with rocks

Gryla -- (**troll** (MM), she/her), guards the coven, mother of the Yule Lads, owner of Jólakötturinn

Yuki-Onna -- (**bheur hag**, she/her), freezes adults with snowy illusions of children

Gryla is accompanied by Jólakötturinn, if alive, and any remaining Yule Lads. She is only fluent in Giant, but has learned a few words in Common from various travelers she has eaten over the centuries. Her favorite snack is children, and she can speak a few halting words of Common, utilizing a horrific approximation of a child's frightened voice. To pass Gryla without a fight, adventurers must succeed on a **DC 18 Charisma (Intimidation) check**. If they are communicating in Common, they make this check at disadvantage. Otherwise, she fights.

Tactics. Gryla summons Jólakötturinn and the Yule Lads to assist her if they are alive. If Jólakötturinn or Gryla are reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, Gryla becomes distraught and concedes the fight.

> ***Scaling for Difficulty***
> If the party is particularly strong and Jólakötturinn has previously been killed, Gryla is accompanied by her husband Leppaludi, a **troll** (MM).

Past Gryla, the cave is paved with cobblestones and lit with lanterns. Snow falls, despite being indoors. Characters reach a snow-covered cottage with frosted windows.

The Forgotten Three

La Befana, disguised as a kindly old woman, opens the door and beckons the adventurers inside to get warm.

> "Come in, come in, my dears! You must be freezing. I've just brewed up something lovely and warm to take the chill right off of you! I do hope you like hot chocolate."

The interior of the cottage appears cozy and feels warm. It is approx. 40 ft. high, and the cave outside of it is about 100 ft. high. Frau Perchta and Yuki-Onna are sitting in rocking chairs, drinking out of teacups. Adventurers with **passive Perception 15 or higher** notice icicles forming around the cup in Frau Perchta and Yuki-Onna's hands.

Yuki-Onna apologizes for Gryla's harsh demeanor and Frau Perchta adds that Gryla and her family are a necessary evil for their safety. If asked who they are, they respond that they are three forgotten deities who now live on the brink of starvation. La Befana shares that she loves nothing more than the laughter of children, and misses hearing that sound. Characters with **passive Insight 14 or higher** notice a subtle smile from Yuki-Onna in response.

Adventurers who succeed on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** notice that the chimney expels outside of the cave. The cave itself is 50 feet by 50 feet with 20-feet high ceilings.

Those who succeed on a **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check** see assorted humanoid bones in the corners of the room.

Frau Perchta explains she was brought to Schneedorfen at its founding. Gryla and her family soon followed. She and La Befana were initially wary of one another, but quickly came to a mutually beneficial arrangement, and she rejoiced when Yuki-Onna came to town. If asked about Mari Lywd, she scoffs that she keeps far away from "that ridiculous horse." If asked about Dorotea, Frau Perchta grows solemn and shares that she once held high hopes for Dorotea. Now, in her eyes, Dorotea is facilitating the coven's starvation. If present, Dorotea silently stares daggers at Frau Perchta.

If asked her goal, Frau Perchta replies that she and her friends thrive on belief and rituals, and if no one believes, there is no reason for them to exist. They want to remind everyone how powerful they are and terrify them into reestablishing the old ways.

Adventurers can convince the coven that new traditions are being formed by succeeding on a **DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check** or through exceptional roleplay. The coven has reminded Schneedorfen they exist, but they, in turn, must accept that things change. Yuki-Onna asks the party to act as their ambassadors and establish acceptable terms between the coven and the town.

Tactics. If adventurers prefer to attack the coven, they fight back. La Befana ends her disguise and melee attacks, aiming for magic users first. If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, she casts fog cloud a final time and flees.

Frau Perchta mounts her greystaff, striking at a distance. If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, she flees through the chimney.

Yuki-Onna mounts her greystaff, striking at a distance. She has major image instead of wall of ice and uses it to cast images of crying children asking for help. If reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, she flees through the chimney.

Development

Now that Gryla and the coven have been dealt with, the party must return to the town with the results of their journey.
If the coven has been killed or dispersed, go to Conclusion A.
If the party agreed to act as ambassadors, go to Conclusion B.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion A: Death of Tradition

The trip down the mountain is treacherous, but otherwise free of monsters. The party is celebrated in Schneedorfen upon their return. Adventurers receive any previously agreed upon payment. Appleblossom, if alive, provides spiced cider to the entire town and free lodging for the party whenever they are in the area. Kimiko, if alive, offers the best of her shop. Only the ghosts appear anxious.

The destruction of the coven sends a shock through the local magical populace. Without the manipulative guidance of Frau Perchta, Schneedorfens spirits are unsure how to proceed. Over time, sightings of magical creatures become so scarce in Schneedorfen that it's as if they never existed at all. The culture of the town becomes homogenized and the old ways are lost completely. A new culture with Schneedorfen-specific cultural celebrations emerges. Within a century, "the night the Forgotten came to dine" is merely a children's fable and a century after that, completely forgotten.

Conclusion B: A Shaky Peace

The party is transported on the backs of Mari Lywd and Jólakötturinn, if alive. The coven's terms are as follows:

1. All spinning must be completed by Solstice
2. Every resident of Schneedorfen must have new clothing by Solstice
3. Everyone stranded on the mountain belongs to the coven
4. Riddles and songs must be answered in kind, followed by food and drink

If the terms are agreed to, the town celebrates the adventurers. Adventurers receive any previously agreed upon payment. Appleblossom, if alive, provides spiced cider to the entire town and free lodging for the party whenever they are in the area. Kimiko, if alive, offers the best of her shop. In the future, the town and magical creatures forge a shaky peace, creating new traditions while maintaining ties to the old.

If the terms are not agreed to, the adventurers are paid any previously agreed payment but are accused of working for the coven and asked to leave quickly. They are no longer welcome in Schneedorfen. The attacks continue until one day, Dorotea vanishes into the mountains. The town wonders if she was working with the coven all along.

Adventurers find coven candy (see Appendix) in their pack the following morning.

Rewards

XP Rewards

Add the total XP of creatures defeated or compromised with, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Creatures	XP
Commoners	10 each
Ghosts	1,100 each
Yule Lads (smoke mephits)	50 each
Mari Lywd	700
Jólakötturinn	10,000
Yule Lads (ice mephits)	100 each
Gryla (troll)	1,800
Frau Perchta (bheur hag)	2,900
La Befana (annis hag)	2,300
Yuki-Onna	2,900
Coven (all three hags)	5,000

Treasure Rewards

Creatures	XP
Town payment	500 gp per adventurer

Item Rewards

Item
Coven candy
Free fashionable winter wear
Free housing and food

Coven Candy

Food item, very rare

These icy blue candies are cold to the touch and taste of peppermint. Anyone who eats the Coven Candy must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 18 (4d8) cold damage and are frozen solid, acquiring the Petrified condition, or take half damage and are not frozen on a success.

Author's Notes/ Acknowledgments

I love winter traditions and all the inherent creepiness we have pasted over with good cheer. Obviously, this takes some inspiration from Neil Gaiman. I love the concept that we bring our gods with us wherever we go and then abandon them when we no longer need them. What might happen if they decided they will no longer be ignored? I absolutely loved researching this project and I regret there wasn't room to include Hans Trapp and Père Fouettard. Next time, gents!

Author Bio

Jessica Marcrum is a lifelong fan of fairy tales, mythology, and fantasy. A former opera singer and current licensed social worker, she has had the good fortune to GM for several fantastic groups of adventurers over the last several years. A contributor to several DMsGuild supplements including the Uncaged Anthology, Grandmother Crookbesom's Book of Hags, Bearthazar's House of Familiars, and she has also created the College of Caterwauling and the Cat Burglar. She is thrilled to finally bring The Book of Seasons to light. Though Chicago-raised, she currently lives in Pittsburgh with her spouse and their three fat cats. She can be reached at @Miss_Jess03 on Twitter, angrynerdgirl on Twitch, or at www.jessicamarcrumwrites.com.



Mari Lwyd

Large Undead, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)
Speed 60 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistance necrotic
Damage Immunities cold, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses Darkvision 120 Ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Understands Abyssal, Common, and Giant, but can't speak. Can communicate telepathically with the Hostler.
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Confer Frost Resistance. Mari Lwyd can grant resistance to cold damage to anyone riding it.

Magic Resistance. Mari Lwyd has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) frost damage.

Ethereal Stride. Mari Lwyd and up to three willing creatures within 5 feet of it magically enter the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Jólakötturinn

Huge Monstrocity, LawfulNeutral

Armor Class 18 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12 + 72)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	8 (–1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +11, Wis +6, Cha +6
Skills Perception +11, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities Cold
Senses Darkvision 120 Ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Understands Common, Giant, and Sylvan, but cannot speak
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Ice Walk. Jólakötturinn can move across and climb icy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost it extra moment.

Pounce. If Jólakötturinn moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, Jólakötturinn can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Powerful Haunches. Jólakötturinn's high jump is up to 60 ft., with or without a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. Jólakötturinn can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks with either its Bite or Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage and the target is swallowed if it is a Large or smaller.. The swallowed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside Jólakötturinn, and it takes 14 (4d6) acid damage at the start of each of the Jólakötturinn's turns.

Jólakötturinn's gullet can hold up to two creatures at a time. If Jólakötturinn takes 25 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, Jólakötturinn must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, each of which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of Jólakötturinn. If Jólakötturinn dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of Jólakötturinn's choice that is within 120 ft. of Jólakötturinn and aware of it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Jólakötturinn's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.




MÁAT
CROOK

Holiday Ruined

Written by Ma'at Crook

Level: 13

Content Warnings: Hunting Fauna, Vomit, Spider-like Creatures

SYNOPSIS

The most senior frost giant organizes the prize hunt for the winter festival, but she is sick. The celebrations will be ruined unless the adventurers help. This adventure is written for five 13th-level characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Holiday Ruined begins with the adventurers on a mountain range. They could be travelers or from nearby communities like the Sunfury Hills village or Koelhied city. They could be between missions, hunting, or are in the area for other reasons. If they played Heart of the Mountain (Seasons of Uncaged: Equinoxes), use the below hook in addition to the general hook, Wails of Despair.

Heart of the Mountain. The characters spotted two metallic green, beetle-like constructs running through the forest. Their distinctive tracks are easy to follow further into the mountain range.

Wails of Despair Hook. The altitude makes breathing labored. Orange dappled leaves and crisp air announce oncoming winter. The first heavy snowfall slowed yesterday's travel, but this morning's sun makes the snow glisten. Ahead the characters hear wails of despair.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Thrym's Coat is many frost giants' favorite holiday; it is the first day of a weeks-long celebration, lasting until the winter solstice. The festivities begin the day following the first heavy snow, as if Thrym, the god of cold, laid his coat over the land. While frost giants prepare their homes for more comfortable weather, their most senior leader hunts. They look for remorhaz eggs to hatch and raise, and they watch for white dragons (Thrym's creature representation). The leader returns to the community at night, hiding what they gathered. On the morning following their return, everyone in the community searches for the hidden prizes, cooks, and plays games.

This morning, the frost giant leader, Bearhonna, set out with her remorhaz, Frostbite, on the Thrym's Coat hunt. While in the wilderness, she drank from a polluted river. She is ill, cannot hunt, and worries about disappointing her loved ones.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Bearhonna (frost giant (MM), she/her)
A senior, cisgender frost giant woman with deep blue skin, dark blue looped braids, and a twenty-eight-foot, pear-shaped body. She is the most senior leader in her community and has chronic food allergies.
Ideals. Listening, fair compromise, and shared joy build a balanced community.
Bonds. I'll do my best to make this a wonderful celebration.
Flaws. I need reminders to have as much compassion for myself as I do for others.

Frost Giant NPCs

1. Kade – (they)
2. Rook – (he)
3. Engar – (she)
4. Ootie – (she)
5. Safe – (they)
6. Sahnah – (he)
7. Nyah – (they)
8. Alon – (she)
9. Baya – (he)
10. Mayvah – (she)
11. Tah'Oh – (zie/zim/zir)
12. Tee'Air – (he)
13. Rostom – (he)
14. Jaya – (they)
15. Mechteld – (goliath, she)
16. Ah'Day – (he)
17. Goldara – (she)
18. Rin – (they)
19. Shar – (ey/im/eir)
20. Yaz – (ve/ver/vis)

CHAPTER 1: NOT FEELING TOO COOL

The party finds Bearhonna. Read or paraphrase:

> You enter a shaded valley clearing; towering above you is a prone, miserable frost giant and a remorhaz harnessed with large packs. She wipes the vomit from her mouth. Snow crunches under her weight and sticks to her blue skin. She does her best to keep her ultramarine braids from tangling in the trees. Bloodshot eyes plead, "It's the Thrym's Coat holiday. I'll disappoint everyone if I return empty-handed from the hunt. Will you help?"

The characters may help or fight her. See the appropriate headings below.

Speaking with Bearhonna

Local characters or those knowledgeable about giants have advantage on checks to recall information about the Thrym's Coat holiday. With a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check**, characters know the information from the Adventure Background. If asked, Bearhonna says, "Thrym's Coat is a reminder that someday he will cover the world in a persistent freeze. Those who cut themselves off from others will succumb to the ice. This is a time of unity and celebration of life. Finish the hunt, and I'll invite you to my home for games, prizes, and the finest party." Bearhonna explains:

- She needs a minimum of eight packs filled, for a scavenger hunt, and additional packs, for feasts and food storage
- The giants need proof of a white dragon sighting, such as a shed scale, for the celebrations
- The giants raise and train remorhaz, so the characters can collect eggs they find
- She loans them her remorhaz, which is festooned with thirty-two packs, "This is Frostbite. He won't fight, but he's stealthy and good at keeping his packs safe from predators and agitated game. He'll hide underground if needed."
- It may take a few days to fill eight or more packs

Investigate Bearhonna's Illness

Bearhonna ate goodberries and drank river water for breakfast but had no luck fishing (unknown to her, the river is polluted). She moved on to this valley, where she experienced terrible nausea, cramps, itchy skin, dizziness, and fatigue. Investigations find the following:

- Healing magic makes her stomach feel briefly better
- A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check diagnoses Bearhonna as being poisoned
- If the check succeeds at DC 15, the character knows Bearhonna is affected by multiple poisons
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds no bites or stings, suggesting the toxins were ingested, possibly food allergies
- She's not allergic to goodberries or water
- Finding the source of the poisonings indicates the correct treatment
- Restorative ointment, a potion of vitality, Keoghtom's ointment, or fifteen castings of lesser restoration or protection from poison remove all traces of poison
- Even if the characters heal her, Bearhonna still needs to rest and recuperate, and cannot complete the hunt herself

Combat

If the characters choose to attack the vulnerable **frost giant** (MM), her **remorhaz** (MM) fights to defend her.

Tactics. Bearhonna continues asking for help. As an action, Bearhonna may vomit in a ten-foot-square area, making it difficult terrain. Creatures within twenty feet of the vomit must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** or spend their next turn vomiting.

Objective

Fill a minimum of eight packs and bring evidence of a white dragon sighting.
Bonus objective. Collect remorhaz eggs

Development

Once the characters agree to hunt, proceed to Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2 – THE HUNT

In the forest, the characters gather flora (plants), hunt, sight a white dragon, and look for the cause of Bearhonna's poisonings. Refer to the headings below.

Use the Gather Flora, Hunt Encounters, and Driving Hunt tables to fill the packs with food. How many checks characters make are dependent on the amount of playtime available and how many of the thirty-two packs the characters wish to fill. Within each table is the possibility of a white dragon sighting. If rolls do not produce a sighting, add it before they return to Bearhonna.

Gather Flora

Use the Random Gather Table to decide what and how much flora a character finds.

Random Gather Table
Characters roll a Wisdom (Survival) check and 1d6.

1d6	1d20 Result (1-10)	1d20 Result (11-20)
1	nothing	3 packs, snowcap mushrooms
2	1 pack, pumpkins	4 packs, coolcumbers
3	1 pack, acorns	4 packs, chocolate willow bark
4	2 packs, cherries	5 packs, goodberries
5	2 packs, carrots	5 packs, corpse flower root-tubers
6	3 packs, rosehips	White dragon sighting, see below

Hunt Encounters

Choose one encounter per long rest from the Random Hunt Table.

Random Hunt Table
roll 1d4.
Each successful encounter fills 4 packs

1d4	Encounter
1	two behir (MM)
2	four wyvern (MM)
3	two remorhaz (MM) & 1d6 eggs
4	White dragon sighting,

Driving Hunt

The characters may hunt other game without combat rounds by using the Random Driving Hunt Table and the information below.

Random Driving Hunt Table

1d4	Number & Creature Name	Environment	Packs filled per creature
1	1d8 giant owls (MM)	Making their home in underground burrows with three exit mounds about 100 feet apart	1
2	1d12 owlbears (MM)	Living in the ruins of a tower with the first two floors buried by an age-old avalanche	1
3	1d20 giant elk (MM)	Grazing a lush valley clearing at the base of cliffs, surrounding them on three sides. A buck stands watch	2
4	White dragon sighting	See "White Dragon Sighting" below	

After describing the information above, ask the party to plan how they hunt, capture, chase, or drive the creatures. To gauge their success, ask for an appropriate ability check; for example:

- Smoke them out, leaving one exit: **DC 10 Charisma (Deception) check**

- Imitate a predator or prey call: **DC 12 Charisma (Performance) check**
- Scare them with noise and movement: **DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation) check**
- Chase them into a trap: **DC 15 Dexterity check**

White Dragon Sighting

Characters need one sighting of the white dragon; any further rolls that result in a sighting are rerolled for different results. Read and paraphrase:

> You hear a rumble. Experience tells you to watch for an avalanche on the highest, snow-covered summit. From behind the peak, the slender neck, muscular body, and translucent wings of a gargantuan, ancient white dragon ascend into the gray sky followed by a smaller silver dragon. They circle each other playfully, singing shearing screeches. Snowflakes land softly on your cheeks.

The silver dragon is Snedronningen, from *Before the Pitchforks Come*.

The dragons are too far away for combat to be an option, and the frost giants would view attacks as disrespectful. The party's highest **Intelligence (Investigation) check** finds one of the following:



- DC 1-9: a chipped piece of dragon eggshell
- DC 10-15: a shed pearlescent scale caught on the bark of a pine tree used as a scratching post
- DC 16+: they find a broken dragon tooth, the size (and stats) of a dagger. The tooth remains cold, no matter how long it sits near a campfire

Cause of the Poisonings

The characters come across the cause of Bearhonna's illness, two retrievers (MToF). Read or paraphrase:

> You approach the river Bearhonna spoke of and find it as bare as she described. Movement atop a ten-foot waterfall catches your eye; it's a large, green, metal, beetle-like construct with bright, mechanical eyes and eight long limbs. The construct bends down, nudging a damaged and leaking duplicate at their feet. Their fallen friend's legs twitch, but they cannot rise from the water.

The characters can choose to fight the constructs.

Tactics. The damaged construct's speed is zero and does not have multiattack; only one foreleg is in working order. The standing construct protects their friend.

Alternately, characters may help the two retrievers and remove the pollution to this river.

- A successful **DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check** convinces the constructs to accept help
- A character with proficiency in tinker's tools has advantage on checks to diagnose the issue and repair the construct. With a successful **DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana), Intelligence (Investigation), or Wisdom (Medicine) check**, a character counts fifteen different toxins leaking from the damaged construct. With one casting of mending or a successful **DC 15 Dexterity check**, a character repairs the damaged construct.
- Six castings of a spell, like purify food and drink around the area, cleanses the pollution

Treasure

If the characters help, a door opens in the side of one retriever. A *clockwork amulet* (XGtE) drops out of the hatch—the constructs' thanks to the characters.

Return to Bearhonna

The characters return to the valley where Bearhonna rests. She is content if they filled at least eight packs. They can heal her now, or she can travel home for healing.

Bearhonna's community makes their home inside a yawning cavern, atop a mid-height mountain. The giants decorated with artfully placed icicles, dyed ice sculptures, a large stone table, and massive bone chairs, cushioned by snow. Soft snores drone from linked chambers and Bearhonna motions for the characters to be quiet as they enter. An adjoining cavern holds a kitchen with abundant cold storage. Bearhonna prepares a room for the characters. Before retiring to bed, they hide what they gathered, in preparation for the morning's Prize Hunt and celebrations.

Objective 2

Help prepare for and celebrate the holiday.

Development

Proceed to Chapter 3 to prepare and participate in the games and celebrations.

Chapter 3: Thrym's Coat Celebrations

These are examples of games to celebrate Thrym's Coat.

Prize Hunt

Estimated Playtime: 10 minutes

Using the Prize Hunt handout found in the appendices, characters hide the prizes they gathered during their Thrym's Coat hunt. The handout has four grids (in case the players want to play more than once). Each grid is numbered, one to ten along the top, and alphabetized along the side, "A" to "J."

How to Play the Prize Hunt

The goal of the game is for the frost giants (i.e., DM) to find the hidden prizes. This game is similar to a hide-and-seek naval strategy game and a mine-sweeper tile puzzle.

1. The players keep their handouts hidden from the DM
2. Each player "hides their prizes" by marking the appropriate number of squares on the grid
    a. A table of 1-2 players hides three prizes each, 3-4 players hide two prizes each, 5-7 players hide one prize each
3. The DM tries to guess which squares the prizes are hidden in by calling out a letter and number
4. Each player looks at their game grid
    a. If the DM called out a letter and number matching where they hid a prize, they call out, "Found it!"
    b. If the DM called out a letter and number corresponding with a square next to where they hid a prize, they call out "Close."
    c. If the DM called out a letter and number two squares from where they hid a prize, they call out "Too far."
    d. If the hidden prize is further than that, the player remains silent
5. Repeat 3 and 4 until all the prizes are found

With players calling out "found it," "close," and "too far" in unison, this game creates fun and challenging chaos.

Thrym's Dragon

Estimated Playtime: 10 minutes

The characters present proof of their white dragon sighting. Each year the proof is hidden, and the giant who finds it is crowned "Thrym's Dragon." The entire frost giant community is in agreement; this year, they'd like to crown one of the player characters as Thrym's Dragon, in gratitude for their help.

How to Choose Thrym's Dragon

To determine who finds the proof, characters roll contested Intelligence (Investigation) checks, as outlined below.

1. Have all players roll the check. The four players who rolled the highest (or two, for smaller tables) are the winners of this round
2. Split the four winners into two teams. Each team rolls contested checks. In each team, the one person who rolls the highest is the winner of this round
3. Those two winners go head-to-head against each other. The frost giants crown the final winner from this contested check, Thrym's Dragon

In the Conclusion, the character named Thrym's Dragon receives the Thrym's Dragon reward.

Blizzard

Estimated Playtime: 30 minutes

How to Play Blizzard

The goal of the game is for Thrym's Dragon to amass Blizzards from the opposing team. The goal of the opposing team is to avoid being hit by snowballs for five rounds. It is against the rules for Thrym's Dragon or the Blizzards to use magic or weapons; they only throw the provided snowballs. The opposing team may use magic and abilities to avoid being hit but may not attack or cast spells on Thrym's Dragon or the Blizzards. This game is similar to Red Rover and dodgeball.

1. To set up, Thrym's Dragon stands with a stack of snowballs. The other players join hands to form a circle surrounding Thrym's Dragon. When they release one another's hands, the first round begins
2. At the start of the round, Thrym's Dragon throws a snowball at one of the surrounding players. The snowball is considered an improvised weapon, and the appropriate roll and bonus are used to determine if it hits the target's AC. Snowballs cause no damage
3. On a hit, the target joins Thrym's Dragon in the center of the circle as a Blizzard. On each of the next rounds, each Blizzard throws one snowball at a surrounding player
4. Step 2 is repeated five times in total
5. At the end of the fifth round, the frost giants praise Thrym's Dragon and the Blizzards for making Thrym proud. The giants congratulate the remaining players for surviving the five rounds of attacks, much like surviving five months of winter

Cooking Contest

Estimated Playtime: 30 minutes

The day before the winter solstice, the community has a cooking contest. This game is a test of the players' and characters' memory skills and the characters' ability skills. Buff and debuff spells are acceptable before cooking, but during the contest, characters are too busy for spellcasting or sabotage.

How to Play the Cooking Contest

1. The player characters break off into teams of two or three. If possible, keep teams identical sizes.
2. Each team is shown one recipe from the included Recipe Handout found in the appendices. They look at the recipe for a total of one minute before the recipe card is accidentally burned and made illegible.
3. Each team must try to "cook their recipe" to the best of their recollection by listing ingredients and instructions, out loud or in written form.
4. At any time during the game, with a successful **DC 15 Intelligence check**, each team may earn two peeks at the recipe, for five seconds each, to recall a bit more information.
    a. Characters with the Keen Mind feat automatically succeed in these checks.
5. Additional challenges apply, due to the size of the cookware and utensils:
    a. Succeed on a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check** to climb to the top of the bowl/pot.
    b. Succeed on a group **DC 15 Constitution check** to stir the tree trunk spoon or operate the churner.
6. Check how many of the ingredients, instructions, and checks each team achieved. The team following the recipe most accurately wins the taste test.

Treasure

The winning team's prize is a chef's apron and hat with the properties of studded leather *armor of resistance (fire)* (DMG). This chef's attire helps protect them from the rising heat in any busy kitchen and announces their mastery of the cooking flame.

Development

After the characters celebrate the Thrym's Coat holiday, go to Conclusion, below. If the group plans to play Heart of the Mountain, read both Conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Read or paraphrase:

> On the day of the solstice, the community watches the sunrise above Mount Spitsber peak. The day is filled with competitive foraging, laughing about the foibles of the year, making wishes, and singing songs about the protection and purification of ice. As the sun sets, everyone sits quietly outside. A single, costumed, and unidentified frost giant exits the cavern, dressed as a glorious white dragon. Parents shield their children's peripheral vision; everyone obeys an unspoken rule not to look amongst themselves to find who is missing. For a year, this person worked in secret, making this stunning costume. As the sun vanishes, they silently pass their audience, down the slope, into the snowfall and deepening night, bringing winter to the valley.

Heart of the Mountain Additional Conclusion

Days later, as the characters travel within the surrounding forests, they meet a group of acolytes, cooking their hunt. They ask if the characters have seen anyone wandering the woods; some of their neighbors fled, believing their village is cursed. Before the acolytes head home to the Sunfury Hills, they ask for help learning why their village's fires provide no heat.

Rewards

Characters who complete this adventure earn the following rewards:

Experience Points

Add the total XP of creatures overcome by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Encounter	XP
Frost Giant	3,900
Remorhaz	7,200
Behir	7,200
Wyvern	2,300
Retrievers	11,500
Objective 1, Hunt & Dragon Sighting	1000 per player
Bonus Objective, Collect Remorhaz Eggs	500 per player
Objective 2, Celebrating	1000 per player

Thrym's Dragon Reward

The frost giants crowned you "Thrym's Dragon." The morning following the winter solstice, you find the beautifully crafted dragon costume, reduced to fit you, folded neatly inside your pack. A sizable note reads, "This gift is handed down from the Maker to this year's Thrym's Dragon. Never ask who gifted it to you. Children sometimes play in their costumes, but most Thrym's Dragons save them for special occasions. On the year they are chosen to be the Maker, they add to and alter the costume, in secret. They perform during the next winter solstice, as you saw last night, and covertly gift the costume to that year's Thrym's Dragon." Roll 1d4; on an even number, the note says you were chosen to be next year's Maker. If you were not selected this year, continue making alterations to your costume and roll 1d4 again next year.

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Perverse Instantiation

Written by Jamie O'Duibhir

Level: 15 - 20

Content Warnings: Gruesome Violence, Gore, Death, Graphic Depictions of Disease

SYNOPSIS

This adventure is intended to be an endgame scenario. The story can be incorporated as a last hurrah for the heroes who have done all that they set out to do and want to go on one last adventure together. It can also be used if the DM wishes to have an impossible task for the heroes to complete. Whatever the case may be, this adventure is designed to be tragic. The heroes may lose one or more of their comrades before reaching the story's conclusion. DMs should adequately prepare their players for the possibility that they will lose their characters.

The adventure is intended for characters between levels 15-20 with a skew towards 18-20. Expect a total party kill if characters are at 15 and only do this after discussing it with the players.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters are hired to find and destroy a crystal gem, which is believed to be the source of the plague on Iouernia. Little else is known about the ruins of this metropolis, though plenty still live who remember it as a bustling trade hub due to its roads being a direct route to other parts of the world. Nobody speaks of it; the memories are too horrible, and many who were there when the calamity destroyed the city have wandered far away from both the city and other people.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The city of Iouernia lies in ruins, mostly covered in ice and snow. It suffered a great and terrible tragedy some years ago. Those who survived moved far away and weren't heard from again. What's left of the once-great city leaves more questions than answers. Travelers who pass by have reported hearing wailing, screaming, and crying, but no one dares go too close. The poor souls who are foolish enough to try to take a 'shortcut' through the ruins either never make it out or are too disturbed by what they saw to say much more than things like, "I can still hear those voices," and, "Won't let them go, can't let them go…"

The city has always remained covered in insurmountable layers of compacted snow and ice, even in summer. It is always coldest near the ruins in winter. The mystery of the ruins was thought to be forever a blight on the surrounding people, a place best avoided even though the most direct routes in the region go straight through or close by the ruins of the frozen city, until now…

A businesswoman hired a few people to scout the city, and while many did not make it back, one reported seeing a dais upon which a glowing crystal gem set in ice seemed to radiate a marrow-stilling chill. The scout was certain that the crystal gem was a magical item responsible for the perpetual winter in the ruins. Now the businesswoman is hiring an expedition team to destroy the crystal gem in order to free the roads, which have been impossible to travel thus far.

CHAPTER 1: ETZEM MITZRAYIM

As the adventurers approach the ruined city of Iouernia, a cold chill ripples through the group. Each creature must make a successful **DC 10 Charisma saving throw** or become frightened for 1 minute. The walls that stood for centuries, designed to manage the flow of traffic from traders passing through, now feel claustrophobic. Anyone treading the paths are forced to walk through knee-deep snow. The ground is considered difficult terrain for movement.

> The icy snow-laden walls of the city stand ominously white against the grey skies above. There is foul magic in every breath you take, like the stench of all things rotten on the tip of your tongue. This is a place of death. This is a place of sorrow. Hope bravely marched into these lands and died horribly.

Frozen Marrow

Once all the adventurers have begun their journey through the winding passages towards the main city area, have everyone make a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**. Upon one person failing, the icy snow breaks and the combat begins against 10 **zombies** (MM). In addition to being immune to poison damage, these zombies are also immune to cold damage. Multiply the number of failed saves with the number of zombies (e.g. 3 failed saves = 30 Zombies). At the end of each round of combat, have all the characters make another **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**. Each time they fail, more zombies are introduced until the characters have made the 300ft. journey to the next corridor using the same formula of 10 zombies per failed save. The rough terrain ends once they reach the end of this corridor.

The White Window

As the adventurers move into the next corridor, have them make a **DC 20 Dexterity saving throw** . Those who fail slip, fall to the ground, and are prone. As they regain their footing they see that what they are standing on is a frozen pile of bodies with grotesque sores and pustules across their faces and exposed skin. The eyes of the dead suddenly open, and a sickeningly pale light shoots up from their bodies. They see the wispy image of people wandering through this corridor and hear ghostly cries for help. There is a mother desperately asking if anyone has seen her child. An elderly man leans against the wall gasping for breath. A moment later the images of a long-forgotten event disappear, the bodies are still, and their eyes are closed.

> ***Managing Large Numbers of NPC Combatants***
> To make dozens of zombies manageable, try using a single roll for each batch of 10 zombies in the initiative and rolling for their attacks as a group. Keep the zombies' movement grouped together even if it means they are susceptible to a well-placed fireball. You could go so far as to combine the HP of 10 Zombies and make it one creature called a Zombie Horde. This may result in a less challenging encounter, as a single NPC of that sort would only get 1 action per round instead of 10 actions per round.

Development

As the adventurers move onto the next corridor, a single figure of a woman comes up from behind them and grabs the shoulder of whomever is last in the marching order. She is but a rotten corpse of her former self, her clothes dirty and ragged. She screams, "Have you seen my wife?!" Combat begins against a banshee (MM) with the following changes: her armor class is raised to 14, and her HP is doubled. After she is defeated, the faint sound of her voice on the wind echoes softly, "She was here just a minute ago… I-I lost track of her. She was trying to help us…" The adventurers continue down the corridor until they come to a T with two directions they can go.

CHAPTER 2: BEST LAID PLANS

At the T, there are signs in Common, Elvish, Dwarvish, Gnomish, and Halfling that give directions. To the left is the financial district, and to the right is the residential district. Seen from the vantage of where the signs are, the financial district corridor is littered with broken down carts, stalls, and rotten or destroyed goods all captured by the freezing temperatures that engulf the entire perimeter of the city. The corridor leading to the residential area is significantly narrower and darkened by the imposing walls on either side. There are notches in the wall where torches would have aided travelers caught after dark.

The Road Best Not Taken

Should the adventurers try to take the route through the financial district, they encounter 2 **abominable yetis** (MM) around a sharp corner. If they succeed in defeating the first one, the remaining yeti howls loudly. Another five **yetis** (MM) appear from around another corner, blood icicles hanging from their fur. Repeat this process until the adventurers decide to go back towards the residential route or are completely destroyed.



Shattered Glimpses

The path to the residential district is eerily quiet, though not without its own horrors. There are corpses frozen solid sitting atop stretchers. If inspected, a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check** reveals that many of these bodies froze to death almost instantly, before whatever disease their bodies were riddled with could kill them. As they round the corner reaching the entrance into the residential district, the following happens as an illusory effect:

> Your whole body shivers in shock as you are hit not with cold, but with the warmth of a beautiful spring day. You can smell the flowers… Flowers? The city is bustling with various people going about their day. There some who are attending to laundry hanging on lines, others who are making their way to or returning from the markets. There are smells from midday meals being prepared. The ground beneath your feet has been carefully tended to with dry dirt to fill in what might have been a hazardous step.

The adventurers are drawn to an interaction between two women. One is talking about how they must return to the council chambers and the other urges her to advise the council to take the new illness seriously as there are four more people who turned up seeking help. The two exchange a parting kiss and touch foreheads. The adventurers never see the other woman except for her long black hair, but the first woman looks like a perfectly healthy half-elf version of the banshee seen earlier. Her brown hair is tied in a tight bun with streaks of stress-greys running from her scalp to into the neat bundle at the back of her head. Her eyes are warm with hazel and a glint of sunlight. She appears to be walking straight towards the adventurers but then walks right through.

Development

The entire scene changes once the woman walks right through the adventuring group. Now there is nothing but cold, dark grey skies. The city that for a moment looked alive and thriving is hollow and still. Buildings are covered in snow. There are bodies on almost every corner; some lay flush against a building wall while others sit in eternal frozen misery. Up ahead, beyond the rows of weather-beaten homes, is a bright blue light pulsing upwards like a spring bursting forth from the ground.

Chapter 3: Sabotaged Intervention

The adventurers tread through the ruins of the residential district. As they pass by dilapidated structures, signs can be seen posted on homes that say in multiple languages, “Quarantine! Keep out.” Upon reaching the entrance to the markets and the city’s main thoroughfare, they hear a heavy fluttering of wings, and a large shadow is cast overhead.

Festering Wounds

Landing unceremoniously atop several snow-laden carts and crushing them in the process, an ancient white dragon-like creature roars in defiance of the adventurers’ advance. This is no ordinary dragon; its flesh is torn and missing or even frozen in places. Its eyes are blank white with green and black like a gangrenous infection has set in around the sockets. There is a pale glow coming from those white empty eyes. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals this is in fact an **ancient white dracolich** (MM).

The Healer Who Couldn't Save Them All

Past the wreckage of residential sector and the dracolich carcass, the pulsing light pierces through the grey sky. It is not a long journey and the adventurers merely pass by more of the same as before. The bodies that lined previous throughways are not as common as they approach a courtyard opening. Standing over a glowing orb is a woman, a half-elf with jet black hair and eyes as green as fir trees. She doesn't look at the adventurers but speaks as though she knows they are present. She says to them, "I can save them all… I just need more time, more power. He's giving me everything he promised and more. I can still fix this."

Though she does not pose an immediate threat, the adventurers must decide what to do with her. A successful **DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals that the glowing sapphire orb is the Dracolich's phylactery, and it must be destroyed, but they can't get to it. They must either convince her to stop or destroy her. If they decide to destroy her, the combat begins against a **necromancer** (VGtM). If the characters make a successful **DC 19 Charisma (Persuasion) check** trying to make a convincing and non-judgmental plea for her to end the curse over the city, she destroys the phylactery herself. Use the read-aloud text if the woman survives.



> The air becomes less biting, and the cold recedes as the magic that kept the land in a perpetual winter fades. The woman falls to her knees. As she clamors to her feet, the adventurers notice that she has aged significantly. Her hair is now an ash grey and her face is wrinkled from stress and sorrow. She walks with a hunch.
>
> Grabbing a large broken wheel axle for a makeship cane, she lurches forward towards the adventurers and speaks in a raspy voice, "My love, the light of my life, Arialla, believed in me. We were separated in the chaos as people heard that the Council was locking down the city… Most of the people were too sick by then to leave anyway. I was so close… There was an answer somewhere. I knew it could be found."
>
> She pauses to look around, and tears begin falling from her face. "What have I done? They're all gone? I killed the very people I tried to save… It was all for nothing. Immortal gods, what have I done?"

Development

The now-old woman sits at the base of the dais upon which the phylactery had been resting. She does not accept comfort and winces at the mention of returning to the world. Her world ended the day her wife died. Perhaps she died that day, too, even if her body remained. The adventurers have nothing left to do but return and report on their success.

CONCLUSION

The weeks that followed drew large crowds, not of opportunistic traders, but mourners who came to dispose of the bodies of loved ones and acquaintances according to their cultural traditions. A garrison of troops from the nearest city was sent to burn the bodies of those unclaimed by family and friends. The old woman reportedly returned to her home and spends her days in bed weeping. Her name has been forgotten by the outside world, and she refuses to give it. Children sing songs while playing games about "Granny Grim," who killed an entire city.

The skull of the ancient white dracolich is kept in a vault. The shards of the phylactery were smashed to bits and melted into tiny glass balls, which were then sent to every part of the known world to be dropped in the deepest bodies of water. The rest of the skeleton was crushed and the bone dust incorporated into the new streets so that the new citizens of Iouernia may trample upon the dracolich who poisoned the mind of their once-great healer.

Rewards

500,000 gold pieces
1 set of *white dragonscale armor* per adventurer (+3 magical armor)
1 key to the city of Iouernia

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To my spouse who believed in me from the start. Nicole, you are the Ruby to my Sapphire and I can't think of anyone I'd rather make Garnet with than you. I love you.

Author Bio

Jamie O'Duibhir is an author, environmental insurrectionist, atheistic-Satanist minister, and performer. She cries at the end of Mass Effect 3 every time. Her favorite actual-play is Friends at the Table and she loves Matt Colville's YouTube channel. She wants a dog and hopes to have one within a year.

Appendix A: Stat Blocks

False Chanterelle of Firgmar's Field

Medium mushroom fey, neutral

These golden-capped fey creatures are known for hanging out in fields, pretending to be faerie circles. Their bodies are a more intense shade of orange than the caps that form their heads and they stand about five feet tall. While generally peaceful, they have been known to incite violence to protect something in their faerie ring from harm.

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	10 (0)	10 (0)	8 (-2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

False Appearance. While the false chanterelle remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a mushroom.

Actions

Multiattack. *The false chanterelle can make two slam attacks*

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) poison damage, and 12 (2d8+2) bludgeoning damage.

Rot Touch. *The false chanterelle can use an Action to touch one target in melee range. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take (4d8+4) points of necrotic damage. On a success, a target takes half-damage.*

The target is Poisoned for as long as the false chanterelle touches it. If the target moves more than five feet away, it is no longer poisoned; however, the false chanterelle can use its Reaction to do 2d8+2 additional necrotic damage (DC 18 Constitution saving throw) to the creature as it moves out of reach.



Fangwei

Large humanoid, Lawful Good

Armor Class 26
Hit Points 300
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+3)	10 (0)	18 (+3)	15 (+2)	20 (+5)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Cha +11, Wis +11
Skills Persuasion +12, Insight +11
Condition Immunities Charmed
Damage Resistances Fire, Radiant
Condition Resistances Frightened
Senses Darkvision 30ft, passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Elvish, Celestial
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Spellcasting. Fangwei is a 17th level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC is 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). They require no components to cast their spell. Jiachen has the following cleric (light domain) spells prepared.

1st Level(4 Slots): *Compelled Duel, Wrathful Smite, Divine Favor, Searing Smite*
2nd level(3 Slots): *Branding Smite, Daylight, Dispel Magic*
3rd level(3 Slots): *Daylight, Crusader's Mantle*
4th level(3 slots): *Staggering Smite, Guardian of Faith*
5th level(1 Slots): *Circle of Power*

Actions

Multiattack. Fangwei makes 2 melee attacks with their longsword.

Longword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8+3) slashing damage

Solar Smite (3/day). Fangwei smites the enemy with the power of the sun while making a melee attack with their longsword. On a successful hit Fangwei deals an extra 5d8 radiant damage.

Wrath of the Sun (1/day). As an action, Fangwei channels a solar aura 10ft around them. For 10 minutes, those chosen as Fangwei's enemy take 2d8 radiant damage if they begin their turn in the aura.

Legendary Actions

Fangwei has 3 legendary actions choosing from the options below. Only 1 legendary action can be used at anytime and only at the end at the end of another creature's turn. Fangwei regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Solar Vengeance. Fangwei dashes to a target they can see. If target is an enemy they can make a weapon attack.

Force of Will(cost 2 actions). Fangwei's AC is increased by 3, and they have advantage on saving throws until the start of their next turn.

Radiance (cost 3 actions). Fangwei radiates a bright light around them. Those within 15ft. around them must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 3d8 radiant damage and be blinded for 1 round.



Fly Agaric of Firgmar's Field

Medium mushroom fey, neutral

These red-capped fey creatures are known for hanging out in fields, pretending to be faerie circles. Their bodies are pale white or cream color and they stand about five feet tall. While generally peaceful, they have been known to incite violence to protect something in their faerie ring from harm.

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (0)	10 (0)	8 (–2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

False Appearance. While the fly agaric remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a mushroom.

Actions

Multiattack. *The fly agaric can make two slam attacks*

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) poison damage and 12 (2d8+2) bludgeoning damage

Spore Seam. *The fly agaric can target up to three creatures in range and unleash a spore seam. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 4d8+4 poison damage. On a failed save, the targets are poisoned for 1d4 rounds and takes half damage.*

Grandfather Frost (Alinar Agathaess)

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral good

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)
Hit Points 66
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (–1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Con +5
Skills Arcana +7, History +7
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Elvish

Spellcasting. Grandfather Frost is a 12th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks. Grandfather Frost has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *frostbite,* light,* prestidigitation, ray of frost**
1st Level (4 slots): *comprehend languages, mage armor, identify*
2nd Level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, invisibility, snilloc's snowball swarm**
3rd Level (3 slots): *counterspell, leomund's tiny hut, sleet storm*
4th Level (3 slots): *conjure minor elementals, ice storm,**
5th level (2 slots): *cone of cold,* scrying*
6th level (1 slot): *investiture of ice, wall of ice**

Sculpt Spells. When Grandfather Frost casts an evocation spell that forces other creatures it can see to make a saving throw, it can choose a number of them equal to 1 + the spell's level. These creatures automatically succeed on their saves against the spell. If a successful save means a chosen creature would take half damage from the spell, it instead takes no damage from it.

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d6 – 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 – 1) bludgeoning damage if used with both hands.

Jiachen

Large humanoid, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 24
Hit Points 300
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	12 (+1)	10 (0)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Cha +12, Wis +11
Skills Persuasion +12, Insight +11
Condition Immunities Charmed
Damage Resistances Fire, Radiant
Condition Resistances Frightened
Senses Darkvision 30ft, passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Elvish, Celestial
Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Spellcasting. Jiachen is a 17th level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom(spell save DC is 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). They require no components to cast their spells. Jiachen has the following cleric (light domain) spells prepared:

Cantrips(at will): *Sacred Flame, Guidance, Toll The Dead, Thaumaturgy, Resistance*
1st Level(4 Slots): *Guiding Bolt, Bless, Create or Destroy Water, Command*
2nd level(3 Slots): *Zone of Truth, Scorching Ray, Hold Person, Aid*
3rd level(3 Slots): *Daylight, Fireball, Dispel Magic*
4th level(3 slots): *Wall of Fire, Guardian of Faith*
5th level(2 Slots): *Flame Strike, Dawn, Geas*
6th level(1 Slot): *True Seeing*
7th level (1 Slot): *Firestorm*
8th level(1 Slot): *Antimagic Field*
9th level(1 Slot): *Mass Heal*

Actions

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4+1)

Faith (3/day). Jiachen inspires their allies within 30ft. They gain +3 AC, and melee attacks do an additional 2d6 fire damage. This effect ends at the start of Jiachen's next turn.

Indoctrinate (1/day). Jiachen attempts to indoctrinate a creature they can see by uttering a couple of words only that target can hear. That creature must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 hour. Those with devotion to a deity, doctrine, or any strong code of ethics have advantage on the saving throw.

Legendary Actions

Jiachen has 3 legendary actions choosing from the options below. Only 1 legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end at the end of another creature's turn. Jiachen regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Command Cultist. Jiachen commands their cultists to protect them. Cultists can move up to their full movement towards Jiachen.

Cast a Spell(2 actions). They cast a spell from their list of prepared spells, using a spell slot as normal.

Sun Scorn (3 actions). Jiachen lets out a psychic wave filled with scorn. Those within 30ft. around them must succeed a Wisdom saving throw (DC 18) or take 2d10 psychic damage and lose their reaction until the start of their next turn.

Jólakötturinn

Huge Monstrocity, LawfulNeutral

Armor Class 18 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 150 (12d12 + 72)
Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	18 (+4)	22 (+6)	8 (–1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +11, Wis +6, Cha +6
Skills Perception +11, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities Cold
Senses Darkvision 120 Ft., passive Perception 21
Languages Understands Common, Giant, and Sylvan, but cannot speak
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Ice Walk. Jólakötturinn can move across and climb icy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost it extra moment.

Pounce. If Jólakötturinn moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, Jólakötturinn can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Powerful Haunches. Jólakötturinn's high jump is up to 60 ft., with or without a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. Jólakötturinn can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks with either its Bite or Claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage and the target is swallowed if it is a Large or smaller.. The swallowed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside Jólakötturinn, and it takes 14 (4d6) acid damage at the start of each of the Jólakötturinn's turns.

Jólakötturinn's gullet can hold up to two creatures at a time. If Jólakötturinn takes 25 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, Jólakötturinn must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, each of which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of Jólakötturinn. If Jólakötturinn dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of Jólakötturinn's choice that is within 120 ft. of Jólakötturinn and aware of it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Jólakötturinn's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.



Kelpies of Loch Aer

Medium plants, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 10ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	10 (0)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion
Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The kelpies can breathe air and water.

Seaweed shape. The kelpies can use their actions to reshape its body into the form of a humanoid or beast that is Small, Medium, or Large. Its statistics are otherwise unchanged. The disguise is convincing, unless the kelpie is in bright light or the viewer is within 30 feet of it, in which case the seams between the seaweed strands are visible. The kelpies return to their true form if it takes a bonus action to do so or it dies.

False Appearance. While the kelpies remain motionless in their true form, they are indistinguishable from normal seaweed.

Actions

Multiattack. The kelpies can make two slam attacks

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: (4d8+4) piercing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled, (escape DC 15).

Drowning hypnosis. *The kelpies choose one humanoid it can see within 150 feet. If the target can see the kelpies, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed while the kelpie maintains concentration, up to 10 minutes (as if concentrating on a spell).*

The charmed target is incapacitated, and instead of holding its breath underwater, it tries to breathe normally and immediately runs out of breath, unless it can breathe water.

If the charmed target is more than 5 feet away, the target must move on its turn toward the kelpies by the most direct route, trying to get within 5 feet. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks.

Before moving into damaging terrain, such as a lava or a pit, and whenever it takes damage from a source other than the kelpie or drowning, the target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If the saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.

A target that successfully saves is immune to this kelpie's hypnosis for the next 24 hours.



Kombucha Monster

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 6
Hit Points 79 (8d10 + 30
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities acid, cold, lightning, slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages –
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Cultured Creature. Brewed from a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, the kombucha monster is an awakened SCOBY.

Amorphous. The kombucha monster can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Spider Climb. The kombucha monster can climb through difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

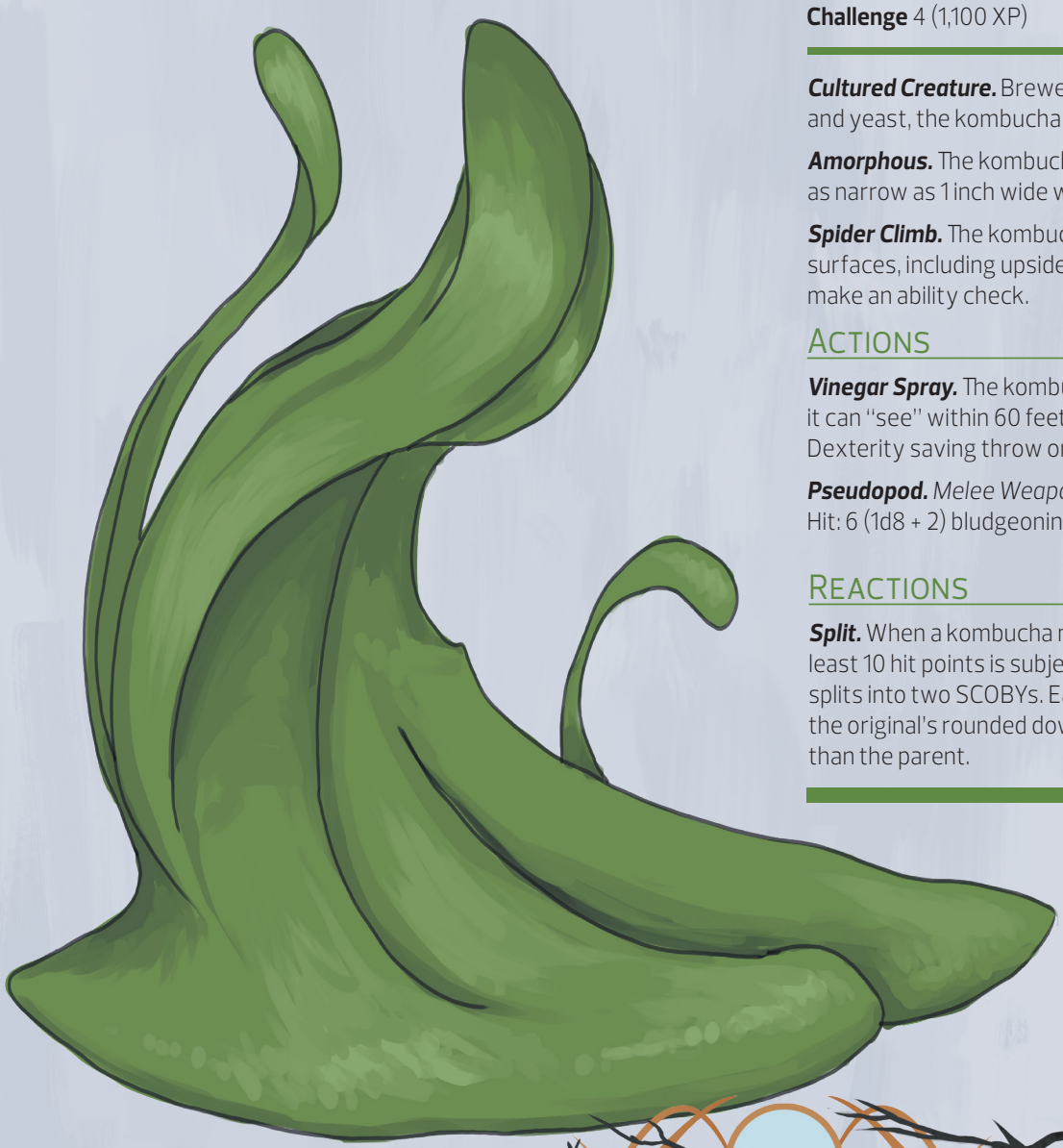
Actions

Vinegar Spray. The kombucha monster targets one creature that it can "see" within 60 feet. The creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (5d6) acid damage

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage

Reactions

Split. When a kombucha monster that is Medium or larger with at least 10 hit points is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two SCOBYs. Each SCOBY has hit points equal to half the original's rounded down. New SCOBYs are one size smaller than the parent.





Mari Lwyd

Large Undead, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class 13 (Natural Armor)
Hit Points 68 (8d10 + 24)
Speed 60 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistance necrotic
Damage Immunities cold, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses Darkvision 120 Ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Understands Abyssal, Common, and Giant, but can't speak. Can communicate telepathically with the Hostler.
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Confer Frost Resistance. Mari Lwyd can grant resistance to cold damage to anyone riding it.

Magic Resistance. Mari Lwyd has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) frost damage.

Ethereal Stride. Mari Lwyd and up to three willing creatures within 5 feet of it magically enter the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

Plessie

Gargantuan monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 472 (27d20+189)
Speed 20 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	11 (0)	25 (+7)	2 (-4)	17 (+3)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Str +17, Dex + 7, Con +14
Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities frightened, paralyzed
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages -
Challenge 23 (50,000 XP)

Hold Breath. The plesiosaurus can hold its breath for one hour.

Siege Monster. The plesiosaurus deals double damage to objects and structures.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the plesiosaurus fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The plesiosaurus makes three bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 33 (5d8+10) piercing damage.

Legendary Actions

Plessie 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. The plesiosaurus regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Breach (1 action). The plesiosaurus breaches the ocean to attack sea-faring vessels, causing a sizable wave to crash onto their decks. A creature must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

Rock the boat (2 actions). Plessie swims quickly, causing a strong current in its wake. Each creature on the deck of a boat must succeed a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone and drop any item in their hands. On a successful save, the creature is either knocked prone or drops held items - creature's choice.

Treacherous bite (1 action). The plesiosaurus takes a bite out of a crew member or ship. The target must succeed a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw



Shaggy Ink Cap of Firgmar's Field

Medium mushroom fey, neutral

These black, shaggy-capped fey creatures are known for hanging out in fields in faerie circles. Their bodies are pale white or cream and they stand about five feet tall. While generally peaceful, they have been known to incite violence to protect something in their faerie ring from harm.

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (0)	10 (0)	8 (-2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +5
Damage Immunities necrotic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from non-magical attacks
Condition Immunities blinded, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
Languages Common, Sylvan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

False Appearance. While the shaggy ink cap remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a mushroom.

Actions

Multiattack. *The shaggy ink cap can make two slam attacks*

Slam. *Melee weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d8+4) necrotic damage and and 12 (2d8+2) bludgeoning damage

Disintegration. *When a shaggy black ink cap is destroyed, it releases its dense, black spores into the air. The spores cover a 30 foot cube centered on the spot where the shaggy ink cap died. Any creatures in this cube are blinded until they move out of the affected area. This feature does not affect other mushroom fey.*

The Snowmaiden (Beriadhwen Beithe)

Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral good

Armor Class 12 (17 with barkskin)
Hit Points 27
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	12(+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (0)

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Common, Druidic, Elvish
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The Snowmaiden is a 4th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The Snowmaiden has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will)*: druidcraft, mending, shillelagh*
1st Level (4 slots)*: animal friendship, cure wounds, longstrider, speak with animals*
2nd Level (3 slots)*: barkskin, pass without a trace*

Ability. While attuned to and wielding her staff, the Snowmaiden has advantage on Constitution saving throws, advantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks, and +2 to initiative.

Actions

Staff of the Snowmaiden. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit (+5 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage, 5 (1d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage if wielded with two hands, or 7 (1d8 +3) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh.



Warlock of the Great Outdoors

Medium humanoid, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13 (15 with Mage Armor)
Hit Points 78 (10d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +7
Skills Arcana +4, Nature +4, Survival +4, Stealth +5
Damage Resistances Bludgeoning damage from any wooden weapons
Languages Common, Undercommon, Sylvan
Senses Darkvision 30 ft, advantage on Survival checks or contests, passive perception 11
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The warlock's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. They can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 16), requiring no material components:

At will: *animal messenger, cure wounds, entangle, hunter's mark, gust of wind, mage armor (self only)*
1/day each: *control weather, crown of stars, whirlwind*

Spellcasting. The warlock is a 17th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (Spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). They regain their expended spell slots when they finish a short or long rest. They know the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *create bonfire, druidcraft, eldritch blast, firebolt, gust, minor illusion, thorn whip*
1st – 5th level (4 5th level slots): *create food and water, dominate beast, insect plague, guardian of nature, purify food and drink, sanctuary, spider climb, stinking cloud, thunder step, web*

Nature's Blessing (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When the warlock fails a spell attack, it can re-roll the attack and add a d4 to the d20 roll. It can add this d4 to the next three attacks.

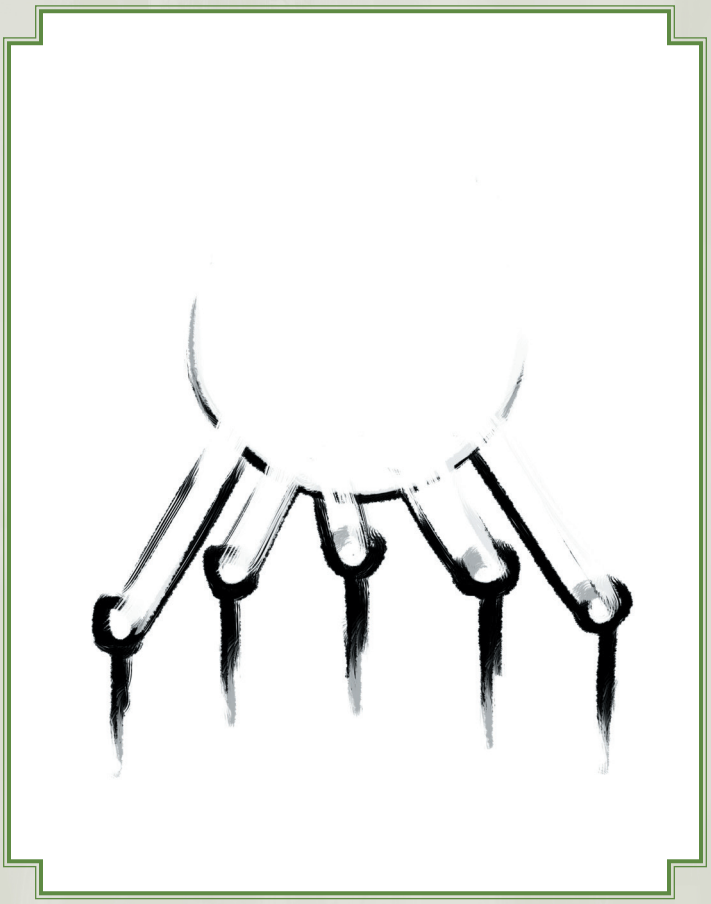
Actions

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

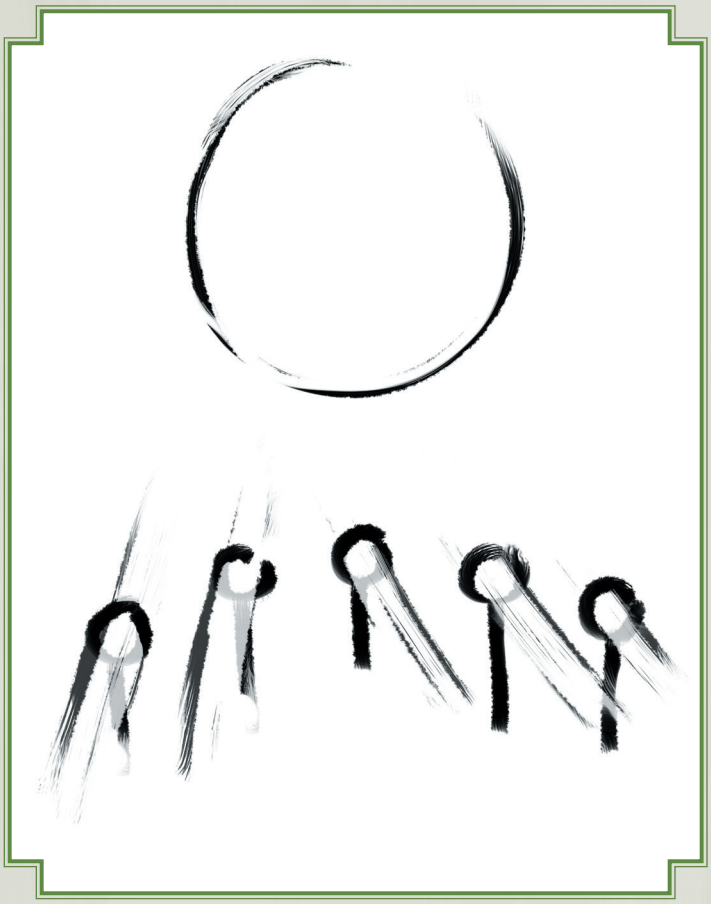


Appendix B: Handouts

Cult of the Summer Solstic: Handout 1



Cult of the Summer Solstice: Handout 2



AUTUMN GREENS RECIPE

ingredients:

3 giant boar hams
1 cartload of autumn greens
3 buckets of cooking oil
½ cistern of water
½ cartload of almond butter
¼ bucket of salt & black pepper
* ¼ bucket of onion
¼ bucket of smoked hot peppers
1 full thyme bush
* 2 full garlic plants

prep time: 15 minutes
cook time: 2 hours

instructions:

- Heat oil in a pot
- Simmer ham & greens until greens wilt
- Stir in remaining ingredients
- Simmer 1.5 hours

* Bearhonna allergic
* Sub chives for onions & garlic

COOLCUMBER SALAD RECIPE

ingredients:

1 cartload of whole coolcumbers
* ½ cartload of peeled red onions
½ cartload of good berries
1 barrel of carrots
1 barrel of yak's milk sour cream
1 bucket of white vinegar
1 bucket of wild dill
1 bucket of sugar
½ bucket of salt
* 2 full garlic plants

prep time: 15 minutes
cook time: 2 hours

instructions:

- In a medium bowl, stir in all ingredients
- Stir well
- Cover and cool

* Bearhonna allegic
* Sub chives for onions & garlic

ICE CREAM RECIPE

ingredients:

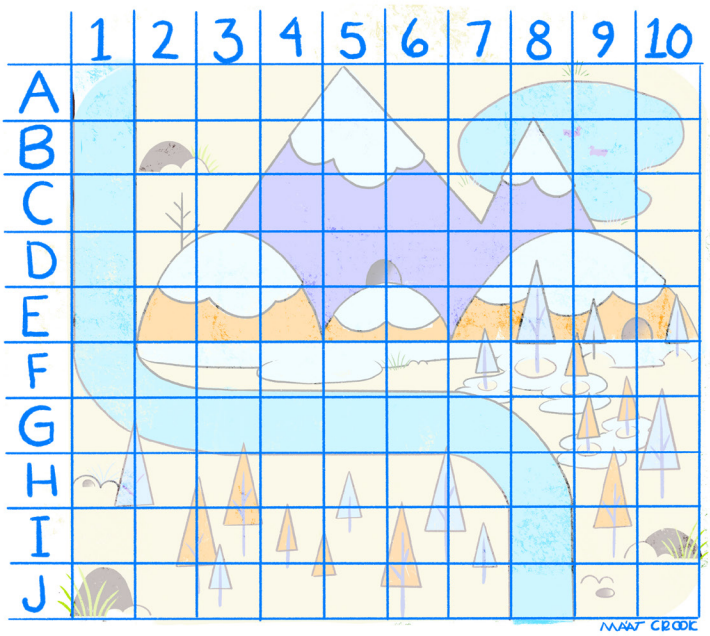
1 cartload of heavy yak cream
½ cartload of whole yak milk
2 barrels of sugar
1 bucket of salt
1 bucket of rosehips
½ cartload of large fowl egg yolks
* 1 barrel of strawberries
1 barrel of chocolate willow bark

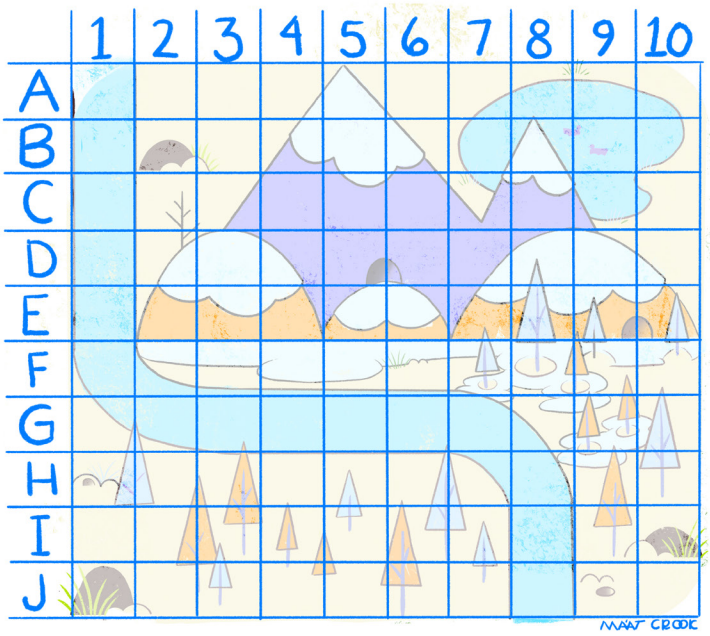
prep time: 30 minutes
cook time: 1 hour

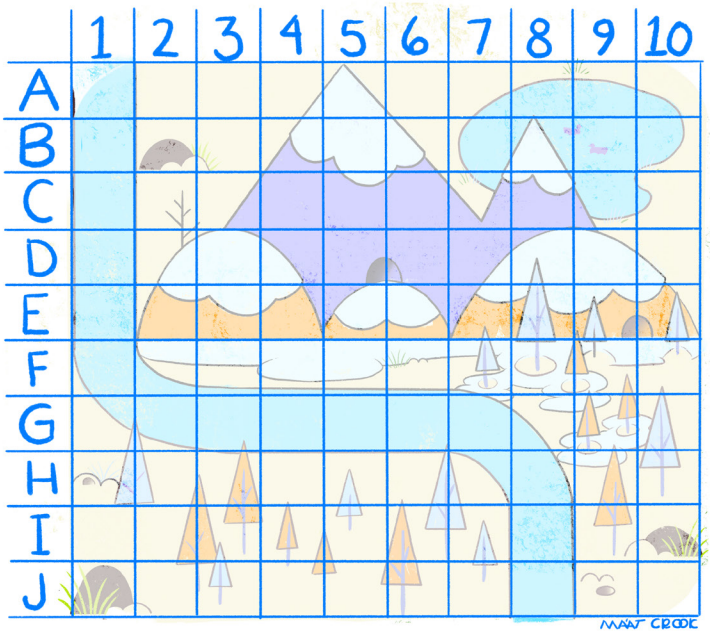
instructions:

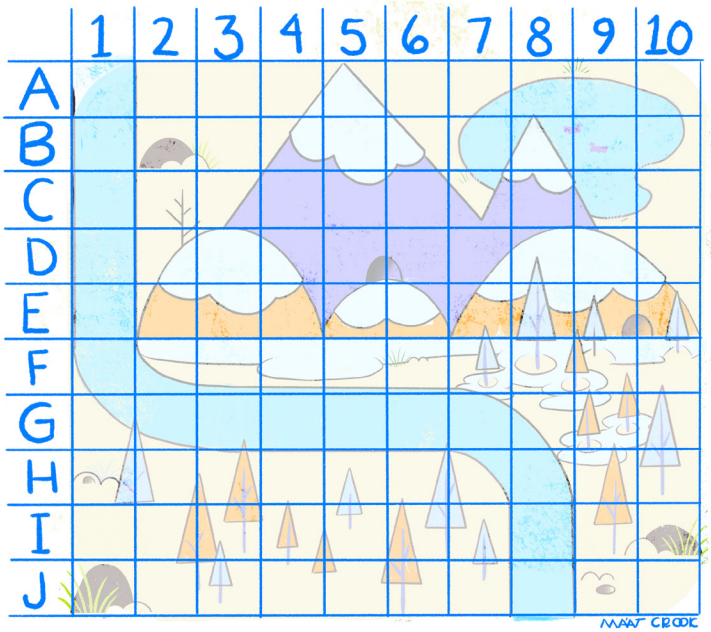
- Simmer first 5 ingredients in a pot
- After 5 min, remove from heat
- In a bowl, whisk the yolks
- Whisk yolks into hot ingredients until mixture coats the whisk
- Chill overnight
- Add final ingredients
- Churn to desired thickness

* Bearhonna allergic
* Sub cherries for strawberries.









Call Out Examples

	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	T	T	T	T	T	
B	T	C	C	C	T	
C	T	C	(F)	C	T	
D	T	C	C	C	T	
E	T	T	T	T	T	

(F) = Found it!
C = Close
T = Too Far

ARTIST BIOS:

Alison Huang

Alison Huang is an Australian based artist who loves to use her skills to bring more diversity and representation into the world. When she's not making illustrations, she's writing, and participating in too many game jams. She can be found on Twitter at @Drazillion.

Andrew Ferguson

Andrew Ferguson is a Canadian artist and hobby game-maker. Dude's been working on cartoons for over a decade, and one day he snapped. Started calling himself Chaotic Good Games, making board games and TTRPGs 'n stuff...like some Zen epiphany knocked his psyche back to childhood. He believes the root of all suffering is a need to prove you're an adult. And the fix is collaborative storytelling and Play. Don't wait....Create!
Instagram: @fergs.art
Youtube: Ferg's Art
Email: chaoticgoodgames@gmail.com

Cat Evans

Cat lives in the UK with her spouse and a whole pack of cute but ill-behaved dogs. She writes things for the DMs Guild (as Catherine Evans) and other RPG places. She wants to be a Night Hag when she grows up.

David Markiwsky

David Markiwsky is a writer, artist and graphic designer in Edmonton, Canada, with a moderate to unhealthy obsessions with horror and all things Fey. You can find all his other D&D content on the DM's Guild and can reach him on Twitter @ DavidMarkiwsky.

D.W. Dagon

D.W. Dagon is a trans non-binary creator with a love for speculative fiction and weird fantasy. They love to dabble in illustration, adventure writing, and designing game mechanics. If they had one thing to say to a dear reader it would be, "Get weird. Stay kind. I love you."

Gwen Bassett

Gwen ("gwendybee" across the web) is a freelance fantasy illustrator who will take any excuse to paint bright colors, flashy magic, and dramatic lighting. In her spare time, she likes to eat inadvisable quantities of dessert and pet other people's dogs.

Jennifer Peig

Jennifer Peig is a freelance illustrator and artist who specialises in fantasy, folklore, and mythology. She resides in Chicago with her ever-exuberant gremlin of a pup. You can often find her scribbling furiously and consuming copious amounts of pastries under piles of blankets.
https://jenniferpeig.com/

Kari Kawachi

Kari Kawachi is a freelance illustrator who currently lives around Seattle, WA. Originally hailing from Honolulu, Hawaii, she has been obsessed with art, storytelling, and role-playing for as long as she's been alive. She enjoys painting characters, scenery, and just about anything that sparks the imagination.
She can be found on twitter under the handle, @yutrio.

Liz Gist

Liz is a hobbyist, artist, and freelance editor. They grew up fascinated with mythology and look for any excuse to burrow into that part of their psyche. Follow them on Twitter @crit_liz for puppy photos, mini painting, and far too many tiefling PCs.

Luciella Scarlett

Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett is an aromantic and asexual author and illustrator based in Naarm (Melbourne) Australia who obnoxiously publishes under a name the length of an entire alphabet. You can follow her on Twitter @luciellaes or at luciellaes.wordpress.com.

Ma'at Crook

Ma'at (ma ought) Crook is a writer and illustrator of D&D homebrew and Adventurer's League modules. She also plays in a Pathfinder actual play. Web: maatcrook.com, Twitter: @MaatCrook

Nichole Wilkinson

Nichole Wilkinson (mostly known as Dendral @tcfdendral on Twitter) is an illustrator and a 3D modeler. She primarily focuses on characters, but has been taking time to explore environmental artwork. She's most often found talking too much about Star Wars and coming up with game ideas.

Sandy Jacobs-Tolle

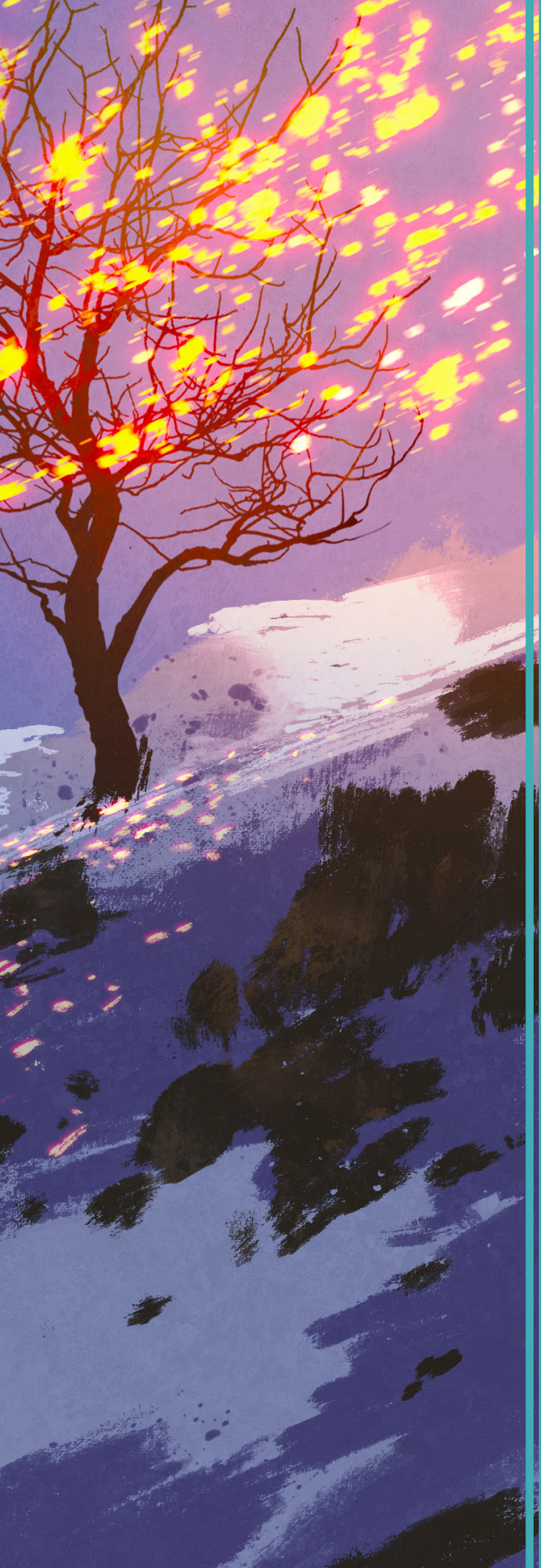
Sandy Jacobs-Tolle got into video gaming with an Atari 2600, tabletop gaming with AD&D 2nd Edition, and art since she ate a blue crayon in the first grade. She's done illustrations for Uncaged Anthology vols. 3 and 4, Choice of Games, Threadbare, Motobushido, Circle of Hands… too many indie games to count. She'll also knit you a pair of socks if she likes you well enough. Portfolio at https://www.artstation.com/racerxmachina, twitter: @racerxmachina

Wouter Florusse

Wouter Florusse is a freelance illustrator with a passion for history, fantasy and nature. He lives in Rotterdam, the Netherlands with his wife and two sons. In his spare time he engages in Historical European Martial Arts, plays ttrpg's and can be found wantonly drawing trees anywhere.
www.wouterflorusse.com

Xan Larson

Xan Larson is an illustrator, comic artist, mythological creature enthusiast, DM, and more. Artist of If Dragons Were Horses, SVN, Deep False Waters, and creator of the teacup almiraj and teacup wolpertinger. Follow on Twitter @PaleWhiteRabbit or Instagram @pale.white.rabbit



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