

Beware the Yule Cat

By Anthony Pryor

SEAVAN Games



Beware the Yule Cat

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ISBN: 978-1-6656-0509-0
5^e PDF



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o maybe you'll have a heart
and give help to the weak and small,
for numerous needy children
get nothing at all.
And searching for those who suffer
from shortage of light for true,
may perhaps make your Christmas
merry, too.

—Jóhannes úr Kötlum
From Jólin Koma (1932)
© The heirs of Jóhannes úr Kötlum.

Special thanks are due to Jeff Harkness, who came up with the idea of a Yule Cat adventure, to the folk of Iceland, to their poet Jóhannes úr Kötlum, whose works helped inspire this tale, and to his heirs who generously allowed us to use his beloved Christmas poem in this work.



Yuletide in Köldhorn

Welcome to Cold Corners, in the frozen depths of the Northlands! ***Beware the Yule Cat*** is a seasonally themed adventure for Tier 2 characters.

Set in the village of Köldhorn (Cold Corners) and the nearby peak of Snörfjall (Snow Mountain), the adventure incorporates elements of Icelandic legends and monsters, with some background information explaining the tale's origins. The adventurers arrive in the village of Köldhorn just ahead of a fierce storm on a wintery Yule eve, only to find the villagers unwilling to offer shelter or hospitality. They soon learn that the town is to be visited by the ferocious Jólakötturinn — the Yule Cat — who stalks the streets and devours those who haven't received new clothes, as well as those who offer them shelter.

The adventurers must face the wrath of the Yule Cat and its companions, the mischievous Jólasveinar — the Yule Lads — who use the mayhem created by the Yule Cat to do mischief in the town. Upon defeating both cat and lads, the party must then venture to Snow Mountain to rescue the mayor's infant son from the lads' parents, the evil fae troll Grýla and her lazy husband Leppalúði. There, they discover a fae gateway to the volcanic demiplane Dimmuborgir, where lava and fire take the place of snow and ice, and where Grýla maintains her lair.

How the adventure ends is up to the party — they may bring about a happy Yuletide conclusion in which the trolls return the child and make peace with the villagers, or the lava fields of the Dimmuborgir may be the scene of a violent Yule battle. Even Grýla's defeat may not end the struggle, for with the help of fae magic, she and her family return for revenge next midwinter.

Background

No one knows exactly when the people of Köldhorn made their deal with the evil fae troll Grýla and her family, but every child in the village is told the story as a warning to be good lest they face the wrath of the Yule Cat. It is said that long ago the region's first human settlers were troubled by the trolls who dwelled in the caves on nearby Snow Mountain. Whenever she grew bored or hungry, Grýla would venture down from the mountain and seize livestock and luckless villagers for her stewpot. Her husband Leppalúði was legendarily lazy and rarely accompanied his wife on her hunting trips, but he always demanded a share of the meat she brought home. Sometimes the two would fight angrily, their voices echoing like thunder from the mountaintop.

In addition to Grýla's predations, the folk of Cold Corners were also plagued by the couple's children — the 13 Jólasveinar, known by the villagers as the Yule Lads because of their sadistic pranks during the normally festive holidays of Yuletide. Eventually, the villagers grew weary of the Yule Lads' antics and angry at their mother's violence. It was on a snowy Yule eve that the folk of Cold Corners decided to fight back.

When the Yule Lads attempted to sneak into town, they were ambushed by angry town militia, beaten with clubs, stabbed with spears, and shot with arrows. The lads retreated, leaving several of their number dead or wounded. Furious, Grýla belabored her lazy husband with a frying pan until he finally bestirred himself and accompanied her as she descended from the mountain, seeking vengeance on the people of Cold Corners. Along the way, she summoned her favorite pet, Jólakötturinn, a huge and ferocious cat with a taste for human flesh.

The struggle with the trolls and their pet was ferocious, and several villagers perished. In the end, however, Grýla and her cat were slain, leaving Leppalúði and the surviving Yule Lads to retreat to their cave on the mountain. Unfortunately for the townsfolk, the troll and her pet were part fae and remained slain on the Material Plane for only a single year — Grýla returned on the following Yule Eve, accompanied by her husband, sons, and cat, fully restored to life and seeking vengeance. Another battle ensued with the same result as the last, and the entire tragic affair was repeated yet again on the following Yule Eve. Over the years, the battle continued each Yule; sometimes Grýla was slain, at other times she was only wounded and forced to flee. After a few years, Leppalúði grew bored and refused to accompany his family as they raided the village, preferring instead to stay home, sleep, and eat.

It was clear that the village and the troll family were caught in an endless cycle of violence, and on the following spring, Cold Corners' mayor and village priest approached Grýla's cave seeking a truce. Wicked and ill-tempered, Grýla at first rejected the townsfolk's entreaties, but although she refused to admit it, she, too, was tired of the endless fighting, and at long last she agreed to speak with them. Over several days, she and the villagers' delegation hammered out an agreement. From this point forward, Grýla and her husband left the town in peace, and although the Jólaveinar continued to pull pranks and commit mischiefs upon the villagers, their antics took place during Yuletide, with the lads arriving one by one on the nights preceding Yule Eve. While they engaged in their tricks, the Yule Lads could not be attacked or harmed. On Yule Morn, the 13 lads would depart, returning to their home in the Dimmuborgir.

The Yule Cat was another matter. It had grown fond of preying on the folk of Cold Corners, and its behavior was hard to change. Grýla finally agreed to a compromise — the Jólakötturinn could still prey on the village, but only on Yule Eve, and only if its victims had not received new clothes as a gift. Those who gave shelter to the cat's victims could also be preyed upon. Like the Yule Lads, the Yule Cat was to be left alone and not harmed by the villagers as it went about its business. As strange as this agreement was, it was probably the best that the town could hope for, and the mayor agreed.

Evil and bloodthirsty though she was, Grýla was nevertheless bound by her oath, which she and her family kept over the many years that followed. The Yule Lads did their mischief on Yule Eve, and the folk of Cold Corners came to simply see it as a grim seasonal tradition. On Yule Eve, they exchanged new clothes made from wool that was spun and woven throughout the year, then set aside for this moment. Yuletide was not a joyful occasion to the beleaguered people of Köldhorn.

The trolls still bickered, their voices still echoing like thunder, but Grýla kept her distance as long as her cat and sons returned to her unharmed each Yule Morn. On rare occasions, visitors who arrived too late on Yule Eve and didn't receive new clothing were victims of the Jólakötturinn as well — a situation that the villagers found distressing but were forced to accept.

Now, it is once more Yule Eve. The Yule Lads are abroad and committing acts of mischief; the Yule Cat is preparing to hunt, hoping to find appropriate victims that won't violate the agreement — some to devour, others to take home for its mistress's pot; and Grýla waits patiently in her cave as her husband snores, dead to the world. A fearsome storm brews on the horizon, but for now the stars shine down and the moonlight gleams on white snowdrifts.

And on this holiday eve, as the people of Köldhorn go about their yearly affairs, looking forward to a joyful Yule Morn, a weary band of adventurers slogs its way into town ...

Where is Cold Corners?

If you're playing in Frog God Games'

Lost Lands setting, the village of Köldhorn is in the Northlands, on the plains west of Gatland. The forbidding peak Snörfjall is the westernmost peak of the steep Olf Mountains. The folk of Köldhorn are Northlanders, speak the Nørsk tongue, and worship the Æsir, but they are largely isolated from the rest of the Northlands and engage in commerce with Northlanders and the occasional foreign visitor during the summer and early fall. This adventure does not have to be set in the Lost Lands, of course. It can take place in any cold, northern region in your campaign world. The names, legends, and culture are all loosely based on those of real-world Iceland, so any nation or region that resembles this area in your campaign is an appropriate place for the adventure.

Hooks

The adventurers may find themselves in Cold Corners on Yule Eve in a number of ways. You can develop hooks appropriate to your own campaign, or you can select from among the following suggestions.

- ❄ This scenario may take place during an ongoing Northlands Saga campaign, when the characters are in the right place at the right time of year (there's nothing wrong with relocating Cold Corners and Snörfjall to fit with your Northland campaign's current location).
- ❄ A halfling party member or NPC is aware of cousins who live in Köldhorn — these would be the members of the Döstiggs family — and wishes to visit for Yule. The halfling knows of some “quaint” traditions in the region such as “mischievous

Ancient Origins and Modern Traditions: Icelandic Yule Legends

B*eware the Yule Cat* is based (somewhat loosely) on Icelandic mythology. Iceland boasts an ancient and vital culture, and many of the traditions discussed here are still practiced today. While this adventure doesn't pretend to be a serious treatise on Icelandic legendry, information about the real-world antecedents of the Yule Cat, Yule Lads, and other fascinating creatures is included for those interested in learning more. As noted, many of these traditions are still followed in modern Iceland, where they are an integral part of the national culture.

The island nation of Iceland has been settled since at least the 800s CE, when the Vikings established permanent settlements. Ruled at different times by Norway, Sweden, and Denmark (and various combinations thereof), the island won independence on December 1, 1918, becoming the modern republic in 1944. Today, Iceland remains an important part of the European community, and while the island is mostly Christian, 5% of its population

follows the ancient Asatru faith, revering the old Norse gods. When it comes to the old traditions, however, many Icelanders either believe that elves and fae beings (known as the *huldufólk*, or “hidden folk”) are real, or at least don't dismiss the possibility that they truly exist.

Note on pronunciation: Some names such as Leppalúði and Þvörusleikir use the letters *eth* (upper case Ð, lower case ð) and *thorn* (Þ). These letters are variations on the “th” sound — ð represents a soft “th” (as in *breath*), while Þ is pronounced with a hard “th” (as in “*the*”).

The Yule Cat

This adventure's namesake — the Jólakötturinn or Yule Cat — is a monster from Icelandic legend, an enormous, ill-tempered feline who devours those unlucky souls who did not receive new clothes on Yule Eve. Stories about the cat have been told for centuries, but the tale wasn't written down until the 1800s. In practice, the Yule Cat was another bit of folklore used to scare naughty children into obedience — kids who did their chores, including helping to gather, card, spin, and dye wool from village sheep, were rewarded with new clothes on Yule Eve. That night, the Yule Cat was abroad,

stalking the streets, peering through windows to see who received the appropriate presents. Even a single stocking would suffice, saving the child from the Yule Cat's hunger. Those who didn't receive clothes were pretty much doomed, and in those days, it was certainly more than enough motivation to pick up toys, make beds, help with the dishes and cooking, and aid the family with the shearing, spinning, and weaving.

The authorities were not always pleased with these frightening tales of Yuletide. In the 1700s, when Iceland was still officially part of the Kingdom of Denmark, a law stated, “*All disorderly and scandalous entertainment at Christmas and other times and Shrovetide revels are strongly forbidden on pain of serious punishment.*” This, and the later prohibition on tales of the Yule lads, discouraged parents from relating many traditional tales, but the Yule Cat and other legends never went away. Today, the tale is repeated, and the once-fearsome Jólakötturinn is a cherished part of Icelandic Christmas.

Grýla and Leppalúði

These two horrid trolls are another part of Icelandic Yule tradition. Grýla is the more fearsome of the pair and is included in the



Yule spirits” but is of a less provincial mindset and doesn’t realize how real and dangerous they truly are.

- ❖ The party may have heard rumors of a powerful ogre or troll-lord who lives atop Snörfjall and journey north to investigate and, hopefully, plunder the troll’s hoard.
- ❖ A scholarly NPC or an institute of learning wishes to visit the region to catalog the inhabitants’ folklore and legend, and has some basic information about the Yule Lads, Yule Cat, and a hungry ogress who devours naughty children. The scholar hires the party to accompany them on the expedition and assist with recording local tales.
- ❖ The characters may simply be traveling in the region, returning from or heading to an entirely different adventure, and see Cold Corners as a convenient stopover, especially with the encroaching storm.

13th-century Icelandic saga, the *Prose Edda*. Variousl described as a giant, troll, witch, or ogre, Grýla is horrificall ugly, bad-tempered, and enjoys snacking on human flesh, especially that of children. As with the Yule Cat, Grýla was another monster used to frighten disobedient children into compliance, but her tale is much older and more complex.

In the oldest stories, Grýla is a destitute beggar who haunts villages asking for food. Originally living in a wilderness hut just outside of town, she later relocated (or was forced by angry townsfolk) to a distant cave in the Dimmuborgir lava fields in northeastern Iceland. Later tales of Grýla describe her as a fierce, monstrous creature who raids villages, seeking children whom she carries off in a great sack. Naughty children are apparently tastier than their well-behaved brethren, for they are her favorite prey. In some stories, Grýla dies or is slain, but other stories claim that she is immortal and returns to the world at Yuletide.

Grýla is also quite difficult to live with, as she has married three times, murdering her first two husbands before settling down with her current husband, Leppalúði. This husband’s identity also varies

somewhat according to folklore — like Grýla, he’s described as a giant, ogre, or troll, but some stories say that he’s just a slovenly human male who took Grýla’s fancy. All the stories agree that Leppalúði is a gluttonous, lazy individual who spends most of his time eating or sleeping, a situation that suits Grýla fine, as a sleeping husband can’t quarrel or argue. Leppalúði must bestir himself occasionally, for he has given Grýla 13 sons.

The Jólaveinar

Grýla and Leppalúði’s sons — known collectively as the Jólaveinar, Yulemen, or Yule Lads — have undergone significant revisions over the centuries. Once fearsome monsters who terrorized naughty children, the lads today are more like 13 small Santa Clauses, bringing presents and mild mischief with them throughout the Yuletide season. See the appendix for details on specific lads and their antics.

Over the years, the lads’ names, number, and exact natures differed from story to story, until the poet Jóhannes úr Kötlum firmly established their identities when he published the book *Jólin Koma* (Christmas is Coming) in 1932. Today, the

Jólaveinar are welcomed at Yuletide, with one arriving each night, starting with Stekkjarstaur (Sheep-Cote Clod, or Sheep-Worrier) on the first night, and ending with Kertasníkir (Candle-Beggar) on Yule Eve. On Yule Morn, the 13 lads gather and wander out of town in single file, until next Yuletide.

The Yulemen’s rehabilitation from frightening intruders to mischievous but friendly visitors began quite a while ago. A 1746 decree declared that “*The foolish custom, which has been practiced here and there about the country, of scaring children with Yuletide lads or ghosts, shall be abolished.*” Since then, the lads have grown less menacing and their various mischiefs minor at worst. They have been updated for the modern world (Giljagaur the Gully-Gawk steals milk from refrigerators; Pottaskefill the Pot-Scraper takes pots from off the gas or electric stove; and Skyrgámur the Skyr-Gobbler must content himself with store-bought dairy products), but the old traditions still hold today. Each night of the Yule season, the children of Iceland place their shoes in their bedroom window, and that night’s special Jólaveina leaves behind small gifts. Also traditionally, naughty children don’t get presents, but instead are left with rotting potatoes.

Chapter One

Yule Eve in Cold Corners

The adventure begins in the village of Köldhorn — Cold Corners in the common tongue — on the night before the traditional Yule holiday. Cold Corners is an ancient and isolated settlement, with many old traditions and practices. The settlement is governed by a mayor selected by village elders, and if necessary, defended by a town militia. Located far from any central authority, the town is largely self-governing, and its economy is based on farming vegetables and fodder crops such as grass, barley, and rye, and on raising goats, sheep, and cows. Most garments are spun from wool, and the villagers' diet is heavy with milk, cheese, and skyr (a yogurt-like food resembling milk curds), with vegetables such as cabbage, carrots, and leeks, occasionally supplemented with meat from local game. The people speak the Nørsk tongue, but Common functions as a trade language, and most Köldhorners can speak enough to make themselves understood.

Nearly all inhabitants are human, save for the Döstigg family of halflings who immigrated here several generations ago and have worked as shopkeepers and farmhands ever since.

The Adventurers Arrive

The Village of Köldhorn (Cold Corners)

Authority Figure: Mayor Hánsval Trygvýsson

Government: Council with biannually elected mayor

Population: 220 (210 Northlander, 10 halfling)

Languages: Nørsk, Common

Religion: Æsir, Vanir

Resources: Wool, feed grains (grass, barley, rye), dairy goods, vegetables

Technology Level: Dark Ages

Köldhorn is a small village of thatch-roofed houses centered on the town square. Normally bustling with the activities of such a settlement, tonight the place is shut up tight and the adventurers are unlikely to find shelter. Unless otherwise indicated, all villagers are **commoners**.

1. The Hálkavegur (Iceroad)

This narrow track is the only road in and out of Köldhorn. It is passable in summer and fall, but frozen in winter and treacherous with mud in the spring. Currently, the road is marked by hoofprints and wheel ruts in the deep snow and is easy to follow into town.

2. Þorháddursson Farm

About 60 Köldhorners live on small farms within riding distance of Cold Corners. The Þorháddursson farm is closest, though it is currently covered in snow save for footprints near the barn and main house. The animals — two dairy cows, a dozen sheep, and four goats — are all safely secured in the barn. Hrauvén, the family patriarch, refuses to answer any summons or knocks on his door; instead, he urges outsiders to “Go away!” Unless the adventurers wish to break into the farm and terrorize the family, they will find no shelter here.

3. Snow Berm

The town proper is surrounded by a low wall of snow that the Köldhorners build every year to safeguard the town against raids by the barbegazi. It is normally patrolled by one or two militia members, but while the Yule Lads are active, townsfolk remain locked indoors and leave the berm unoccupied. The berm has no gate and opens only at the end of the Iceroad that allows access to the village.

4. Mead Hall

Gunbörg Anfridsdóttir, along with her three sons and two daughters, manages this longhouse-based drinking hall that is the social center of the village. The building's wooden walls are brightly painted with fanciful designs and luck runes, and its doors normally are kept unlocked, accessible at all hours of the day and night. However, the hall is a frequent target of the Jólásveinar during Yuletide, and the doors are kept shut and barred. Gunbörg and her five children cower inside and won't let anyone in.

The sun sets early during the frigid northern winter, vanishing by mid-afternoon, and heralding a long, dreary night. Your shadows lengthen as you travel down the snow-covered road marked with hoofprints and wheel ruts. The horizon to the east is unnaturally dark, and flashes of distant lightning flicker among the clouds, illuminating the soaring ramparts of the Olf Mountains — a sure sign of a fierce oncoming blizzard. Ahead, you see the lights of a small settlement; with luck, you can find shelter there before the storm strikes. It is, you reflect, an odd way to spend the normally festive Yule Eve.

The adventure begins. Read or paraphrase as the party nears the town.

Snow crunches beneath your feet as you enter the small settlement. The last rays of the sun vanish beneath the horizon, the stars are hidden behind black clouds, and a few errant flakes begin to fall, and in the distance, you hear a rising howl of wind. You've made it to safety just in time, but to your surprise the village is strangely quiet. Smoke rises from several thatch-roof buildings, and light glimmers through shutters, but no one is on the street to greet you. All around you, the snow is pristine save for a few trails of what appear to be cat pawprints. Looking up, you see the dark form of a cat staring down at you from a snow-covered rooftop.

▲ Read or paraphrase as the characters enter the town.

5. Homes

About 150 humans and 10 halflings live inside the village proper, where they maintain small, neat homes with small, attached gardens and stables, and high-pitched thatch roofs to minimize snow accumulation. The whitewashed walls are often decorated with luck runes or images of flowers and birds, and many doors are painted red to attract good fortune and repel hostile creatures such as the Yule Lads (the red doors don't seem to work, but that hasn't ended the tradition).

6. Temple of Frigg

The Köldhorners worship both Æsir and Vanir, but their greatest love is for the goddess Frigg, to whom this temple is dedicated. Wotan, Donar, and the other gods are worshipped here as well, but Frigg's devotion to community, peace, and protection are the village's most valued qualities. A single godi, the priestess Vöka (**commoner** with Wisdom 16), lives here and tends to the temple, oversees worship, and assists locals in need of aid. She is not a cleric, but she purchases healing herbs and potions when they are available and keeps a stock on hand. Though she risks attack by the Yule Cat, Vöka opens her doors to the adventurers and provide *potions of healing* to any in need. She has a limited supply, however, and may confine her assistance to simply giving first aid. See **Friendly Faces** next should the characters seek shelter in the temple.

The temple contains a small statue of Frigg and shrines to the other gods. A hearth fire is kept constantly burning. Though the Yule Lads aren't above pushing snow from the temple roof onto nearby characters or throwing snowballs, they won't enter the temple. They leave it safe from their pranks, providing a temporary haven for the party should they need it. Unfortunately for Vöka and the adventurers, the Yule Cat is not as squeamish as the lads when it comes to committing acts of sacrilege, and it has no qualms about smashing its way into the temple should the characters hide there.

7. Blacksmith

A small house with an attached roof over the outdoor forge and anvil, this is the home of the blacksmith Jarne (NG male human **thug** with Constitution 16 [37 hit points] and Strength 18 [+6 to hit and +4 damage with his mace]), and his wife Hima. He is a kindly man, but like the other villagers, he does not offer shelter to the party. "Better to freeze in the storm than face the Jólakötturinn!" he shouts from behind his barred door. "Go now! Quickly, for your own sakes!" Once the fight with the Yule Cat begins, Jarne may reconsider and join the fight against it and the Yule Lads (see **Fight in the Streets**).

8. Village Circle

Cold Corners is centered on this open space where folk meet to socialize and trade. It's ankle-deep in unbroken snow at the moment, as the villagers keep to themselves and wait for Yule Morn, when the grim and potentially deadly season is at last at an end.

9. Bonta the Brewer

Normally a jolly, generous man with an equally jolly wife and two jolly children, Bonta the Brewer has grown surly and grim over Yuletide, as the lads seem to be taking special joy in tormenting him. Currently, he is staying awake all Yule Eve, holding a club and guarding his last few barrels of unspoiled ale and aquavit against the lads. He's not above raiding his own stock and is fairly intoxicated. If the party knocks, he replies from behind the door, expresses his sympathies, and tells them to go away before the Yule Cat shows up. He won't elaborate on exactly what the Yule Cat is, and eventually he shuts up entirely.

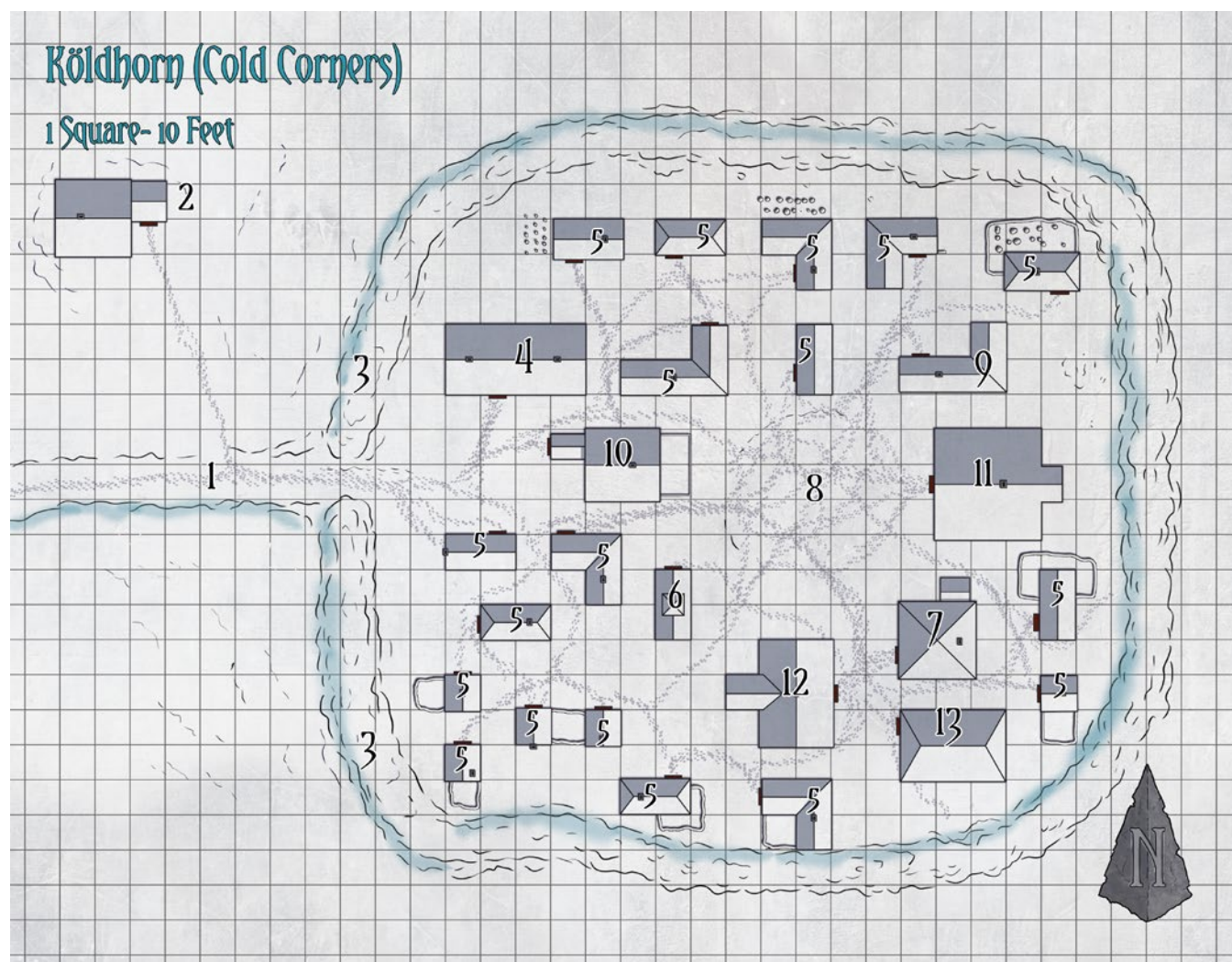
10. Þöstigg Family

Köldhorn's only halfling family has served as shopkeepers, farmhands, and laborers for many generations. They are genial and good-natured and are well-liked by the people of Cold Corners. Grandmother Lilja and grandfather Borska oversee their son Mikal (NG male halfling **scout**), his wife Nadi and their six children in this sprawling home that has been extensively added to over the generations. Outside, the Þöstiggs grow vegetables and keep several dairy goats.

Like the other villagers, the Þöstiggs initially refuse entrance to the party, telling them that something terrible is coming to the village, and that they should flee into the deadly teeth of the storm rather than face it. This doesn't sit well with Lilja and Borska, who eventually decide to leave their home and seek out the party, offering them at least temporary safety (see **Friendly Faces** next).

11. Council Hall

Köldhorn is governed with a light hand by a council of family elders who elect a mayor every two years. This grand (for Cold Corners at least) longhouse is where the mayor and council meet daily to discuss governance of the village. It is equipped with a long table and chairs, and is also used to stow ale kegs, sacks of grain, and vegetables when the storehouse is full. Currently, it is locked and empty.



12. Mayor's House

The current mayor is one of the village's wealthier and more influential citizens, a merchant named Hánsval Trygvysson (NG human male **noble**). One of the few locals who has ventured more than a few leagues beyond Cold Corners, Hánsval made a fair amount of money selling sheep and wool in Gatland and Vastavikland, returning home to build what is for the village an especially ostentatious two-story house.

At Yuletide, however, Mayor Hánsval is no different from any other Köldhorners, and his fine house has been subject to the Yule Lads' treatment for the past two weeks. Like the others, he and his wife Marja are locked inside with their infant son Kasða. They refuse to come out before dawn, which is still 18 hours away. If the characters knock or attempt to enter, he complains that he and his wife are sleeping, and directs the party to either Frigg's temple (**Location 6**) or the Ðostiggs (**Location 10**), knowing full well what danger he is putting his fellow villagers in.

13. Storehouse

Winter provisions and other surplus goods are stored here, where they are available to all in times of shortage. This winter has been particularly harsh, and the Yule Lads seem especially cruel, so the storehouse is now more than half empty, containing casks of beer, wilted vegetables, sacks of grain, and some dried meat.

Events in the Village

All is not well in Cold Corners when the adventurers arrive. The darkness of midwinter was never an especially joyful time for the local people, a situation that the cruel Yule Lads have taken pains to make worse. And though the yearly exchange of clothing has kept the Yule Cat at bay, both adults and children remain terrified as its dark shape stalks the snowy winter streets in search of prey. Poverty and a poor shearing season left the villagers with less wool than usual, forcing them to limit their clothing exchange, with some receiving only a single sock or small scarf. The adventurers' dilemma is further complicated by the fact that the clothing exchange has already occurred, and absolutely no new clothing remains. Now, even though most Köldhorners genuinely want to help their visitors, there is simply nothing to give.

This winter has also been particularly harsh, forcing the Köldhorners to deplete their winter stores, and the Jólasveinar's cruelties have spoiled more supplies than usual. Worse still, the intense cold has caused milk production to fall, reducing the stock of cheese, skyr, and other dairy products that they normally rely upon for survival. In desperation, some in the village have begun to consider the unthinkable — slaughtering some of their beloved animals for food.

Events occur in the following order:

The Yule Lads Arrive

The party arrives in Cold Corners at a particularly ominous moment. Facing the shortages and deprivations of a harsh winter and the imminent arrival of the Yule Cat, the villagers have also had to deal with the mischievous Yule Lads for nearly

two weeks. Beginning with Stekkjarstaur the Sheep-Worrier, one Lad arrives each night until Yule Morning, when they all depart for Grýla's cave to plot and scheme mischief for the next Yule. Currently, all 13 Yule Lads are present in town, ever sneaking and lurking, playing tricks, frightening children, angering adults, and annoying livestock. Wary after generations of torment by the cat and the lads, the Köldhorners are careful to lock the town up tight and refuse hospitality to travelers, lest they become the Jólakötturinn's next victims.

The Village Cats

The Köldhorners treasure their cats, relying on them to keep the town free of vermin. During Yuletide, however, the proximity of the fearsome Jólakötturinn seems to affect the local cats' behavior, making them jumpy, aggressive, and distrustful. When the party enters the town, they see various cats lurking in snowy alleys, watching warily from rooftops, and peeking out of village windows with ominous expressions. The cats don't take any action against the party until the Jólakötturinn arrives, but their behavior should increase the party's unease as they move through the silent town.

Seeking Shelter

The characters are free to explore the village, where they find few if any footprints or signs of passage besides those of the nervous village cats. Though the Yule Lads are abroad, they leave no trace behind and watch the party from hiding, their cruel delight growing by the minute.

If the characters knock on doors, they either get no answer or they are told to go away. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Intimidation) check may get more information out of the villagers as they cower in their homes, such as "I'm sorry! I want to help you, but I can't! You need to leave now!", "Gods protect you on this cursed night!" or "Please, for your own good! Go away or the Jólakötturinn will eat you!" If the characters don't speak the local tongue, these exhortations are delivered in broken Common.

After their first few rejections, at such supposedly welcoming places as the town mead hall, the characters are likely to be quite frustrated, especially as the coming storm is growing worse. Some may even consider breaking into a home and forcing themselves on its inhabitants. There are also some empty buildings such as the council hall and storehouse, but these must be broken into as well. Before the party takes such drastic action, the Jólásveinar make their presence known.



The Storm Arrives

The blizzard hits with brutal fury while the characters are wandering through the town. While the storm rages, the party is subject to the following effects:

Extreme Cold: Each hour that they are exposed to the storm, characters must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer a level of exhaustion. Characters with resistance or immunity to cold damage and those dressed in heavy winter gear don't need to make these rolls. Characters who are dressed in normal outdoor clothing must still make the saving throw. (It's unlikely that the fight with the Yule Cat will take more than an hour, but if it does, the characters will need to make another round of saving throws against the cold.)

Strong Winds: Unnaturally heavy winds batter the little village, casting up great plumes of snow and ice. Ranged weapon attacks and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing are made at disadvantage. The wind also extinguishes open flames and forces any flying creatures to land at the end of their turn or fall.

Heavy Precipitation: All Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight are made at disadvantage in the face of the thick, billowing snow.

Ice Storm: Periodic blasts of wind drive tiny fragments of ice before them like miniature daggers. Each turn there is a 1-in-6 chance of such a blast, which requires all characters to make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Encountering the Lads

Though they're cruel and malicious, the Yule Lads aren't killers; instead, they prefer to annoy and enrage their victims rather than engage in direct combat. Like their parents, they will be reborn next Yule if slain, but the lads still consider death to be an especially uncomfortable experience and seek to avoid it. The 13 Jólaveinar wait for the blizzard to hit before engaging in a number of prankish acts — at first, they are merely annoying, but once the Yule Cat arrives, the lads' trickery may cause deadly distractions.

Before the Yule Cat's arrival, only one or two lads engage in harassment, as the others are off playing pranks on the villagers. Once the Jólakötturinn puts in an appearance, the lads take the fight much more seriously, and several gang up to distract the party and help their beloved pet get its Yuletide meal. Typical actions are listed below, but feel free to come up with your own Jólaveinar pranks and amusing japey.

While they engage in their various pranks, the Yule Lads shout random comments, taunts, and insults such as:

- ❄️ "Happy Yule, visitors! Welcome to the nether regions!"
- ❄️ "Did that hurt? So sorry for our clumsiness, travelers!"
- ❄️ "You're a sturdy, fine-looking adventurer! Why ever do you associate with such ugly, common folk?"
- ❄️ "Your clothes are quite becoming! Tell your mother that she dresses you well!"
- ❄️ "It seems that your hair was cut by the local butcher!"

The lads all howl with laughter at these comments, even though none of them are especially funny.

The blizzard that has been threatening for the past few hours now arrives, blasting you full force as if angry that you tried to evade it. Chill wind races through the streets with a deafening, banshee-like howl, driving slivers of ice before it to sting and pierce exposed flesh, and a near-solid cloud of snow all but blinds you. Even walking is almost impossible — deep snow hampers you while the raging wind either pushes against you or shoves you violently from behind, threatening to tumble you to the icy ground. And amid wind's ferocious roar, you think you may hear something else. What is it? Even in your tortured ears, it sounds like peals of cruel, maniacal laughter.

^
Read or paraphrase when the blizzard arrives.

Snowball: *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 point bludgeoning damage, and target must make DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for one minute. A blind target may make a new saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Snowslide: The lads cause a mass of snow to slide off the steep roof of a nearby building. Any characters within 10 feet must succeed on DC 12 Dexterity saving throws or take 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

Hit and Run: One or more lads dart from hiding, making Hit and Run attacks (see the Jólásveinar entry in **Appendix 1**) before vanishing into the night.

Sniper Attack: One or more lads make shortbow attacks from hiding.

Silent Image: A Yule Lad creates the illusion of another Jólásveina obviously sneaking between buildings, hoping to draw the adventurers into an attack. Once they discover the deception, the tricked characters are pelted with snowballs or garbage.

Dump Garbage: The lads have hauled bins of vile refuse onto rooftops and dump them on unsuspecting characters. Each Dump Garbage attack is directed at a single target. A DC 12 Dexterity saving throw is required to avoid the garbage; on a failure, the garbage hits the target squarely, forcing it to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1d4 minutes. The target's Charisma score is also reduced by half during this period.

Taunt: A Yule Lad takes a Taunt action against a party member, hoping to enrage them and draw them away from the party for further torment.

Stampede: A couple of Jólásveinar have been busy on nearby farms, frightening the animals and causing a stampede of cows, goats, or sheep, which barrels through the opening in the town's snow berm and thunders through the snow toward the party. The stampede fills an entire street, and those in its path must make DC 13 Dexterity saving throws. Those that fail are knocked prone and suffer 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage from collisions with heavy bodies and hooves. Those who succeed suffer half this damage and are not knocked prone. The Jólásveinar can use this tactic only once.

Frozen Waterfall: Rooftop lads dump freezing water upon the party. Anyone within five feet of a building must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) cold damage. The water then freezes on the targets, inflicting another 1 cold damage at the start of each of the target's turns until the target or another creature spends an action to knock off the ice.



Friendly Faces

Once the characters (or as is more likely, the players) are thoroughly sick and frustrated by the storm and the lads' mean tricks, help arrives in the form of halfling elders Lilja and Borska Ðöstigg (**commoners**), who apologize for their children's rudeness and invite the party to their home, knowing full well the danger that they now face. The characters may also have taken shelter at the Temple of Frigg, where they're safe from the Yule Lads but unfortunately not the Yule Cat.

Inside either the halfling home or the temple, the characters should be allowed a short rest, and their hosts can provide sustenance — yogurt-like skyr “from an old family recipe” in the case of Lilja, and caraway-spiced aquavit liquor from Vöka's hidden stock (“I've been saving it for a special occasion,” she confides) — that allow any character suffering from Exhaustion to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, recovering one level of Exhaustion on a success. Vöka also has a small number of *potions of healing* available, but she can spare only two at most, as she wishes to keep the remainder for the villagers.

Grandmother Lilja and Gödi Vöka fill the characters in on the village's situation, quickly explaining the history of the lads and the Yule Cat. Lilja seems like a kindly old woman who has seen many wonders, and her version of the story is straightforward.

Vöka's version of the story is a bit more circumspect.

Both hosts explain that new clothes have already been distributed in anticipation of the cat's arrival, and none are currently available to give to the party, though both would do so if they could. Before either Lilja or Vöka can explain further however, the Jólakötturinn arrives, immediately detects the delicious scent of those who haven't received new clothes and makes its way toward the party's hiding place.

Grandmother Lilja's story

There's these two trolls upon the mountain, see? Grýla, and her good-for-nothing husband Leppalúði — he's her third, by the way. I think she killed the previous two. They used to come down here every Yule and eat folks, but when we started fighting back, she got tired of it, and agreed to leave us in peace. Her sons, though — the Jólasveinar — they still come down here and raise hell during Yuletide. And that cat ... that awful cat, the Jólakötturinn — Grýla lets it eat folks as it wants, so long as those folks didn't get new clothes on Yule Eve. Why she came up with such a mad compromise ... well, who's to know? They say they're all part-fae, and there's no telling what the fae will ask of folks. Any rate, that cat's on its way, and as you folks haven't got your new clothes, I'm afraid you'll have a fight on your hands. And so will we, since we were foolish enough to give you shelter. But then, my gran always taught me never to neglect a stranger in need, so here we are, eh?

Vöka's story

Those Yule Lads, they've been causing trouble every Yuletide for generations. We made an agreement long ago though. They would just play tricks on people, never kill anyone as long as we left them alone. And their pet, that big cat, it can eat anyone who didn't get new clothes on Yule Eve, and unfortunately that includes you. You should run as fast as you can out of town, and hope that thing doesn't follow.

Attack of the Yule Cat

If the characters exit quickly into the wind- and snow-ravaged streets of Köldhorn, the Yule Cat spares their refuge further assaults. If they choose to stay inside, however, it easily rips the wall open and attacks them inside their building as their hosts attempt to scramble to safety. Having given the party shelter, they are now also on the cat's victim list, but it's most interested in the adventurers, and attacks them first. The cat is adjacent to the structure, attacking the wall, but takes notice of the characters as soon as they appear.

Fight in the Streets

The party must roll for initiative. The cat's first action is to Pounce, bypassing any adjacent characters (and drawing opportunity attacks), and leap onto more distant



From outside, a terrifying howl rises above the constant roar of the wind, and the entire structure shudders as if something huge has been thrown against its walls. "It's here," says your hostess. "I'm afraid all I can offer now is my sympathies. You'd best go fight it lest it tears this whole place down to get to you."

Read or paraphrase when
the Yule Cat appears.

targets such as archers or spellcasters who normally stay back from the front lines. It uses its Disembowelment attack if both claws hit.

The fight with the Jólakötturinn is likely to be chaotic and mobile, as the cat prefers hit-and-run attacks, slashing and biting at its foes, taking damage, then retreating into the snow to regenerate. Its speed makes it very hard to keep up with, and its Pounce action allows it to leap onto rooftops away from the party. Perception checks and flying movement are both limited by the weather conditions as noted above. The cat is especially afraid of fire, which hampers its regeneration. If it takes damage from fire, it flees up to 120 feet on its following turn and does not attack.

In most cases, the villagers cower in their houses, terrified of the cat and fearful that they will be its victims if they help the party. However, should the party have trouble defeating the cat, some villagers overcome with guilt and anger may muster up enough courage to emerge from their homes and assist.

Most of the villagers are **commoners**, but they don their militia equipment, giving them AC 11 (padded armor) or 12 (hide armor), and pick up spears (*Melee Weapon Attack*: +2, reach 5 ft., one target, 1d6 piercing damage). Some may even have shortbows (*Ranged Weapon Attack*: +2, range 80/320 ft., 1d6 piercing damage). It's up to you how many villagers appear, and whom they attack — they're most likely to vent their fury on the Yule Lads, who are less-challenging opponents and far more likely to abandon the fight and run away.

Some of the village's more capable warriors may participate as well, chief among them the halflings Mikal and Nadi Döstigg, both **scouts** who have grown weary of enduring the Jólasveinar's cruelties and want to fight back. They may also be joined by Jarni the blacksmith (see **Location 7**), who can't stand to see anyone victimized by the vicious Yule Cat. All of these allies are well aware that they are breaking a time-honored pact with Grýla and may be bringing even greater misfortune down



upon the village. They are, however, fed up with passively tolerating the lads and allowing the cat to devour innocent travelers.

Though the Jólásveinar flee the village if threatened, the cat's rage and hunger keep it from leaving, and it fights to the death. The fight ends if the cat is slain, at which time the remaining Yule lads retreat into the snow, bearing with them the infant son of Mayor Hánsval and Marja, though at this point the adventurers are unaware that young Kasða has been taken.

Chose Annoying Lads and Angry Cats

While the fight with the cat continues, the Yule Lads continue to delightedly harass and annoy the party. Spoon-Licker and Gully-Gawk are detached to kidnap the mayor's baby (this happens "off-camera," and the party can't prevent it), and some of the others keep up their various food-stealing and door-slamming pranks, but each turn the party faces up to six of the lads, who engage in the various acts of sabotage and harassment as described above.

The lads are loathe to get involved in full melee combat and keep their distance; they flee if possible. At most, they make their Hit-and-Run attacks, stabbing their targets before vanishing into the snowy night. Jólásveinar who lose more than half their hit points also retreat, fleeing back to Dimmuborgir. If encountered in **Chapter Three**, injured Yule Lads are healed of all damage.

In addition to the lads, you may want to further complicate the characters' task by involving the village cats. As described previously, the cats are all on edge due to the imminent arrival of the Jólakötturinn, but with the creature actually in town, the normally placid cats seem instinctively driven to attack the party. Each round, at your discretion, village cats may take any of the following actions against one or more party members:

Trip. A cat dashes out from hiding and runs between a character's legs. Characters who fail a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw fall prone.

Scratch. Leaping from a roof, doorway, or windowsill, the cat tries to scratch a party member with a +2 melee weapon attack, inflicting 1d2 slashing damage on a hit. The attacked character may take an opportunity attack on the cat at disadvantage, but this uses the character's reaction for the turn.

Howl. Several nearby cats set up a collective howl in the hopes of distracting the party. The sharp sound rises above the sound of the wind, and anyone who hears it must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. Anyone who fails this save has disadvantage on all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks until the end of their next turn.

Swarm. A small cluster of cats pounces and attaches itself to a character, inflicting a small amount of damage and reducing their target's movement. Characters attacked in this fashion must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the swarm. Those who fail their save take 2 (1d4) slashing damage and move at half speed each turn until they use an action to succeed on another DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check to detach the angry felines.

Read or paraphrase to describe the Yule Cat's appearance.



Grouching in the icy street, its massive form wreathed by swirls of snow, is an enormous black cat (Jólakötturinn, see **Appendix 1**), identical to a mangy domestic beast save for its great size and malicious, near-fiendish expression. Deep green eyes glare, glowing with an inner light, and long white whiskers frame a snarling mouth with white teeth that gleam like polished daggers. Behind its humped body, a long, puffed-out tail lashes with seething anger. Its hind legs shift back and forth, ominously preparing to leap. "Meet our cat, our lovely cat, who has not dined in many a year," echoes a wicked voice from nearby. "You're just to his taste — a bit gristly perhaps, but still quite toothsome!"

Aftermath: A Child is Missing

The wind continues to howl, blowing great clouds of snow through the streets. One by one, villagers begin to emerge from their homes, gazing in wonder as you stand, weary and wounded, beside the creature's massive body. A man bearing a lantern and better dressed than the other villagers approaches and inspects the corpse with a concerned expression. He turns to you and speaks in a sad tone. "I am Hánsval, Mayor of Köldhorn," he says with a trace of apprehension in his voice. "Long have we feared the Yule Cat and suffered from the Yule Lads' cruelties. But we don't rejoice at its fall. In slaying the cat, you have broken a pact that has stood for generations, and now we must fear the vengeance of the lads' parents, the trolls Grýla and Leppalúði, who dwell on the great mountain Snjörfall." He gestures toward the craggy peak that towers to the east. "The trolls' vengeance is sure to be harsh." At this point, a shriek echoes through the streets, and a woman races toward Hánsval, her face streaked with tears and set in a mask of unbearable grief. "Hánsval!" she cries. "Hánsval! They've taken Kasða! They've taken our son!" Gasps of horror erupt from the gathered crowd of villagers, as they turn their angry, accusatory gazes upon you.

^
Read or paraphrase after
the Yule Cat is defeated.

The woman is Hánsval's wife Marja, and she explains that when she went upstairs to check on their baby, she found the window open, and glimpsed two Yule Lads racing away bearing the baby. They left no prints in the snow as they went.

This certainly leaves the adventurers in a spot and turning down the mayor's sincere plea for help is unlikely to endear them to the villagers. In the unlikely event that they appear reluctant, the mayor reveals that Grýla is said to have a hoard of treasure that the party can have if they save Kasða. Mikal is also not above reminding the characters that this situation is a direct result of their arrival in town, and now the future looks grim, even if the boy is rescued.

The characters can take a short rest before leaving, and the Gödi Vöka is willing to use up the last of her *potions of healing*, providing one to each party member. The townsfolk can also provide heavy weather gear that eliminates the need for characters to make Constitution saving throws against extreme cold, as well as snowshoes to help prevent them from bogging down in the snow. The villagers can also provide sufficient food and drink to get to the mountain and back.

Despite this, it's possible that the party sets off with lost hit points and expended spell slots, and this is likely to make the coming journey a significant challenge. If you want to be less harsh, you can add healing potions and other enhancements to the loot taken from foes during the journey to Snow Mountain.

Hánsval turns to you, his hands held out beseechingly. "They're taking my son to their cursed mountain!" he cries. "Grýla cooks children in her foul stew! Now that the Yule Cat is dead, she will delight in devouring poor Kasða as punishment for what you've done! Their cave is on the slopes of Snjörfall. Please, I beg you! Rescue our son! Save him from that horrid troll and her husband!" As you contemplate the full meaning of the mayor's words, a voice pipes up. "I will guide you to the troll's caves!" From the crowd steps the halfling Mikal ðöstigg. "It is a dangerous journey, but I will help you in any way that I can!"

^
Hánsval's plea.

The storm subsides as you leave the village, the howling wind dying to a low moan. Occasional gaps in the clouds allow the moon to illuminate the white expanse between you and the granite ramparts of Snjörfall before the storm closes in again. It seems the entire village has turned out to see you off as you begin the long trip across the snowfields. They seem more apprehensive than hopeful, and their expressions are dark, as if seeing the troubles ahead now that their long agreement with the trolls is broken. You hope that your mission is successful and try not to fear for these hardy souls in their tiny village.

^
Read or paraphrase as the party leaves the village.

Chapter

Two

To the Mountain

The storm continues, but with protective clothing and snowshoes, the party makes slow but steady progress. Mikal takes the lead, pointing toward the mountain. “The way there is straightforward,” he says, “but getting to Grýla’s cave is a bit trickier.”

There are 12 hours of cold northern night until dawn, and mountain is about 20 miles away. The party can travel at Fast, Normal, or Slow pace, reaching the mountain in the time given next. The party’s pace affects the number of encounter rolls made, the likelihood of encounters, and the party’s ability to avoid them if so desired. Transit time is the same whether the party is mounted or not, and the party must dismount upon reaching the mountain, before going up the slope to Grýla’s cave.

Fun with Exhaustion

Numerous opportunities exist in this adventure for characters to earn levels of Exhaustion. Unfortunately for them, Exhaustion is one of the most debilitating conditions in the game and is extremely difficult to recover from — only *greater restoration* or a Long Rest (provided that food and water are consumed) can reduce Exhaustion levels, and then only one level at a time. More than one Exhaustion level severely handicaps characters — reducing their speed by half, forcing disadvantage on attacks and saving throws, and even worse penalties as levels accumulate — and so should be avoided at all costs.

This leaves you in a ticklish situation — you want to keep the adventure challenging, but you

don't want to make it impossible. Thus, several spots exist in the adventure where Exhaustion levels can be reduced (Mæya's tea, Father Poga's whiskey, etc.),

If the halfling scout Mikal accompanies the party, he doesn't improve their transit time, but he does have +6 to his Dexterity (Stealth) checks, and +5 to Wisdom (Perception) and (Survival) checks. He also has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight, effectively cancelling out penalties due to bad weather, but there is still a chance that party members may end up with two, three, or more levels of Exhaustion. In such a case, you have some options for dealing with the situation:

❄ Do nothing. The characters failed their rolls (or foolishly

refused to wear warm clothing), and they must deal with the consequences.

- ❄ Provide more options for recovery or let remedies such as Poga's whiskey remove more than one level of Exhaustion. Letting Grýla's baked goods remove levels if consumed is another option.
- ❄ Reduce the challenge of some encounters.

Exhaustion from cold and exertion is a useful element of storytelling and roleplaying, helping to bring home the hazardous nature of the wilderness, but don't let it spoil your players' fun. This is, after all, a Yule adventure and not a dark Jack London-style saga of wilderness survival. Work to balance peril with enjoyment and your players will appreciate it.

Pace: Fast pace covers about 400 feet per minute and four miles per hour; Normal pace covers 300 feet per minute and three miles per hour; Slow pace covers 200 feet per minute and two miles per hour. At a fast pace, the party requires five hours to get to the mountain; at a medium pace, seven hours; and at a slow pace, 10. The party can travel mounted, but conditions are such that this does not decrease transit time, although it does provide advantage on Exhaustion checks (see below).

Encounter Chance Per Hour: Roll 1d6 for each hour of travel. If traveling Fast, an encounter occurs on a roll of 1–3; if Normal, the encounter occurs on a roll of 1–2; and if traveling Slow, the encounter occurs on a roll of 1 only. If an encounter is indicated, roll 2d6 on **Table 1: Encounters**.

Stealth: If traveling Slow, an encounter can be avoided with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check by half or more of the party. Encounters can't be avoided if traveling Normal or Fast. Encounters such as weather events that can't be avoided with Stealth rolls are indicated in **Table 1: Encounters**.

Exhaustion DC: If the party was moving at Fast or Normal pace, each member must make a DC 14 (Fast) or 12 (Normal) Constitution saving throw for each hour of travel and suffer a level of Exhaustion on a failure. No saves are needed if the party moved at Slow pace, and these saves may be made with advantage by any mounted party members. Note that this roll is due to the party's exertion, rather than extreme cold weather, so the rolls are not negated due to heavy clothing. Any party members shortsighted enough to shun warm clothing or other protections against the cold makes their saves against Exhaustion at disadvantage.

Table 1: Encounters

 Encounter	
2	Frost giant
3	1–3 yeti
4	1–3 winter wolves
5	Crevasse**
6	Barbegazi* raiders
7	Storm conditions**
8	1d3 polar bears
9	2d4 ice mephits
10	1d3 ice drakes*
11	Young remorhaz
12	Young white dragon
* See Appendix 1	
** Cannot be avoided with Dexterity (Stealth) checks	

Passive Perception: Unless otherwise noted, party members can make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to detect the encounter before it occurs. If traveling Fast, all party members' Wisdom (Perception) checks are made with disadvantage. If the party was traveling Slow, Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot an encounter are made at advantage. If the encounter is not spotted, creatures attacking the party receive a surprise round.

Barbegazi Raiders: The barbegazi, or ice gnomes (a term that they themselves despise), are a constant threat to travelers and the people of Cold Corners, who fortify their town and train a militia to deal with them. A typical raiding party consists of 2d6 **barbegazi** led by an elder male (**barbegazi** with 21 hit points who also has advantage on all Dexterity [Stealth] checks). Though they are hostile toward outsiders and are actively seeking loot, they retreat if half their number are slain. If the party faced a white dragon, the barbegazi saw this from hiding and are consequently friendly, providing 1–3 *potions of healing* and giving warnings of future dangers so that for the next hour any encounters except for storm conditions are ignored.

Crevasse: The party member in the lead must make a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check to detect a deep crevasse hidden by snowfall. If they fail, they must then make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to avoid falling into the crevasse. If they do not detect the crevasse and succeed on their Dexterity save, the next individuals in the party must make the same checks until someone either avoids, detects, or falls into the crevasse.

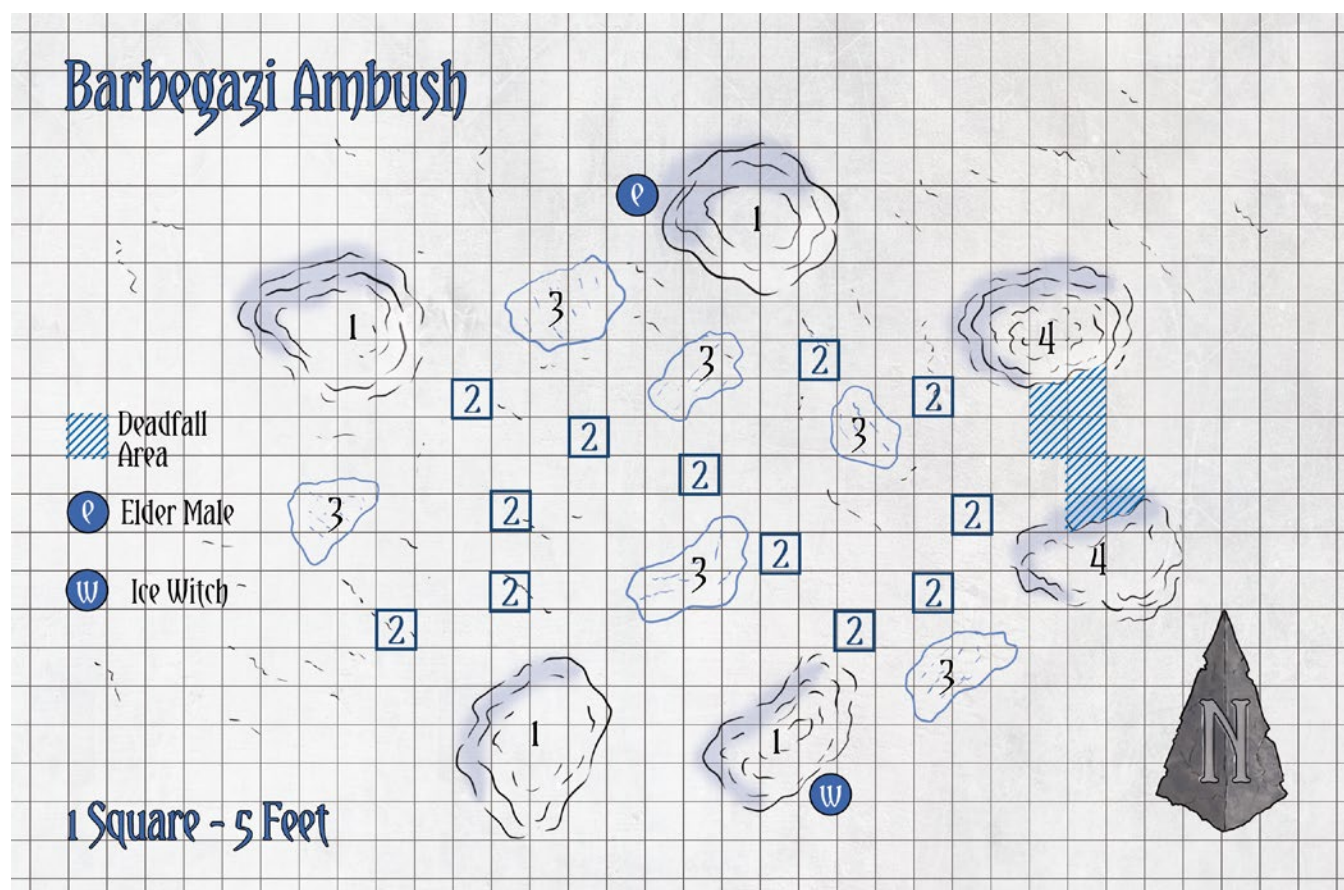
Those who fall into the crevasse must then make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the individual takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage and is trapped at the bottom of a 30-foot-deep crevasse. On a success, the damage is halved, and the individual falls only 20 feet. In either case, the character can climb out with a Strength (Athletics) check of DC 10 + 1 for every 10 feet fallen. If using a rope, the fallen individual can get out with a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. On a failure, they slip and take another 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage but can try to climb out again.

Frost Giant: These creatures are generally going about their own business and won't attack the party unless attacked first. If the party fails to detect an encounter with a frost giant, there is a 1-in-6 chance that the giant is so alarmed by the party's sudden appearance that it attacks. If the party wishes to flee from an attacking giant, have all party members make DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) or Wisdom (Survival) rolls. If more than half the party succeeds, the adventurers escape from the giant, who then gives up pursuit.

Storm Conditions: Gale force winds howl down from the mountains, renewing the fierce blizzard. Conditions are as described under **The Storm Arrives** and persist for the next 1d4 hours (if party members are wearing the heavy clothing provided by the village, they do not need to make rolls against extreme cold, however). Continue to make encounter checks as normal, with the storm conditions making things more complicated for the adventurers. Each hour that the storm persists, one party member must make a Wisdom (Survival) roll, with help from one other party member if desired. The DC is 10 plus one for every hour the storm has gone on. On a success, the party moves ahead normally; on a failure, no progress is made in the teeth of the storm, and the party loses one hour of transit time, which requires further encounter rolls and Constitution saving throws.

Fixed Encounters

In addition to random encounters, you can include some of the following fixed events, each of which reduces the time remaining by one hour. These are optional, however, in case you think the party is having too easy a time of it, or if you want to enliven the journey with more challenging encounters.



Barbegazi Ambush

The barbegazi ice gnomes are the primary reason that Cold Corners maintains a militia and surrounds the village with a high ice berm each winter. Barbegazi clans are nomadic, moving from place to place, following game and raiding opportunities, pitching hide and mammoth-bone tents, and tending herds of hardy tundra goats. The clans supplement their diet and wealth with raids on each other, on travelers, and on human settlements such as Köldhorn.

In this encounter, the barbegazi lay an ambush for the party with the aid of their clan's ice witch and several trained worgs and attempt to disable them as quickly as possible.

1. Low Hills

These hills flank the party's route. Five **barbegazi** hide just beyond the crest of each hill and emerge, delivering *hold person* and *ray of frost* spells when the party is in range. They then swarm down, attacking immobilized or injured party members first. Spotting the hidden barbegazi requires a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check.

A **barbegazi** elder male (with 21 hp and advantage on all Dexterity [Stealth] rolls, at location **e**) is accompanied by the clan's **ice witch** (at location **w**). They move to assist any fallen barbegazi or attack characters who fall prone or into the pit traps.

2. Pit Traps

The ice gnomes dug several, six-foot-deep pits in the area and placed sharp icicles at the bottom, then placed debris across their openings and concealed them with snow. A character who moves into the same square as a pit must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the pit. Anyone who crosses the pit must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall into it, taking 7 (2d6) piercing damage from the icicles. Once they inflict damage, the icicles break and can't cause further damage. A creature can use an action to make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to climb out of a pit.

3. Ice Patches

The barbegazi also prepared some difficult terrain by melting snow then letting it freeze into slick ice covered in a thin veneer of snow. Movement through these areas costs double, and anyone who steps in one of them must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone, losing the rest of their movement for the turn. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a character to detect an ice patch before stepping on it.

4. Deadfall

Two masses of rocks, snow, and debris are rigged on the slopes of these two hills, ready to fall should anyone try to move between them. Spotting the deadfalls requires a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. They can't really be disarmed, but a character can move adjacent to them and take an action to trigger the debris, which immediately falls into the indicated spaces, making them difficult terrain but not otherwise harming anyone not in the area of effect.

If the Wisdom (Perception) roll to spot the deadfalls fail, the traps are sprung, and everyone in the indicated areas of effect must make DC 13 Dexterity saving throws. A creature who fails is knocked prone and takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage, while a creature who succeeds takes half this damage and is not knocked prone. After the deadfall is triggered, the areas of effect are difficult terrain.

The barbegazi flee the ambush if half their number are slain, or if both the elder male and the witch are killed.

Snow Elves vs. Barbegazi

As they continue to trudge through the darkness, have the characters make Wisdom (Perception) checks (remember to make the checks at disadvantage if the bad weather returns). On a success, the characters hear the faint sounds of combat from nearby — shouts, screams, the clash of weapons.

The attackers are 20 **barbegazi** led by an elder male (with 21 hp and advantage on all Dexterity [Stealth] rolls) and the defenders are 10 elf **scouts** led by Gaela (NG female elf **noble** with a +1 *rapier*) and Mendiran (LG male elf **priest**). The elves are a foraging party from a nearby nomadic clan seeking game in the form of caribou and reindeer. They were set upon by the barbegazi and most likely perish if the party doesn't intervene.

If the party intervenes, the elves keep 10 barbegazi out of the fight; the adventurers have to fight the remaining 10 barbegazi and the elder male. The elder and 10 ice gnomes that the party faces have only one use of their *ray of frost* attacks remaining, and only five of the barbegazi still have access to their *hold person* spells.

If the party kills the elder male and five of the barbegazi, the remainder retreat. Once the ice gnomes are driven off, Gaela and Mendiran thank the party and offer food, wine, and up to three *potions of healing* in gratitude. Mendiran also has one *cure wounds* and a *lesser restoration* spell remaining. They are also aware of Grýla and her offspring but can't provide any further assistance beyond their gratitude and best wishes.

Yule Bear Attack

The Yule Cat is not the family's only pet. Over the past few years, they've tamed and trained a huge polar bear to follow their commands. Dubbed **Jólabjörn** (Yule Bear, see **Appendix 1**), it normally guards the family cave. However, the lads and their mother are feeling especially annoyed, and Jólabjörn is dispatched to delay the party.

Although the Yule Bear is certainly terrifying, it doesn't actually try to kill anyone. As noted under the Jólaveinar's description in **Appendix 1**, while the Yule Lads are mischievous, often cruel, and sometimes cause physical harm, they also love animals. They raised Jólabjörn as a pet and trained him to do tricks and play games. Thus, his actions to delay the party aren't intended to be violent, though the characters may not notice immediately.

Jólabjörn doesn't take the fight terribly seriously and sees the party as new playmates; it makes play-fighting attacks as described in its appendix entry. As noted, even if it does use its normal attacks, it does only minimal damage. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that the bear is mostly playing and seems intent only on delaying the party. A *speak with animals* spell allows the characters to learn the bear's true motivations, while *animal friendship* allows the party to stop the attacks altogether. If this is the case, the bear accompanies the party to the Snörfjall caves but does not fight any opponents inside the caves, including the Yule Lads or Grýla.

If the party fights Jólabjörn, it continues play-fighting until they inflict at least 35 points of damage, after which it looks at the party with a hurt expression and ambles away into the darkness. If the party pursues, it continues to flee. If cornered, it fights normally, causing full damage with its attacks. As with most of the lads' other creatures, the bear returns next Yule, but its death saddens the Jólaveinar, possibly even making them reconsider their past behavior.



head of you in the cloud-obscured moonlight you see a circle of tall figures armed with slender swords surrounded by a group of smaller humanoids. Several figures lie motionless in the snow. As you watch, there is a magical exchange between the two groups; shimmering rays of ice burst from the attackers, while flames shoot from the fingertips of a figure in the center of the defenders' circle. Combatants fall, and you see the surrounding figures move to the attack.

Read or paraphrase if the party investigates.

In the distance ahead, you spy a warm yellow glow, like a friendly fire. As you draw near, you see an odd sight — here, in the middle of the snow-swept plain stands a simple hut with firelight flickering from its single glass window. Smoke curling from its small chimney is caught up and dispersed by the angry wind. Though by rights it should be half-buried in drifting snow, the hut is almost entirely clear, save for a picturesque accumulation on its thatch roof. When you are within just a few paces of the hut, the door opens to reveal a rectangle of yellow-orange light. In the doorway stands a bent, elderly woman with braided gray hair. She is clad in ragged clothes and wears numerous charms and necklaces. “Well, well,” echoes an elderly voice. “It’s a band of adventurers, as rare as white ravens, braving the cold on a stormy Yule Eve. Your task must be grave indeed. Please come in and warm yourselves. Share some tea with a lonely old woman, won’t you?”

▲
Read or paraphrase
as the characters near the hut.

The tiny hut’s interior is as spacious as a king’s longhouse, warm and dry, hung with tapestries and skins, its floor covered in hides and fleece. Nearby stands a log table with burning tapers. The woman bids you sit. “Don’t worry,” she says. “Time is slower here. You will not be delayed unduly. I am called Mæya.” Two ravens flutter down from the rafter to alight on the old woman’s shoulders, then motion as if whispering in her ears. She listens for a moment, then greets you all by name before picking up a ceramic teapot from the table. “Be welcome, adventurers. Would you like some tea? Moss, pine needles, angelica, birch. Quite refreshing.”

▲
Read or paraphrase
as the party enters the hut.

The Snowy Hut

If the party protests that they’re on a tight schedule, the woman replies that it doesn’t matter, “You won’t lose any time here.” If the party doesn’t enter and tries to move on, the hut appears in front of them a mile or so farther along until they agree to come in and chat.

Mæya is a part-fae creature who just happens to be Grýla’s half-sister. She is quite aware of her sister’s various misdeeds but also feels compelled to keep her from harm. Like many other enchanted creatures, Mæya can manifest herself during Yuletide and takes this opportunity to dissuade the party from hurting or killing Grýla. Though her sister is effectively immortal, being slain on the Material Plane is painful and a huge inconvenience, which makes her extremely cranky and hard to get along with during her exile to the fae realms. Mæya isn’t given statistics as she’s a noncombatant; should the party attempt to use violence once inside the hut, she and her hut vanish, leaving them back in the snow.

The tea acts as a *potion of healing* and also removes one level of exhaustion when consumed. Suspicious characters (there are bound to be at least one or two) find nothing amiss about the woman, and spells such as *detect evil and good* are inconclusive. A DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) or (Nature) check suggest only that she is not entirely of the Material Plane. Once the party begins to drink their tea, she speaks.

Festive Yule Lights

In addition to creatures such as Mæya and the Yule Lads, other entities lurk in the snowy wilderness during the mid-winter season. Insubstantial fae spirits visit the Material Plane on the year’s longest nights and sometimes interact with mortals. The party can encounter one or more of these spirits, with consequences good or ill.

There is one cluster of lights per party member, including the halfling Mikal if he’s with the party. How the party

interacts with the spirits is up to them. If attacked, individual lights instantly extinguish themselves, dealing 7 (2d6) lightning damage on their attackers; a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw halves this damage. If a party member tries to communicate with a spirit, it continues to flicker and flash, but does so in a single color, which is different for each party member. Otherwise, the lights simply flicker and flash, then once more vanish on the wind after a few moments.

If one or more of the Yule Spirits bonds with a character by changing to a solid color, it continues to follow the selected character and provide resistance to cold damage. The spirit remains with the character and accompanies its character past the fae portal to the Dimmuborgir; it departs when the party returns to Cold Corners. In addition, while a Yule Spirit accompanies a character, that player can choose to reroll an attack roll, saving throw, or ability check. If the player does this, however, the new roll must be used and the spirit vanishes, returning to the fae.

"I know of your task, my rare white ravens. I offer advice to you on this night when we of the fae can cross over barriers and speak to mortals. You fear for the safety of a loved one and seek the troll woman Grýla. Perhaps the good folk of Köldhorn have told you something of her and her offspring, but they have not told you everything, for they have forgotten much."

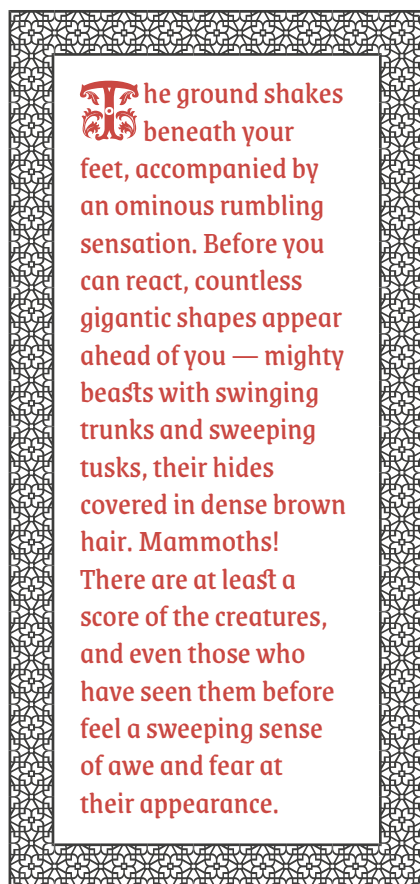
"The truth is that in the distant past, they fought her and her family, and even succeeded in slaying her. But she is not entirely of this world, and on the sacred Yule Eve she and her brood are always reborn, returning to the town to seek vengeance. Slain once more, she returned again, and the cycle repeated many times before peace of a sort was finally established. Grýla would leave the village in peace, her sons would raise havoc during Yuletide, and her cat would be allowed to devour those who had not received new clothes on Yule Eve — the poor and unfortunate, outsiders who didn't know of the tradition, even lazy children who neglected their chores, though even they were usually given clothing rather than face the cat's wrath. So long as neither her cat nor her sons were harmed, the agreement remained in place."

"Now, you have broken the pact and slain the Jólakötturinn and seek to slay Grýla to rescue a lost child. It is a noble quest, and you might even succeed, but if you do kill Grýla or her sons, they and the Jólakötturinn will return next Yule, seeking vengeance and bringing back old dark days. I ask that you reconsider what you are doing. Seek peace and reconciliation rather than blood and vengeance and ask that Grýla do the same. I can appeal only to your sense of mercy and fairness, even knowing the evils that she has committed in the past. Evil she may be, but even Grýla is not without some good in the depths of her soul. I know this, for she is my sister, and her 13 sons are my nephews." With that, the old woman fades from view, along with her strange, lonely hut. In a moment, you are back in windswept wilderness, and the foreboding mass of Snörfjall towers above you.

Unexpectedly, the icy winds blow warm, and the whirling snow flickers with sparks of multicolored light. Staring at the phenomenon, you see that several clusters of lights flit back and forth, heedless of the storm. The wind grows colder as they move away, then warmer as they get closer. Amid the howl of the wind, you hear what sound like melodic voices uttering words that you can't quite make out. Several of the light clusters slow down and hang in the air before you, just within reach.

▲
Mæya speaks.

◀ Read or paraphrase when the party encounters the Yule Spirit.



▲
Read or paraphrase when the mammoths draw near.

Mammoth Herd

No rolls are needed to detect the approach of these behemoths.

The herd contains 20 adult **mammoths** and 8 noncombatant calves — clearly more than the party can effectively face in combat. Mammoths normally roam the plains, moving south as the winter grows harsher. They have grown wary of the humans, elves, and barbegazi who hunt them and can potentially stampede if alarmed.

If the party remains calm and allows the herd to pass, make a group DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If half or more of the party pass the check, the mammoths move on without incident. If more than half fail, the mammoths trumpet in alarm and stampede. If the herd stampedes, each party member must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage as the mammoths thunder past. If anyone is so foolish as to attack the mammoths, several adults detach themselves from the main herd and attack the offenders directly, an act that is likely to result in some fairly severe damage to the party.

Reaching the Cave

After traveling through snowy foothills, the party is confronted by the rugged, snow-clad slopes of great Snörfjall — Snow Mountain. The terrain ahead is far too steep and rugged for their animals, who must be left behind. If Mikal accompanies the party, he unerringly guides the party to the cave mouth after about an hour of hiking.

Should the party be without the halfling guide, they have a harder time of it. After one hour of searching, the cave can be located with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check. Each successive hour of searching reduces the DC by 2, and if those rolls fail, the cave is automatically located after four hours of searching. Party members must make DC 10 Constitution saving throws each hour, taking a level of Exhaustion on a failure.

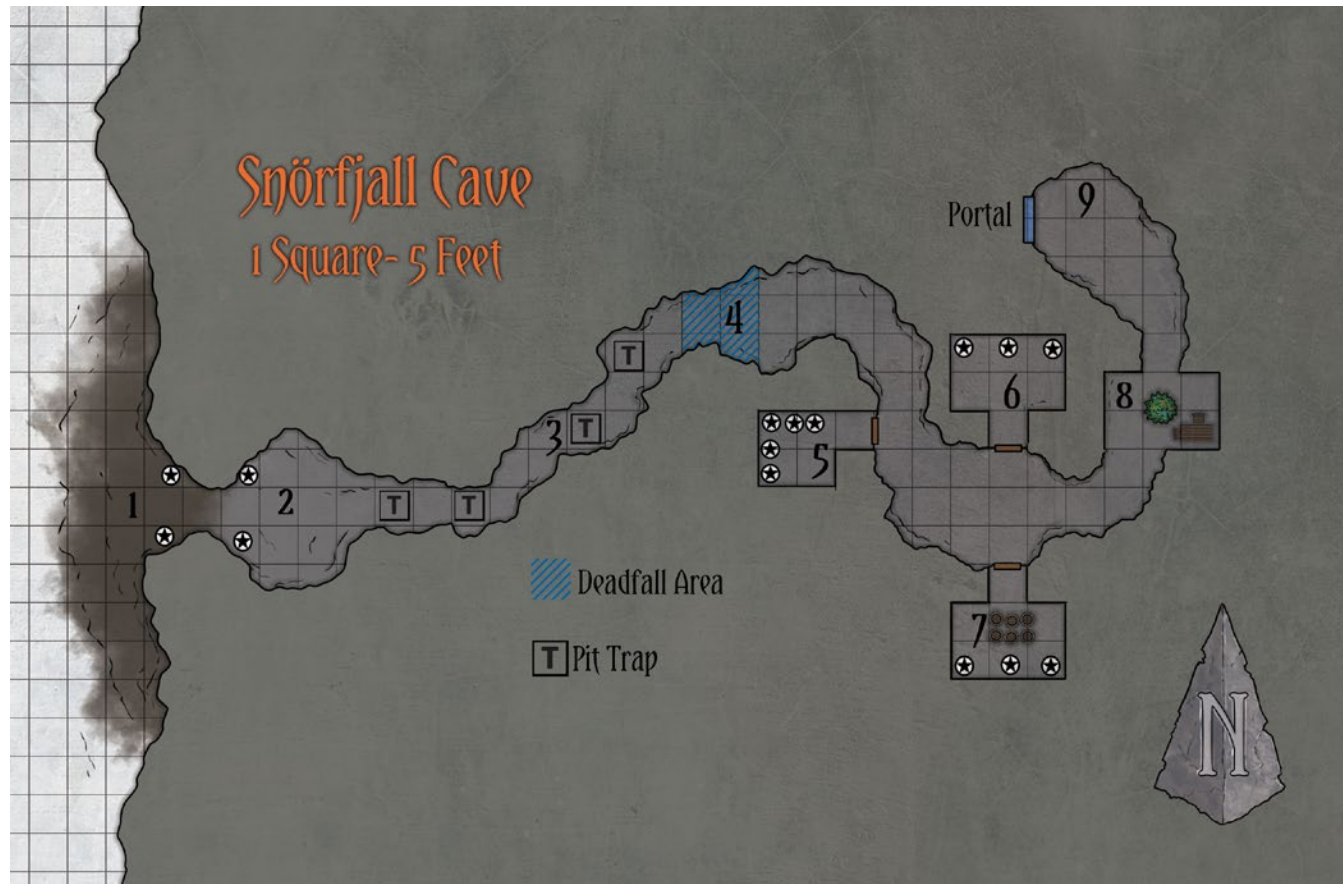
Chapter Three

Yuletide on Snörfjall

As the party approaches Grýla's cave, they see a jagged patch of deeper darkness that scars the stone mountainside ahead, accessible across a rocky, treacherous-looking shelf. By this time, the Yule Lads have returned to their home with the kidnapped infant and warned their mother of the party's pursuit. She has dealt with their type before and hasn't taken any precautions, relying upon her other minions to delay and weaken them before they find her. She hasn't even bothered to awaken Leppalúði.

In the end, the supposed need to rescue Kasða is something of a red herring, as the lad was never actually in any danger. As will be revealed, the fearsome troll Grýla has grown a bit softhearted over the years, and her sons (those who survived anyway) now urge her to adopt the baby so they'll have a new playmate. Grýla herself grew weary of preying on the villagers years ago, and the lads are not themselves especially evil, though they are possessed of rather cruel senses of humor. The cat remains a mangy and quarrelsome beast, but it follows commands if Grýla emphasizes how important it is not to eat anyone in the village when it returns next Yule.

The Caves



Gryla and her family live in this area, but what appears to be a bleak frozen cave is something a bit more, as the portion of the cave that exists on the Material Plane contains a portal to Gryla's home, a fae demiplane called the Dimmuborgir (Black Castle), a place of volcanic rock, magma, and heat. The caves are guarded by the Yule Lads' various clockworks and other constructs, suggesting that they are something more than simple obnoxious pranksters.

1. Entrance

As they approach the cave opening, the party notices that the wind has died to a cold breeze and the area near the entrance is bare of snow. A pair of statues of spear-armed soldiers flank the cave mouth. If approached within 10 feet, the "soldiers" clank into motion, revealing themselves as **animated armor** (armed with spears that function the same as the armor's Slam attacks, but inflict piercing damage instead of bludgeoning). These mechanical soldiers are examples of the Yule lads' craftsmanship, and several more defend the caves and the lads' home in the Dimmuborgir.

2. Foyer

A number of painted wooden panels hang on the walls of this small chamber. They're all quite skillfully done, with images of various animals and monsters, including deer, ravens, bears, wolves, dragons, and what might be humans or elves armed with spears and bows. The lads painted these to remind them of their adventures in the Northlands, where they had a grand time even when they weren't cruelly pranking villagers. Two more suits of **animated armor** guard the tunnel entrance, and these also mindlessly attack if approached within 10 feet.

3. Tunnel

This wide tunnel leads deeper into the complex. It has been set with pit traps (T) along its length to discourage intruders. The Yule Lads added their own touches to the traps, so each has a special surprise for anyone who falls into it. The traps can be spotted with a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. If not detected, anyone in the pit's square falls in, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage (unless it's full of pillows; see below). Roll on **Table 2: Pit Features** to see what is in the pit.

4. Tripwire

A thin wire that triggers a fall of rocks and debris stretches across the tunnel at this point. It requires a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to detect and a DC 13 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to disarm. If triggered, tooting party horns sound briefly, and the air is filled with bits of glittering confetti before debris falls into the indicated squares. Creatures in the area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

5. Guardians

Five **clockwork guards** (see **Appendix 1**) stand idly in this otherwise empty room. If the party triggers the deadfall at **Area 4**, they activate, exit the room, and move to investigate. These are some of the lads' more sophisticated creations and are more powerful than the clockworks encountered so far. They fight until destroyed, and the lads have set them up to repeat seasonal phrases as they do so, including "Merry Yuletide!", "A joyous Midwinter!", "Enjoy some delicious *aquavit!*", and "Have you been good this year?"

If the party doesn't trigger the deadfall, the guards remain in this room but attack if the unlocked door is opened.

6. Decoys

A round, blue-and-white painted door opens onto this room. It is not locked but a bucket of ice-cold water is rigged to fall on the first person to open it. A successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw avoids the bucket, but on a failure the character is stunned for one round, which allows **3 sets of animated armor** in the room to act.

The animated armor suits are cunning clockwork duplicates of the Yule Lads, and a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check is required in the dim light to see that they are

Table 2:
Pit Features



Feature

- 1 Broken crockery:** Victim must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) piercing damage.
- 2 Garbage, offal, rotting food:** Victim must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for the next 10 minutes.
- 3 Icy water:** Victim must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) cold damage.
- 4 Used cooking grease:** Victim must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or suffer disadvantage on Dexterity-based ability checks and saving throws until they take five minutes to remove the grease.
- 5 Pillows, cushions, and various stuffed toys:** No damage inflicted.
- 6 Nothing:** Victim takes bludgeoning damage with no additional effects.

not what they seem. Once engaged in melee, it is obvious that the automatons are fakes, but initially the party may think they're fighting genuine Jólasveinar. Destroyed automata fall apart into various metal gears, pistons, and scrap.

The room contains food and supplies, including several sausages and hams, a couple of cheese wheels, and some sealed lidded bowls — called *askur* — containing yogurt-like skyr. There are also several tunics and fur-lined hats for small humanoids, and two chests contain miscellaneous gears, springs, screws, nuts, and bolts — building supplies that the lads use to make their clockwork toys.

7. Libations

This room also has a bucket of cold water suspended over the door in the same fashion as **Room 6** and contains 3 more suits of **animated armor** resembling soldiers. They attack anyone who enters. The chamber contains six hogsheads of ale and a pile of 12 small casks filled with brandy. Each of the containers sells for 20 gp if taken back to the Northlands.

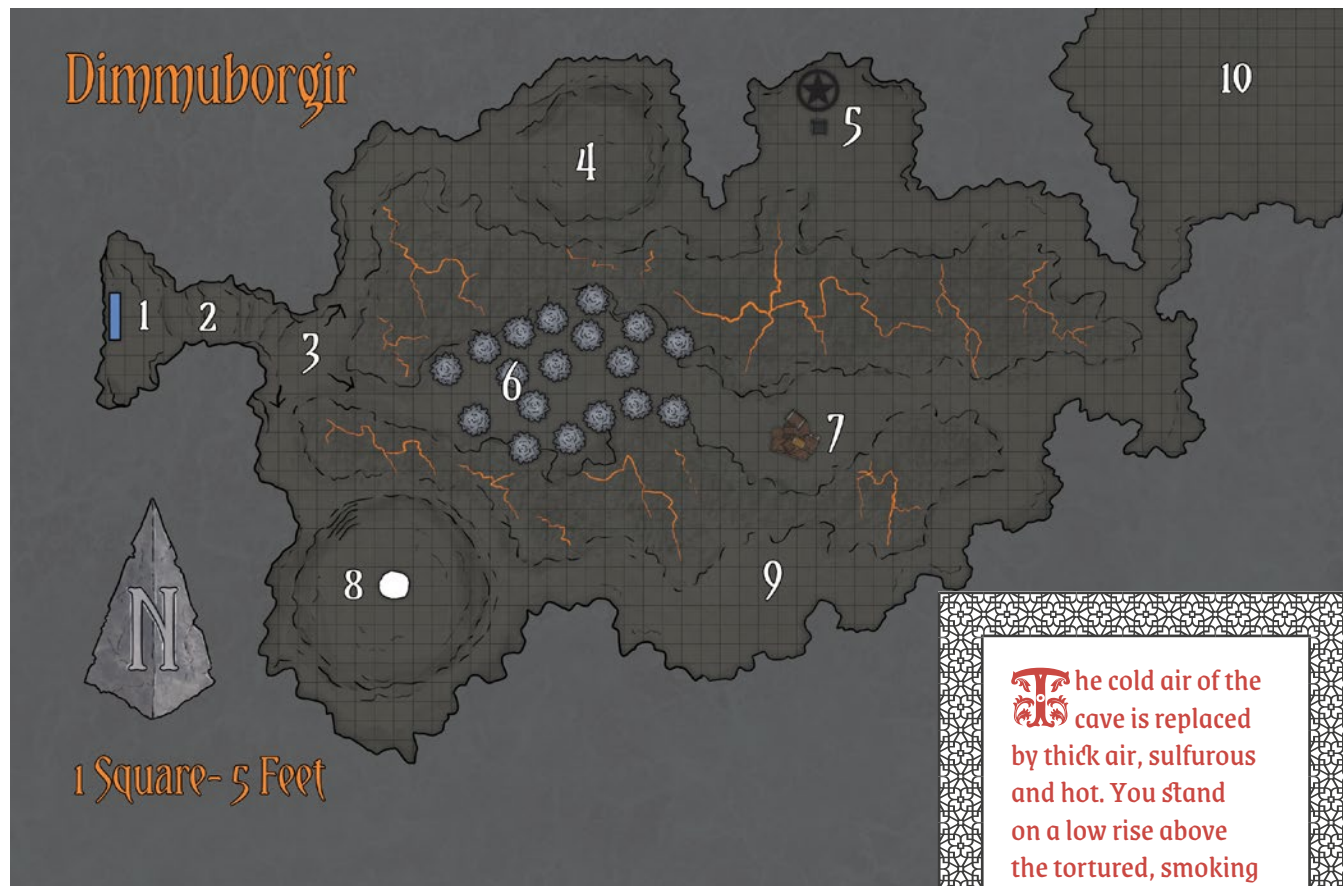
8. The Yule Tree

After several fights, the party may be surprised when they step into this round chamber and behold what stands in the center: a tall tree rising from a cedar wood planter. The tree is draped with sparkling tinsel and decorated with small wooden carvings of animals, stars, and snowflakes. At the top is a small carving of Grýla, who is portrayed as a large, ugly trollish woman in a fur-trimmed robe, with a beatific and loving smile on her repulsive face. A table with two chairs stands beside the tree, and on the table is a plate of spice cookies, a pitcher of milk, and two wooden goblets. The treats are perfectly fine and quite delicious if eaten.

9. Fae Portal

Beyond the Yule Tree, a round opening in the wall shimmers and flickers. This is a one-way portal to the fae demi-realm known as the Dimmuborgir, home to Grýla and the Yule Lads. If any of them are slain, they return to life in the Dimmuborgir and must remain there until the following Yuletide. Anyone who steps through the portal feels an intense and bone-numbing cold far deeper than that of the caverns, which is quickly replaced by a thick and oppressive heat as they reappear in the fiery land beyond.

The Dimmuborgir



The cold air of the cave is replaced by thick air, sulfurous and hot. You stand on a low rise above the tortured, smoking shapes of solidified lava. Trails of smoke climb into a grim gray sky. Glowing orange lava appears here and there through cracks in the rock. Ahead of you, a narrow path snakes down into the twisted black labyrinth below.

Beyond the portal lies Grýla's true home, a fae realm consisting of labyrinthine lava fields known as the Dimmuborgir, or "Dark Castle" (based upon the real-world Dimmuborgir located in northern Iceland). She is bound to the region and returns here if slain, but she cannot leave again through her portal until the following Yuletide, which makes her cranky and irritable (at least crankier and more irritable than normal).

The contrast between environments couldn't be greater. The air is hot and almost unbreathable, the way through the lava is winding and maze-like, and the demiplane is inhabited by monsters native to fiery or volcanic regions, entirely unlike the near-arctic region from which the adventurers just came.

The Dimmuborgir is like a fae mirror to the Northlands — hot and volcanic where the Northlands are cool and snowy. Though volcanic activity is constant, the seasons here are reversed — hot and sunny during the Northlands winter, cold and gloomy during the bright Northlands summer.

It's currently the hot season. Though uncomfortable, the heat has no immediate effect on the adventurers unless they are wearing heavy or protective garments

Read or paraphrase when the party passes through the portal.



intended to protect them from the cold, such as those provided by the villagers. If they continue to wear the heavy gear, the adventurers need to make DC 12 Constitution saving throws every hour that they're in the Dimmuborgir or suffer one level of Exhaustion.

The dense sulfurous air is hard to breathe. Characters who Dash or make melee attack rolls for two or more consecutive rounds must make DC 10 Constitution saving throws or take a level of Exhaustion. Exhaustion levels gained in this manner are temporary and can be recovered if the character takes no actions for 10 minutes. Levels of Exhaustion gained in other ways must be recovered normally.

Encounters in the Dimmuborgir

Table 3: Dimmuborgir Encounters

66	Encounter
2	1d3 azers
3	2d4 salamanders
4-5	Lava geyser
6	Fire elemental
7-8	Tremors
9	2d6 magma mephits
10	2d6 magmin
11	1d2 salamanders
12	Hrófi the fire giant

The paths through the lava seem baffling and maze-like but all eventually end at Grýla's lair. Roll 1d6 for encounters every hour, or whenever you feel like it. Encounters occur on a roll of 1–2. If an encounter is indicated, roll 2d6 on **Table 3: Dimmuborgir Encounters**.

Lava Geyser: The ground near or beneath the party erupts into a fiery orange fountain of magma, showering them with hot debris. Each party member takes 2 (1d4) fire damage and must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the individual is on fire and takes an additional 2 (1d4) fire damage until the fire is put out by a character using an action to make a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. Up to two of the character's companions can help put out the fire.

Tremors: Small earthquakes periodically rumble through the area as liquid lava shifts beneath the ground. All party members must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone. If a character's roll is 5 or less, a fissure opens nearby and they fall onto a patch of hot or molten rock. In this case, the fallen character must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

Hrófi the Fire Giant: The **fire giant** Hrófi lives in the Dimmuborgir and periodically wanders in this area. Though quite evil, he isn't overtly hostile to those he meets and does not immediately fight; instead, he asks them their business. If the party mentions Grýla, Hrófi laughs and tells them they have their work cut out for them. After a moment's contemplation, the giant reaches into his belt pouch and tosses the party a *ring of resistance* (fire). "Here," he rumbles. "Maybe this trinket will help. It's too small for me, and its previous owner ... well, let's just say they have no further use for it." He laughs loudly then continues on his way.

1. Entrance

The party finds itself standing on this low hill of volcanic rock with the fae portal shimmering behind them. The portal is one-way, and the adventurers can only return via the portal in Grýla's lair (**Area 7N**). From this vantage point they can see the field of solidified lava stretching into the distance until it is invisible beneath a pall of smoke. A few paths through the lava can be glimpsed through the smoke, but not enough to determine where each one goes.

2. Path

A single path descends from the hill into the lava fields. Walls of convoluted, smoking black rock rise around the party as they move lower. The ground is hot but not dangerous; individuals who touch the walls with bare skin must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1 fire damage.

3. Split

The path splits here into three directions. The three paths are marked with signs left by the Yule Lads. Each has an arrow pointing down its path, painted with encouraging messages in Common: *Certain Death*, *Doom*, and *Free Candy*. There is no indication which is the correct path to Grýla's home, so without magical assistance, the party is pretty much on its own when deciding on a route. In the end, all three eventually lead to their destination, but there's no way of knowing that at this point.

4. Fire Drake Nest

Six **fire drakes** (see **Appendix 1**) lounge in a shallow depression, soaking up the warmth of the lava and incubating a clutch of eggs. They seem disinclined to attack unless approached too closely. Avoiding the drakes requires edging around the depression, which puts characters uncomfortably close to the walls of hot rock that surround the trail. Characters can try to move quickly past the spot with a single DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check, or they can make three DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) checks in succession if they wish to move more slowly and cautiously. Failing any of these checks indicates that the character slips and falls into the depression and alarms the drakes. A final DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check is allowed to get the character out of the depression, after which they can attempt the failed check again. If the final check fails, the alarmed drakes attack to defend their lair.

If the drakes attack, three fly toward the party and use their fire breath while the other three remain in place to defend their clutch of eggs. The three airborne drakes fly away if the other three are killed. A total of six eggs are in the nest; they can be sold for 100 gp each if they are kept intact and warm. If the party wishes to keep the eggs, they need to figure out how to keep them safe once they leave the fiery regions of the Dimmuborgir.

5. Fire Shrine

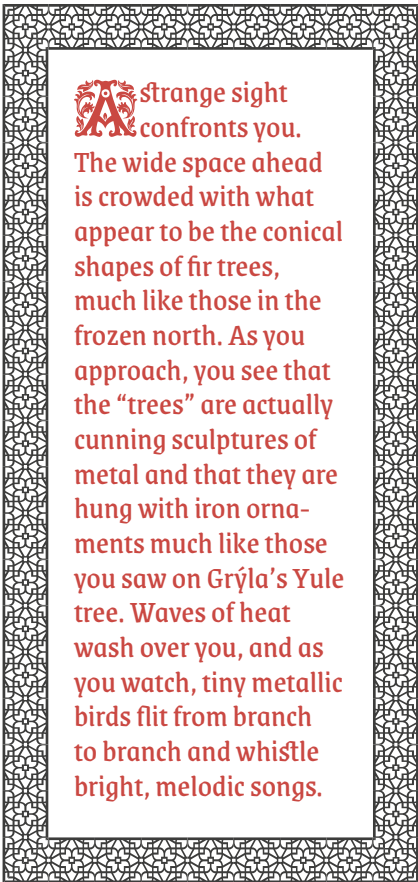
A DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) or (History) check reveals that the statue is Surtr, god of the fire giants. Those native to the region who are familiar with Northern mythology know this automatically, as do those who worship Surtr themselves. Those who can read the Nøorsk language (including Mikal from Köldhorn if he is with the party) can see that the runes read as follows: *Holy Surtr guards his people; make iron tribute here or face his displeasure*.

The shrine at the foot of the statue has a bowl-shaped indentation at the top that is clearly intended for offerings. The reference to "iron tribute" means that an object made of iron must be placed in the indentation as a mark of respect to the god of the fire giants. If no one guesses this, allow the party to make DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) checks to figure it out. Objects placed on the altar glow orange then white-hot before melting away and vanishing.

While any iron object is acceptable, Surtr prefers tributes of weapons and armor. Iron objects that are not weapons or armor can be given and grant no boons to the giver. An iron or steel weapon grants the giver a +1 bonus to all attack rolls while they

Before you stands a black iron altar inscribed with runes and complex knotwork. Towering above the altar is a black iron statue that portrays a bearded giant clad in armor and clutching a huge sword in one hand. As you approach, the statue's eyes glow orange like molten metal, and flames begin to flicker along the length of the sword. Upon the altar, the runes begin to glow as well.

▲
Fire shrine.



Read or paraphrase when the party enters Area 6.

are in the Dimmuborgir. While adventurers frequently have spare weapons, they're unlikely to be hauling around spare sets of armor; however, they can remove pieces of iron or steel armor (such as a vambrace, gauntlet, a single metal stud, etc.) as tribute. If such an item is given, the character receives a +1 bonus to AC while they are in the Dimmuborgir. Characters can also offer a full set of armor (mail shirt, breastplate, etc.), in which case they retain the same AC they would have had while wearing the armor, with a +2 bonus while they are in the Dimmuborgir. Once leaving the Dimmuborgir, the sacrificed items are gone permanently, however.

Only a single item needs to be given, but Surtr is indeed annoyed at those who refuse him the respect he feels he deserves. Should the entire party refuse tribute to Surtr, 10 **magma mephits** appear and immediately attack. In addition, all party members gain vulnerability to fire for the remainder of their time in the Dimmuborgir.

6. Trees of Iron

This was a joint art project between the Yule Lads and some visiting fire giants. The lads missed the trees and pleasant vistas of the Northlands and set out to create a sculpted tribute to the region. The metal trees were indeed picturesque, and the Jólaveinar's unheralded artistic skill made each a unique work of art. Unfortunately, the surrounding lava formations made the place unbearably hot and able to be appreciated only from a distance. Undaunted, the lads also produced clockwork birds and other animals to inhabit their forest.

The trees are built even closer together than a real forest, so traversing this region unharmed is a tricky proposition. Rushing through quickly requires three DC15 Constitution saving throws. The DC drops to 12 if a character wishes to go mores slowly, but five Constitution saving throws are required. Each failed save inflicts 3 (1d6) fire damage as the character brushes against the trees or blunders into branches.

Roll 1d6 each time a character makes a Constitution saving throw to get through the metal forest. On a 1–3 (if rushing) or a 1–2 (if moving slowly), the character encounters one of the Yule Lads' clockwork forest creatures. If a creature is encountered, roll on **Table 4: Iron Tree Creatures** and apply the result.

Table 4:
Iron Tree Creatures

6	Result
1	A songbird flitters across a character's field of vision, causing them to hesitate. They must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or reroll their last successful Constitution saving throw and replace the result.
2	A squirrel chatters and throws a metal pinecone. <i>Ranged Weapon Attack</i> : +4 to hit, range 10/30 ft., one target. <i>Hit</i> : 2 (1d4) fire damage.
3	A crow flies directly into a character's face. They must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone, taking 1 bludgeoning damage, and reroll their last successful Constitution saving throw and replace the result.
4	A rabbit darts between the character's feet. They must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check or stumble, taking 3 (1d6) fire damage as they fall against a tree.
5	A fox rushes out, takes a bite at a character, then vanishes into the trees. <i>Melee Weapon Attack</i> : +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. <i>Hit</i> : 2 (1d4) piercing damage plus 1 fire damage.
6	A raven flies past in a rush of metal wings, pecking at a character as it goes. <i>Melee Weapon Attack</i> : +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. <i>Hit</i> : 2 (1d4) piercing damage plus 1d2 fire damage; the character must reroll last successful Constitution saving throw and replace the result.

7. Naughty or Nice

The packages and chests can be avoided entirely if the party so wishes, but if they decide to take the Yule Lads up on their offer, each party member can pick one item, after which the remaining items disappear.

Despite the lads' letter, the contents of the packages aren't really dependent upon the adventurers' relative naughtiness or niceness. In reality, after a package is selected and opened, roll on **Table 5: Packages** and apply the results. After the results are applied, a note appears at the bottom of the container with the indicated message.



pile of chests and boxes is in the middle of the path ahead of you. Several are decorated with bright ribbons. A parchment is nailed to one of the chests. At the top of the parchment, in large red letters, the words **READ THIS** are written in Common.

Read or paraphrase as the characters enter Area 7.



READ THIS

DEAR ADVENTURERS,

GREETINGS! YOU HAVE BROUGHT US GREAT JOY THIS YULETIDE, THOUGH WE TAKE ISSUE WITH HOW YOU TREATED OUR POOR, SWEET KITTY. NO MATTER, THOUGH IT'S YULE EVE, A TIME OF FORGIVENESS AND FESTIVE ENTERTAINMENT! TO COMPENSATE YOU SOMEWHAT FOR YOUR EFFORTS, AND THE PAINS YOU HAVE SUFFERED GETTING THIS FAR, WE OFFER YOU THESE GIFTS, EACH OF YOU MAY CHOOSE ONE, BUT TAKE CARE! GOOD CHILDREN GET GOOD PRESENTS, WHILE NAUGHTY CHILDREN GET WELL. WE THINK YOU KNOW WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. JOYOUS YULE, AND WE WILL SEE YOU SOON!

SINCERELY,

SHEEP-WORRIER, GULLY BAWK, STUBBY,
 SPOON-LICKER, POT-SCRAPER, BOWL-LICKER,
 DOOR-SLAMMER, SKYR-GOBBLER,
 SAUSAGE-SWIPER, WINDOW-PEEPER,
 DOOR-SNIFFER, MEAT-HOOK, AND
 CANDLE-BEGGAR
 THE 13 J LASVEINAR

Dear Adventurers,
Greetings! You
brought us great joy
this Yuletide, though
we take issue with how
you treated our poor,
sweet kitty. No matter,
though — it's Yule Eve,
a time of forgiveness
and festive enjoyment!
To compensate you
somewhat for your ef-
forts and the pains you
suffered getting this far,
we offer you these gifts.
Each of you may choose
one but take care!
Good children get good
presents, while naughty
children get ... well, we
think you know what
we're talking about.
Joyous Yule, and we
will see you soon!
Sincerely,
Sheep-Worrier,
Gully Gawk, Stubby,
Spoon-Licker, Pot-
Scraper, Bowl-Licker,
Door-Slammer, Skyr-
Gobbler, Sausage-
Swiper, Window-
Peeper, Door-Sniffer,
Meat-Hook, and
Candle-Beggar
The 13 Jólásveinar

^
The note left for the adventurers.

Table 5: Packages



Result

- 1 1d100 gp and a note that reads: *For good children only! Don't spend it all in one place!*
- 2 A swarm of bees. The opener must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) piercing damage. After the effect is applied, a note appears that reads: *A stinging rebuke for a naughty little one!*
- 3 A covered bowl or *askur* full of yogurt-like skyr, which acts as a *potion of healing*. A note then appears: *For your good health! (We had to hide this from Askasleikir.)*
- 4 A spring-loaded jack-in-the-box jumps out and bonks the opener on the nose with a small wooden club, inflicting 1 bludgeoning damage. A note then appears: *This hurts me more than it does you! Now behave yourself!*
- 5 The box contains a small plush, stuffed sheep. While kept on a character's person, the sheep functions as a *ring of warmth*. After the opener touches the sheep, a note appears: *His name is Snowball! Keep him with you, and he'll keep you warm! Not that he'll do you much good in these parts, but he'll help when you go back to where it's all cold and icy!*
- 6 This small box contains a leather scroll tube. Those who attempt to read the scroll or determine what it contains can make a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check to discover that it is cursed and stop themselves, in which case the scroll has no effect. If the check fails, the reader acquires a curse that causes all healing spells and potions to heal only the minimum amount possible. The curse lasts for as long as the victim is in the Dimmuborgir or until a *remove curse* spell is cast. The note that appears reads as follows: *Healing magic just isn't what it used to be, is it? Sorry about that!*
- 7 A small rubber ball sits in this tiny box. If thrown, it automatically sets off any traps that are within 30 feet in a straight line from the thrower, five feet to either side. The ball then returns to the thrower's hand. This ability can be used once per day and resets on the next sunrise. A note reads: *Use this to keep you safe. Throw it and see what dangers lie ahead. We figured you needed some help!*
- 8 A blast of snow and icy air bursts out of this chest. The opener must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 7 (2d6) cold damage. The note that appears afterward simply reads *Brrrr!*
- 9 This box contains a set of 12 wooden toy soldiers, beautifully carved and realistically painted. When one of the soldiers is placed on the ground and the words *Koma till ifs!* (Come to life!) are uttered, it transforms into a Medium construct with the same statistics as a **bandit captain** and faithfully carries out its owner's instructions for one hour before vanishing. Only one soldier can be used per day in this fashion, and once it disappears, it is gone permanently. A note appears and reads: *Say the words Koma till ifs! to call up your soldier. But take care! After a single hour, your soldier will be gone, and you will be sad!*
- 10 A number of **magma mephits** equal to the party size (including Mikal if he's with the group) burst from this chest. Each attacks one party member. No note appears.

8. Ceremony

The Yule season is not limited to the Northlands, nor even to the Material Plane. Here in the Dimmuborgir, where the seasons are reversed, Yuletide occurs at the height of summer, when fire-based creatures celebrate the banishment of cold and ice, reveling in the land's heat and molten rock.

The 10 creatures in the center are free-willed **fire elementals** (with Intelligence 12) called here from the Plane of Fire to solemnly observe the season by 20 **azer** who dwell in the Dimmuborgir. If the party does not interfere with the ceremony, the fire elementals vanish when the ice column fully melts and the steam disperses. If the party tries to bypass the ceremony and doesn't disturb it, they get some glares from the assembled azer, but they can continue without incident. If they're so foolish as to attack the gathering, the elementals vanish, and the enraged azer turn their wrath on the party.

If the party waits respectfully until the ceremony is over, the elementals disappear, and three of the azer approach.

"You witnessed our sacred midwinter ritual, folk of the Material Plane," says one in thickly accented Common (or in Ignan, if one of the party speaks the language). "You watched in peace and granted the azer and their elemental patrons respect. For that we are grateful. Accept our boon and think well of us when the night is cold, and fire is your only friend."

With that, all 20 azer burst into flames and fade away. Once they are gone, any levels of Exhaustion suffered by party members are removed. Any not suffering from Exhaustion are cured of 2d6 points of damage.

Read or paraphrase when the party reaches this location.

9. The Whiskey Man

The old man is of course an avatar of Father Poga, a dwarven god adopted by humans and mountain dwarves alike as the manifestation of Yuletide in the material world. The characters won't know this, but they are certain to suspect something suspiciously seasonal about him, his dress, and his manner.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check recalls some of the stories of Father Poga (mountain dwarves make this check with advantage), though the party can't be certain that this is the actual god himself. If asked, he offhandedly remarks that he's "Just a traveler," but conspiratorially winks at the character and makes a motion toward his belt, where hangs a leather-covered glass bottle. "They do call me the Whiskey Man sometimes, though. Have a sip? I only share it with my closest friends."

The trail widens, and you find yourself on the lip of a round depression, with carved stone steps leading down. A few feet below, you behold an unusual sight. In the center of the circular space is a column of what appears to be ice, shimmering and reflecting the hot orange light of 10 burning, humanoid creatures that stand in a circle around it. Beyond the inner circle of fire-beings is a second circle of similar but smaller creatures, numbering about 20. As you watch, the creatures in the inner circle raise their arms and direct streams of fire at the ice column, which begins to melt, emitting great clouds of steam. A low, rhythmic chant echoes from the score of smaller fire-creatures in the outer circle.

Read or paraphrase.

You spy a figure walking toward you through the smoke and volcanic gases. As it grows closer, you see that it appears to be a white-bearded dwarven man clad in a green greatcoat and a black fur hat sprouting deer antlers — a totally impractical outfit given the current conditions. Nevertheless, he doesn't seem uncomfortable, but instead breaks into a wide grin when he sees you. "Well, well," he declares. "It's so good to see friendly faces in such a bleak and forbidding land. Happy Yuletide, travelers. Would you like some gingerbread?"

The old man sighs and puts his hat back on, squaring his shoulders and looking down the lava path. “Well,” he says, “It’s time for me to move on. Lots of work to do tonight, I’m afraid.” He begins to walk away, but as he does, he looks back over one shoulder and says, “Be kind tonight. Be understanding and helpful. If you do, then Cold Corners may have a good Yule after all. And when you see them again, tell them that Father Poga’s helpers will be paying them a visit soon.” The old man then vanishes once more into the smoke and steam.

▲ Read or paraphrase as Poga leaves.



(Those who succeeded on their Religion check know that “The Whiskey Man” is another name for Father Poga, confirming their suspicions.)

If any of the characters say they want gingerbread, Poga doffs his hat, reaches inside, and pulls out several gingerbread cookies to share. Despite possible misgivings about eating out of a stranger’s hat, the cookies prove to be quite delicious, granting anyone who eats one advantage on their next Constitution or Wisdom saving throw. The whiskey is similarly remarkable, as it functions as a spell of *greater restoration*, *remove curse*, or *cure wounds* cast at 3rd level, at your discretion.

10. Grýla’s Lair

Here at last is the home of Grýla and her family. See the next section for details.



Grýla's Lair

Grýla and Leppalúði's home, which they share with their children and pets, rests on a small hill of igneous rock amid the volcanic desolation of the Dimmuborgir. Here lies a sprawling, unsightly pile of mismatched stones topped by a sturdy slate roof studded with vents and chimneys and partially built into the black rock hillside, with a row of round windows along the eastern side, all looking into the Yule Lads' tidy rooms. All windows are made of a dark and particularly tough, glass-like material; they are all AC 15, with a Damage Threshold of 10 and take 25 points of damage before breaking.

The building is accessible only through the main door at **Area 6**. The walls are of thick volcanic rock and cannot practically be breached without taking considerable time and force. Rich volcanic soil lies underfoot. Several smaller outbuildings house some of the family pets. The family is inside playing with Kasða at **Area 12**, leaving the Yule Lads' clockwork toys to deal with unwanted visitors.

1. Jólakötturinn's Enclosure

The Yule Cat normally lives here within a low stone wall with a wrought-iron gate. Inside, the ground is littered with gnawed bones and — surprisingly — oversized cat toys such as big fuzzy balls and enormous stuffed mice, all sporting claw- and bite-marks. It's most likely that the Jólakötturinn didn't survive the battle at Köldhorn, in which case the enclosure is empty, but if by some stroke of fate the Yule Cat was not slain, it is here with the same injuries it sustained in the fight. Even if it was killed, it reappears here next Yuletide and unless the party made peace with Grýla, it happily descends on Köldhorn to devour the villagers indiscriminately now that Grýla's agreement has been broken.



2. Jólaljörð's Hut

The playful Yule Bear lives here in a gated enclosure similar to that of the Yule Cat but equipped with a large stone hut for shelter. If it accompanied the party, it ambles amiably into the enclosure, enters the hut, and quickly goes to sleep, playing no further role in the adventure. If the party drove it off, it is here, and upon seeing them, it roars happily and lumbers toward them, seeking to once more play-fight and wrestle. It continues to harass the party in this fashion unless the party inflicts another 20 points of damage on it, in which case it lopes away and returns to its hut.

3. The Jólageit

Another stone fence surrounds this compound, where two more of the family pets — the Jólageit, or Yule Goats (**giant goats** with 33 hp each, Ram Attack damage of $3d4 + 3$ bludgeoning, and Seasonal Immortality identical to that of the Jólakötturinn) — spend their time, idly chewing on fodder and contemplating the world around them. They are quite smart and also very territorial, so on first sighting the party, they move to the gate and fix the adventurers with a look that is equal parts curiosity and hostility. If the party comes within 20 feet of the goats, one of them noses the gate open and they charge. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to see that the goats are opening the gate; otherwise, they charge across the intervening space and madly head-butt with surprise.

4. Other Pets

This long structure houses the other pets lovingly cared for by the Yule Lads. They are all mundane creatures, though they also possess the Seasonal Immortality feature. There are six hens, one rooster, and four rabbits, none of which are combatants. They are all kept in clean, well-appointed hutches and nest boxes, with their feed carefully stored in bales and bags. Several of the hens have laid eggs, though they have no special qualities.

5. Garden

In another sign of the Yule Lads' domestic side, this plot of rich, volcanic earth sports numerous vegetables — cabbage, leeks, cauliflower, carrots, turnips, and radishes — and a small apple tree. They are clearly tended with considerable love and care, and if eaten prove quite satisfactory. A clay kiln where the brothers fire their ceramic creations is also in the garden.

6. Front Porch

A pair of what look like statues of spear-armed soldiers flank the dwelling's doorway. The door itself is round, carved with bands of runes that surround a pattern of three ravens in the center. Round glass windows flank the door; these can be broken to enter the Common Room (**Area 7**) if all other attempts to enter fail.

If approached within 10 feet, the “soldiers” clank into motion, revealing themselves as **animated armor** (armed with spears that function the same as the armor's Slam attacks, but inflict piercing damage instead of bludgeoning). These are of course more of the Yule Lads' mechanical creations.

After dealing with the constructs, the party discovers that the door has no apparent handle, hinge assembly, or other obvious means of opening. If checked with *detect magic*, the door radiates Abjuration magic. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that it requires a password to open but doesn't reveal the password itself. This password is actually written in the runes that run around the outside edge of the door, but don't tell the players that. When pronounced, the runes spell out the Nøorsk words *Gangið inn í friði*, which roughly translates as “Enter in Peace.” If the words are spoken out loud, the door rolls silently away, and the entrance to the house is open. Should the party be having a hard time, allow a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check or have Mikal the halfling read the words out loud to open the door.

7. Common Room

The door opens on a large room with a troll-sized table equipped with two large wooden chairs, an enormous fireplace (cold for the moment) equipped with a big black cauldron hanging from a hook, and shelves crammed with stone plates, iron utensils, dried meat, vegetables, spices, and other culinary items, all in chaotic disorder. Beside the fireplace is a brick oven where Grýla prepares her cakes and cookies. Nearby is a long table, lower and more finely built, polished and carved with fanciful knotwork decorations. Thirteen stools are set upside-down on the long table.

The family meets, socializes, and takes its meals here. It's quite obvious that the larger, cruder-looking table is intended for the use of Grýla and Leppalúði (though he rarely eats here, preferring to take meals in his room, preferably while lying in bed), and the longer table is for their sons. A closer inspection of the shelves reveals finer-looking plates and eating utensils smaller than the massive iron implements the trolls use.

Light enters through two round windows that flank the front door (and a frustrated party may end up smashing them to gain entry), but on dark days, overhead chandeliers crafted from antlers and tusks of various huge beasts can be set with candles to provide decent illumination.

8. Jólasveinar's Rooms

Adjoining the common room is a long hallway with 13 round doors, each with the name of one of the Yule Lads inscribed above it. The rooms are all similar. Each has a small bed for its owner with embroidered sheets and pillowcases, a small window to the outside, a beautifully crafted chest of drawers and a closet hung with various items of clothing. Each also has a small table and chair and a shelf of books. The lads' volumes include various fairy tales, histories written for children, works on animal care and husbandry, and picture books about birds and beasts. The lads don't seem to have any monetary valuables.

9. Workshop

Another round door carved with wolves and ravens is at the end of the hallway. It is not locked and opens onto this neat, efficient workspace where the Yule Lads toil on their various clockwork creations, works of art, tools, and toys for themselves and their pets. It contains two long worktables with stools, each with several sets of tools for crafting wood, leather, and metal, and for tailoring clothes. Materials such as wooden blocks, paint, brushes, nails, buttons, cloth, thread, needles, sheet metal, and the like are stored neatly in a series of cabinets.

Several partially completed items sit on the worktables. These include a set of unfired ceramic dishes skillfully painted with runic and natural patterns, and wooden animals carved into fantastical poses with realistic expressions. A full-sized clockwork soldier like the ones encountered outside is in one corner, its chest open to reveal gears, pistons, and springs. Several completed sets of clothing, beautifully embroidered and stitched, hang from hooks on the wall. Overhead are several more horn-and-antler chandeliers set with candles but unlit. Large windows let in the smoky light from outside.

Most remarkably, the room also contains a Yule Tree that must have been taken from the Northlands since it obviously couldn't have come from the barren volcanic lands of the Dimmuborgir. It's decorated with more intricate wooden carvings of snowflakes, beasts, and miniature versions of the Yule Lads and their pets. There is a carving of the Yule Cat playfully batting a ball, the Yule Bear standing on its hind legs and grinning, the Yule Goats pulling a cart full of packages, and also small versions of the lads' chickens and rabbits.

Maul of Thundering

*Weapon, rare
(requires attunement)*

This +2 *maul* deals an additional 2d8 thunder damage on a natural attack roll of 20.

Read or paraphrase when the party enters the room.

The chamber is brightly lit by candles set in elaborate overhead chandeliers. It is wide and looks more like the interior of a cave than a room. The walls are brightly painted with images of animals, trees, birds, bright suns, and artistic renderings of the lava formations you just traveled through. A table is set with various cakes — vinarterta, skufukaka, and Yuletide Jólakaka — cookies such as piparkokur and spesiur, goblets, and pitchers full of spiced wine and ale. The diminutive Yule Lads are seated in a circle in the center of the room, around a human baby, a bright smile on his tiny face. When he sees you, the child laughs, and the gathered Yule Lads join in, laughing happily. One of the lads claps his hands in delight, winds up a small clockwork toy cat and lets it amble toward the infant, who grabs it and sends it back to a different lad. An enormous female troll clad in an embroidered gown sits in an overstuffed chair nearby. She is possibly the ugliest creature you've ever seen, with a wizened, greenish face, long pointed nose and chin, jagged and broken teeth, small wicked black eyes, and unkempt, greasy black hair. When she sees you, she looks up, a smile fading from her face to be replaced by a grimace of hatred. "So you've come," she says, her voice filling the chamber. "Come to rob me and my family of a tiny bit of joy and happiness this Yule season? Well? Let's get it over with then! Leppalúði! Get your lazy carcass in here! I've got some pests for you to squash!"

10. Grýla's Room

An unlocked, unadorned round wooden door opens on Grýla's room. The chamber is built to resemble a dark, rocky cave with rough walls, a stone floor, and a number of sculpted stalactites. A big bed made of antlers and bones stands at the far end, covered in furs and hides. Various possessions are stored in a series of four mismatched chests against one wall, and a pair of antler chandeliers hang from the ceiling. The chests are all locked and require a DC 12 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open. Two of the chests contain clothing; the third contains 522 gp and 950 sp; and the fourth contains a bag with 10 rubies worth 60 gp each and a +1 *dagger*.

11. Leppalúði's Room

Loud snoring can be heard from outside this round door. Like Grýla's, the door is unlocked, but the interior is occupied and far more repellent. Leppalúði, a particularly unmotivated **troll**, slumbers on the bed, snoring thunderously. The rest of the room is a disaster, scattered with gnawed bones, half-eaten joints of meat, soiled clothing, and various other pieces of unidentifiable trash. It takes about 15 minutes to give the room a moderately thorough search, which reveals 150 gp and 500 sp scattered about, and a *maul of thundering*, Leppalúði's favorite weapon when he's in a mood for fighting — which is rare.

Leppalúði was just an ordinary if especially lazy and gluttonous troll who crossed paths with Grýla while she was searching for a less-troublesome husband. He agreed to marry her after being promised all the food he could eat and little interference beyond being asked to help Grýla with domestic chores and to participate in the occasional raid on the humans back in the Northlands. So far, he's mostly taken advantage of the meals and sleeping facilities, and only helps around the house when threatened with violence. He sleeps through any searches of his room but awakens if attacked and defends himself. If pressed, Leppalúði tries to make his way to the Nursery (**Area 12**), where he calls on Grýla and the Yule Lads for help. If this happens, some of the Yule Lads call for a truce and try to negotiate, avoiding bloodshed if possible (see **Merriment or Murder?** next for more details on negotiating with Grýla and the lads).

12. Nursery

Here at last the fate of the kidnapped Kasða is revealed, and it's probably not what the adventurers expect. As they approach, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check allows characters to hear chuckles and peals of childish laughter echoing from the nursery. Feel free to describe the sounds as "cruel laughter" and "shrieks of terror" if you desire.

At this critical moment, as Grýla ponderously rises from her throne with murder in her eyes, and before the party can respond, two Yule Lads leap to their feet, shouting. Anyone who speaks Nørsk understands what they say, or Mikal the halfling can translate.

“Mother, no! We’ve wearied of fighting and of causing grief! We miss our kitty and just want to play!” shouts the first Yule Lad. “Let us not show the child what uncouth folk we are!” adds the other. “He is happy with us! Let us keep him as our new brother! At this, Grýla hesitates, looking at her sons and the smiling, happy baby in their midst. “What?” she demands in confusion. “You mean you don’t want to eat him? He looks delicious.” The first lad confronts his mother, hands on his hips. Behind him, several of the Yule Lads rise and stand protectively near the baby. “He is like a ray of sunshine!” he says. “His happiness makes us happy as well. Let him stay with us

forever so we can play and laugh!” He looks at you. “We wish no harm, but we want our new brother to stay! We’ll cease our cruelties and pranks and leave the village in peace if you consent and let him stay!” Grýla frowns. “All right then. It looks like my sons want to keep the little one as a Yule present and make him their new little brother. Because I’m feeling generous, I’ll let you leave and not kill you. Just this once. Now scoot.” At this point, a commotion erupts behind you, and a huge fat troll appears, looking half-asleep but bearing a huge maul in one hand. “What’s going on?” he demands. “I was just having a nice little nap, and you woke me up, you horrid woman.”

See **Merriment or Murder?** on the next page to determine how the conflict plays out based on the characters’ responses, and how their decisions affect Grýla, the lads, and the town.



13. Storeroom

Many different items are stored here, including significant quantities of food and drink, clothing of all sorts and sizes, and shelves full of the Yule Lads' various toys, clockworks, carvings, and works of art. Gear from adventurers who tried and failed to slay Grýla is here too, along with a substantial number of coins, gems, and other treasures.

The room contains enough food, beer, and other consumables to easily get Cold Corners through the winter and beyond. Several chests, bags, and jars contain a total of 1,600 gp and 6,000 sp, six garnets worth 100 gp each, one pink pearl worth 90 gp, and three diamonds worth 600 gp each. Magic items include two arcane scrolls (one worth 175 gp with *disguise self* and *detect thoughts*, and one worth 450 gp with *darkvision*, *gust of wind*, and *web*), a +1 *greataxe*, *oil of sharpness*, *potion of poison resistance*, and a set of +1 *half plate armor of fire resistance*. There are also mundane tools, weapons, armor, and items of clothing; the exact items are up to you.

If all goes well with the family, the party gets their pick of the items here, but if Grýla and the family are slain or driven off, the party is free to plunder. This may have bad consequences however, as you may determine that these items are cursed and that those who steal them may be drawn back to Köldhorn to face the family again next Yule (see below).

14. Exit Portal

Another one-way fae portal opens here, providing access to the Northlands only a mile or two from Cold Corners. Once, Grýla passed through here freely to prey on the villagers and even to ravage the countryside beyond, before making the long trudge back to Snörfjall and using the other portal to get back to Dimmuborgir. She hasn't come this way in quite a while, but as specified in their agreement with the townsfolk, the Yule Lads travel to the Northlands in order, one per night, during Yuletide. When the party steps through, they find themselves back in the freezing weather of the Northlands and see the lights of Köldhorn in the distance. Whether they come bearing good cheer, mixed tidings, or bad news depends on how they conducted themselves in Grýla's lair.

Merriment or Murder?

This adventure, despite a relatively grim beginning, includes the possibility of a happy and entirely seasonally appropriate ending in which the Jólasveinar become welcome Yuletide visitors to the town, bringing presents and good cheer, playing with their new friend Kasða, and making amends for their past misdeeds. Back on the mountain, Grýla grows slightly more sentimental, forsaking her old, child-devouring ways and trying to be a decent mother to her kids and even showing her husband a bit more appreciation despite his lack of redeeming qualities. This is, of course, the “good” ending, and if the party is sufficiently diplomatic and resourceful, they can leave in high spirits, knowing that they've reconciled enemies and helped create a new and merry Yule tradition.

Splitting the Difference, or The Ending That Satisfies No One

The least likely outcome — but still one that should be considered — is for the party to simply agree to Grýla's terms and depart, leaving Kasða with the family. This of course earns the Köldhorners' antipathy, but leaves Grýla and her family alive and untroubled. While this may not seem like the best outcome (and it's probably the least likely, given the adventurers' natural desire to complete their missions), it may in the end also have a good result.

If the party leaves with their rescue mission incomplete, the mayor and his wife are enraged and heartbroken, the villagers are enraged, and the party is never welcome in Köldhorn again. If you wish to add an especially bleak ending, it is even possible that Hánsval leads the militia to Snörfjall to take his son back by force, an enterprise that is certain to end in tragedy.

This ending is not entirely sad, however, as life with Grýla and her family prove good for young Kasða, and he joins his adoptive brothers as the 14th Jólasveina. Eventually, his innate good nature affects the lads and their mother, and they come up with the idea of bringing food and presents to the village on their own. These more helpful Yule traditions develop on their own, though due to their indecisive conduct, the adventurers probably won't find out about it for a very long time.

Bloody Yule, or the Yule Lads' Revenge

Should the bold adventurers draw swords, let them roll for initiative and wade into battle with Grýla's family to rescue the kidnapped child. This conclusion, for more aggressive parties who have no problem with violence and mayhem, leaves the situation unsettled, and worse than it was when they arrived, though there is still a chance to salvage a positive outcome.

It is likely to be a tough fight, and any slain foes (besides Leppalúði, who is just an ordinary troll) return next Yuletide seeking revenge. By that time, Grýla may have found another husband who is even less appealing than Leppalúði. In combat, the Yule Lads are greatly distressed, but they help their parents to the best of their ability, eventually retreating to their rooms should their parents fall. In this most bloody of outcomes, the party can return Kasða to his family, but Köldhorn's Yuletide will surely be a grim and dark one when Grýla returns next winter.

The party may also plunder the treasure in **Area 13** after Grýla's fall. Though this is initially profitable, you can impose a curse on the plunder: Any who take treasure from the room feel an inexorable need to return to Cold Corners the following Yule, where they have to again fight Grýla, the Yule Cat, and the Yule Lads, who will be in a vengeful mood. Characters who are too far away find themselves magically transported to the village. The process continues each Yule until either all the plundered treasure is returned or a deal is again struck with Grýla.

The old agreement is now broken. Grýla stalks travelers or enters the town at night, seizing villagers for her cooking pot. The Yule Cat creeps through the streets, devouring some and bringing others back to Grýla. The Yule Lads continue to engage in their typical antics, and although they still don't especially want to kill anyone, they steal and spoil supplies, set fires, and otherwise harm the town, robbing the villagers of food and shelter.

Given this dire situation, the villagers may turn to the only allies they can think of — the adventurers, whom they call on to again defend the town. If you determine that Grýla's treasure was cursed, the characters may not have a choice as they are drawn back to Cold Corners every Yule until the treasure is returned or Grýla agrees

to a new truce. This conflict will be even more challenging than the previous one, but it may lead to a similar situation, in which the party pursues Grýla's clan back to the Dimmuborgir, realizing that if they continue to fight and kill, the cycle will continue to repeat itself, bringing woe and sadness to the people of Köldhorn. They may finally acknowledge that a new agreement is in order, or possibly the Yule Lads come to the same conclusion and offer to negotiate. Though this ending is more tragic and difficult, it may result in peace as well.

Yuletide Cheer, or Peace on Earth (Mostly)

The most productive alternative is for the party to negotiate, especially given that Grýla seems to be in a forgiving mood — maybe the Yuletide season has somehow mellowed her normally violent temper. Let the party couch their arguments any way they wish — Kasða's family will miss him, and he's not theirs to take, or they can make similar appeals to reason and the lads' better natures. While Grýla may grumble and disagree, and Leppalúði stands around, staring stupidly unless a fight breaks out, the Yule Lads may be persuaded by such arguments.

Either have the lads make individual Wisdom saving throws against the party's Wisdom (Persuasion) checks (Lads who fail are convinced by the party to return Kasða to his family), or if you don't want to make 13 successive saving throws, simply roll 1d12 to determine how many lads are initially convinced. The Jólaveinar understandably don't like being bullied and so have advantage on Wisdom saving throws to resist Wisdom (Intimidation) rolls by the party; or you can roll 1d6 to see how many are convinced by the party's threats.

The discussion continues, with the unconvinced lads complaining that they will never get to see Kasða again, and the convinced insisting that while they don't like sending him home either, they don't want him or his parents to be unhappy. The characters are free to make their own suggestions, and if they suggest returning Kasða to the village but allowing the lads to visit him, this allows them to make another attempt to persuade the holdouts — this time, roll individually for the skeptical lads, with the party's Wisdom (Persuasion) roll made at advantage.

Should the party mention their encounter with Grýla's half-sister Mæya, she angrily denounces "that meddling little do-gooder" and angrily stamps her feet. Though she is outwardly annoyed, Grýla is fond of her half-sister and secretly glad that she's intervened. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) roll reveals this, but Grýla keeps her true feelings well hidden.

A Yule Lad stands up and shouts angrily.



"Enough!" The Yule Lad leaps to his feet, fists clenched. "We've chattered long enough! The boy stays here as our new brother! I care not what anyone says, I'll fight to keep him here! Mother, please, send these ruffians away and let our new brother remain!" With a grunt, Grýla rises to her feet and picks up a gnarled club at her side. "You heard the lad, Husband," she growls at Leppalúði. "Let's shed some blood!" Leppalúði steps toward you, chuckling thickly.

Mention of Mæya doesn't otherwise affect negotiations. However, if the party brings up their interactions with Father Poga, the Yule Lads stare in wonder. "He is the Whiskey Man! The one who brings gifts and good cheer at Yule!"

"We've heard only stories," says another. "Long have we wished that he could come and bring us gifts, as he does for the mortal folk!" As with Mæya, bringing up Father Poga doesn't affect the actual discussion and bargaining, but the lads may mention him when they offer compromises, as noted next.

Tensions Rise

While the goal is to move the conversation toward a compromise between the two positions, play it with increasing tension and frustration from both sides if the party doesn't come up with the above suggestion, ending with one of the unconvinced lads standing up and shouting angrily.

The party has one last chance to sway the lads and end the fight. At this point, they might still offer the visitation option, in which case they get another Wisdom (Persuasion) attempt, this time without advantage. If this manages to get most of the remaining holdouts on their side, the lads immediately de-escalate the situation, telling Grýla and Leppalúði to sit down. They then begin to discuss the particulars of their new agreement.

It's still possible to resolve things positively even if the party doesn't come up with this solution. At this point, one of the convinced lads may wave his arms and shout.

Hopefully, the party and the lads are close to an agreement to take Kasða to his parents but to allow the Yule Lads to see him during their traditional Yuletide visitations. Several lads agree that bringing the villagers food and presents might help make up for their past cruelties.

Another lad pipes up, declaring, "It is as they say! Father Poga spoke of his helpers, and of visiting the far cold village. Perhaps that is us, and we can act as he acts, bringing gifts and happiness."

Gledileg Jól

The lads now lead the party to **Area 13**, where pilfered and crafted goods are stored. There, they begin putting food, artwork, and toys into sacks. The lads also bid each character to take up to 1,000 gp or their choice of magic items as a reward for resolving the situation and finding them some new ways to have fun. As the items are freely given, they aren't cursed.

Once the lads are loaded up with gifts, they collect Kasða, warmly bundled up and sleeping peacefully, then lead the party through the fae portal at **Area 12**.

The villagers, of course, are suspicious, as they've suffered from the terror of the Yule Cat and the Jólásveinar's tricks and thievery, but once the lads start delivering food and gifts, most of the hostility is muted. Food stolen from the town is returned, Grýla's cakes and cookies are

"Wait, my brothers, and cease your prattle! Perhaps the boy could return — return to his true family, who miss him so-rely! But we can always see him! We could travel through the portal at Yule as we always do and see him in the village!" The unconvinced Jólásveinar grow quiet and look thoughtful. "But those villagers do hate us so," says one, regretfully. "For we were wanton and cruel, and played the most thoughtless of tricks on them. If only we could make amends for our misbehavior."

One of the lads waves his arms and shouts.

"What think you, good Mother?" asks one of the lads. "We can share our food, our toys, and our many creations with those in the village. We've far more than we need, and perhaps it's better to be loved than hated and feared. This is what we've heard from the tales of Father Poga, and he is loved by all!" Another lad pipes up, declaring, "It is as they say! Father Poga spoke of his helpers, and of visiting the far cold village. Perhaps that is us, and we can act as he acts, bringing gifts and happiness." Grýla grumpily looks at the eager lads, then at you, and finally displays a gap-toothed smile. "Well, I've never really denied my boys anything. You want to go down there and play with the children and give people presents, you do that." She gestures at the table, which is loaded with cookies and cakes. "Take them some of my piparkokur and Jólakaka while you're at it. I made too much, and they'll just spoil otherwise. Now go, quick, while it's still Yuletide and I'm in a good mood." The lad turns away, then thinks of something and turns back. "And mother? Perhaps our great kitty could be kinder as well. The village folk love their kitties so much. ... A shame it is that ours wants to feast on the unfortunate." The old troll woman sighs and waves a hand. "Certainly. Yule Cat is getting old, too. I'll talk to him. He'll be content to go down there to get pets and sleep by the fire. Now get out of here! Hey, Leppalúði! Put down that stupid club and have some cake." The big troll grins hungrily, dropping his maul to the floor with a crash, and ambles toward the table, his big eyes fixed on the piles of cakes and cookies.

Several lads agree...

You stand on a low, snowy rise as the sun peaks just above the great mountain Snörfjall in the east, heralding a peaceful Yule Morn. About a mile away, you see the huddled buildings of Köldhorn, see curls of smoke rising, and hear faint shouts of “*Gleðileg Jól!*” echoing as tiny figures emerge from their homes. The corpse of the Yule Cat is nowhere to be seen. “They greet the day with joy and hope. Now let us bring them Yuletide cheer!” declares a lad. He places his fingers in his mouth and utters a loud whistle. Instantly, as if from out of nowhere, a wooden sleigh appears, pulled by a pair of giant goats with bells on their harnesses. “Load your burdens, brothers! Let us fly!” The Jólásveinar quickly pack their bags and boxes into the sleigh as one of their number takes the reins. He gestures at you. “Come then, strange adventurers!

You shall join us in our tasks!”

The lads shout, sing, ring bells, and carry on while an awakened Kasða laughs and claps his little hands as the sleigh glides over the snow toward the village. As the party draws near, several Köldhorners notice and react with alarm, rushing to grab spears and bows. As the sleigh passes through the opening in the village’s snow wall, the lads begin to shout, “No fear, people of Köldhorn! We bring your beloved boy and beg pardon! As Father Poga bade, gifts and feasting shall replace pranks and wicked deeds!” A lad holds up the grinning and gurgling infant as Maria and Mayor Hónsval rush forward, tears streaming down their faces. As the Yule Lads hand the baby over to his mother, Hónsval looks at you gratefully. “My friends, you’ve done more than just rescue our son. You’ve brought joy to this darkest day of the year.”

^
Read or paraphrase
as the situation resolves.

shared, fine wooden carvings and decorations are given, and wondrous clockwork toys are distributed to the village’s awestruck children. Some still think this is a trick, that the food is tainted and the gifts illusory, but these fears lessen as the day goes on, ending in a great feast in Gunbörg’s mead hall. As the sun sets, the Yule Lads get back on their sleigh and ride toward the mountain, waving and declaring that they will be back next Yule, bringing more food and presents.

Yuletide in Years to Come

Obviously, this is the happiest of endings, as the adventurers help make peace between Grýla’s family and the villagers. In the coming years, the Yule Lads change their behavior to be a bit more generous and less mean-spirited, bringing food and toys on Yule Morn. Their natures remain chaotic, and they still play the occasional prank, but as time goes by, this becomes more and more a traditional Yuletide tradition. In the end, the children of Cold Corners leave their shoes on their windowsills on Yule Eve, and the Jólásveinar leave treats of cakes and candy made by their mother in addition to the various presents brought on Yule Morn.

As for the Jólakötturinn, the old cat continues to stalk the village each Yule, though eventually the villagers accept that it’s all for show and leave out milk and treats. It is later considered to be a sign of good fortune for the Yule Cat to curl up on one’s roof near the warm chimney.

Should the adventurers pay a visit to Köldhorn later, they’ll always be welcome and have a comfortable place to stay, and the villagers shower them with food and drink, telling them tales of how the Yule Lads have changed, and how they no longer fear the darkness of midwinter.

And so — in this alternative at least — *Beware the Yule Cat* ends hopefully, with enemies reconciled and joyful new traditions brought to a cold and bleak land. *Gleðileg Jól*, indeed!

Appendix

One

Creatures

Barbegazi (Ice Gnome)

This humanoid stands just over three feet tall and has white hair, glossy white skin, and deep blue eyes. Its beard is long and flowing and appears to be made of icicles. Its feet are large and flat. Barbegazi weigh 45 pounds on average.

Barbegazi are often referred to as snow or ice gnomes, a name they do not appreciate. They inhabit frigid hills and mountains where they spend their time engaging in activities they enjoy: hunting, fishing, and wrestling. Barbegazi homes are constructed of large blocks of ice and stone and are often built into the sides of hills and mountains or are part of the mountain itself. Their homes are frequently targeted by white dragons (who consider their flesh a delicacy).

A barbegazi prefers to avoid combat, using misdirection and deception (including well-placed traps and pitfalls) whenever possible to mislead and detour potential opponents. If a barbegazi knows an enemy is coming, it most certainly has several traps and snares in place by the time the enemy arrives. If a barbegazi engages an opponent, it usually opens combat with its icicle blast before moving to attack with its shortsword.

A barbegazi is not stupid and will not risk its life in battle (unless it is defending its clan). If forced to flee, a barbegazi burrows into the snow and attempts to escape.

Barbegazi (Ice Gnome)

Small humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (–1)

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Gnome (Barbegazi dialect)

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Snow Walk. The barbegazi can move across and climb icy or snowy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost extra movement.

Innate Spellcasting. A barbegazi's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 10, +2 to hit with spell attacks).

The barbegazi can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day: *ray of frost*

1/day: *hold person*

Actions

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

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Society

A barbegazi clan is led by the eldest male. Females play a lesser role than males in barbegazi society, though many are as capable (or more) than many of the males in the clan. Barbegazi are trained from a young age in the art of combat and survival. Elder males who rise to leadership in their clan have 21 hit points and advantage on all Dexterity (Stealth) rolls.

Aside from white dragons, barbegazis have tolerable relations with most cold-dwelling races and often initiate trade with frost giant clans. Typical goods traded by a barbegazi clan are furs and meat. They do not associate or particularly care for frost men.



Some barbegazi females are born with innate cold-based arcane powers in excess of normal barbegazi innate spellcasting. These so-called ice witches are usually forced to live apart from the clan but are called upon in times of need and expected to defend their people or accompany raiding parties. Ice witches are also believed to have visions of the future and are sometimes consulted to learn the possible outcomes of important clan endeavors.

Barbegazi Ice Witch

Small humanoid, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d6 + 3)

Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Skills Stealth +3

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Gnome (Barbegazi dialect)

Challenge 2 (100 XP)

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

Snow Walk. The barbegazi can move across and climb icy or snowy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain composed of ice or snow doesn't cost extra movement.

Spellcasting. The ice witch is an 8th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The ice witch has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *crown of madness*, *invisibility*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (2 slots): *ice storm*

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) cold damage.

Fire Drake Blood

Fire drake blood can be quickly saved for later with a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Up to one ounce of the blood can be saved per saving throw. The body of a single fire drake provides 1d10 + 2 doses of its blood. Fire drake blood can be used as an explosive, with a glass vial hurled at a target bursting to inflict 9 (2d8) fire damage. As an action, it can be applied to a weapon, granting that weapon +2 (1d4) fire damage on each attack for the next five rounds, after which it is destroyed by the fiery blood, unless the weapon is magical.

Drake, Fire

Fire drakes are sometimes confused as small or young red dragons. Their bodies are only around four feet long with five or more feet of tail. They run the range from orange to deep red and often have smoky black markings. Heat and smoke seem to radiate from their bodies. Their wings are large enough to take them aloft, and their fiery breath is nothing to laugh at. Many would-be dragon slayers work their way up by fighting the fiercely territorial fire drakes, and those that survive are apt to choose a new line of work.



Drake, Fire

Small dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	4 (−3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities fire

Condition Immunities paralyzed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Pyrophoric Blood. A creature that hits the fire drake with a weapon attack from within five feet of the fire drake must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The fire drake makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (2d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Fire Breath (recharge 5–6). The fire drake exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Creatures in the area must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful saving throw.

Drake, Ice

Ice drakes are small, dragon-like creatures that resemble white dragons. Their hides are icy white and blue, with jagged blue-black markings. Their eyes are sapphire. While they could be confused with juvenile white dragons, drakes lack much of the intelligence of even that least intelligent of true dragonkind. They hunt the frozen parts of the world, in the icy poles and frigid mountain passes where their natural coloring and immunities make them a top predator.



Drake, Ice

Small dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	7 (–2)	8 (–1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +1

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities cold

Condition Immunities paralyzed

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Draconic

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Change Shape. The ice drake magically polymorphs into a Large white dragon or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment being worn or carried by the ice drake do not change. The ice drake reverts to its true form when it dies.

Actions

Multiattack. The ice drake makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage.

Breath Weapon (recharge 4–6). The ice drake exhales an icy blast in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) cold damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

Ice Drake Blood

Ice drake blood can be quickly saved for later with a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Up to one ounce of the blood can be saved per saving throw. The body of a single ice drake provides 1d10 + 2 doses of its blood. Ice drake blood can be used as an explosive, with a glass vial hurled at a target bursting to inflict 9 (2d8) cold damage. As an action, it can be applied to a weapon, granting that weapon +2 (1d4) cold damage on each attack for the next five rounds, after which the weapon is destroyed by the super-chilled blood, unless it is magical.



Grýla

One of the most feared denizens of the region, Grýla is an ugly, foul-tempered troll who hates merriment, despises generosity, and has a taste for the flesh of children. At least that's how she's portrayed in tales told to make the children of Köldhorn and other villages behave, and in the past, that's certainly been the case.

It's said that Grýla is part fae and has a special connection to the Yuletide season at midwinter. If slain on the Material Plane, she returns at full health on the following Yule eve, usually with a grudge against those who did her wrong (and anyone else who inconvenienced her). She is quarrelsome and hard to live with, having killed

(and some say eaten) each of her two previous husbands. Her current husband, Leppalúði, is an ordinary troll — lazy, fat, and gluttonous, whose primary pursuits are eating and sleeping. This seems to suit Grýla well, for she does enjoy cooking and serving meals, and while Leppalúði is sleeping, he can't bother her.

Grýla has numerous offspring from her previous marriages, but her 13 sons with Leppalúði are collectively known as the Jólasveinar or Yule Lads, who though spoiled and ill-mannered, are not outright evil. Her pet cat, Jólakötturinn, is also infamous and feared throughout the Northlands, but it obeys its mistress despite its bad temper.

Though known as a great cook, Grýla favors the flesh of mortals, especially children, and has been known to kidnap them for her pot. Over the years, she fought a continuous struggle with the local people, particularly those in the village of Köldhorn, raiding the village to seize livestock and villagers to supplement her larder. After finally making an uneasy peace with the Köldhorners, Grýla has contented herself with less problematic prey, preferring elk, goats, deer, bears, and even the occasional dragon for her stewpot. Though she sometimes thinks fondly of her anthropophagous past, the old troll woman is not quite so enthusiastic for mortal flesh anymore. She has even begun to dabble in baked goods, including cookies such as piparkokur, speiur, and lakkrisoppar, and cakes like vinarterta, skufukaka, and the Yuletide Jólakaka, all of which have won the approval of her sons and her lazy husband.

Grýla

Large fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 171 (18d10 + 72)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	5 (–3)

Saving Throws Str +8, Con +7, Wis +5

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +5, Survival +5

Damage Immunities cold

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Giant, Sylvan

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Irritable. Each turn, Grýla must succeed on a DC 7 Wisdom saving throw or attack the last creature who inflicted damage on her. If the target is not in range, she must move toward that target, even if she's not able to attack it at the end of her movement.

Keen Smell. Grýla has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

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

Regeneration. Grýla regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn. If Grýla takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of Grýla's next turn. Grýla dies only if she starts her turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Seasonal Immortality. If slain, Grýla returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.

Actions

Multiattack. Grýla makes one Bite attacks and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) thunder damage.

Though she's mellowed with age, Grýla remains an irritable old creature, inhospitable and quarrelsome. On the rare occasions when her husband is fully conscious, the couple's fights are legendary, rocking the mountains and dislodging great boulders that sometimes travel miles to smash mortal houses. The arrival of an adorable baby boy, taken from Köldhorn by the Yule Lads, has brought some joy into Grýla's life, however, and she has started to feel an affection for the child that she has not felt in many, many years.

Jólabjörn (Yule Bear)

The Yule Lads are known for their chaotic, sometimes meanspirited senses of humor, their often-cruel pranks, and seeming disregard for their victims' health and safety. Less known is their love for animals and their fondness for training pets. The cave bear known as Jólabjörn is one of the lads' favorite pets. Raised from a cub and infused with the fae energies of Grýla's cave, Jólabjörn is terrifying to behold, even though the lads gave him a leather collar decorated with holly leaves and shiny bells that herald his coming. Despite this, Yule Bear is playful, good-natured, and generally quite friendly. Those whom the great bear befriends are not usually aware of its intentions and invariably flee before its playful charges. All this does is encourage Jólabjörn to play a friendly game of chase, often ending in a terrifying pounce and playful roughhousing, which in turn may end in minor injuries, bruises, or even broken bones. Tales of "victims" escaping the wrath of the Yule Bear are told throughout the region, often growing in the telling until the friendly creature has attained a reputation almost as fearsome as the more infamous Yule Cat (whose reputation for ill-tempered violence is entirely earned).

Jólabjörn (Yule Bear)

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 142 (15d12 + 45)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	5 (−3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Understands Giant and Common but doesn't speak

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Bear Hug. If Jólabjörn hits a creature with two Claw attacks in the same turn, the target is grappled. Jólabjörn has advantage on Bite attacks against a creature it has grappled and may use a bonus action to inflict 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage on the grappled creature. If Play-Fighting, Jólabjörn uses its Bear Hug to inflict further bludgeoning damage, but happily maintains the grapple and play-bites, inflicting minimal damage.

Bear Frenzy. Jólabjörn is not slain if reduced to 0 HP. Instead, it enters bear frenzy. While in Bear Frenzy, Jólabjörn may continue to act normally. At the end of every turn that Jólabjörn is in Bear Frenzy, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or die.

Keen Scent. Jólabjörn has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on scent.

Play-Fighting. Unless it has taken more than 35 points of damage, Jólabjörn views fighting as more of a game than anything else and seeks to engage its opponents with nibbles and playful hugs. If Play-Fighting, the Yule Bear's attacks inflict only minimum damage and do not include its Strength bonus — its Claws inflict only 1 point each, its bite and Bear Hug inflict only 2 points each. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) roll reveals that the monstrous bear is holding back and not fighting seriously. If it takes more than 35 points of damage, Jólabjörn first tries to amble off, tired of friends who play too rough, but inflicts full damage if cornered.

Seasonal Immortality. If slain, Jólabjörn returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.

Actions

Multiattack. Jólabjörn makes two attacks, only one of which can be a Bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 15 (2d8 + 6) piercing damage. If Play-fighting, this attack only inflicts 2 points of piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 11 (1d10 + 6) slashing damage. If Play-Fighting, this attack inflicts only 1 point of slashing damage.

Jólakötturinn (Yule Cat)

Huge beast, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 152 (16d12 + 48)

Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	6 (–2)	16 (+3)	6 (–2)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +7, Perception +6

Damage Immunities cold

Damage Resistances lightning, thunder

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Understands Giant but can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Disembowelment. If the Yule Cat hits a single target with both claw attacks on its turn, it can use an action to inflict an additional 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage by kicking with its hind legs.

Find Prey. The Yule Cat can only attack targets that did not receive new clothes on the most recent Yule Eve. It can automatically detect any such targets within one mile of its location.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The Jólakötturinn has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Regeneration. The Jólakötturinn regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the Jólakötturinn takes fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the Jólakötturinn's next turn. The Jólakötturinn dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Seasonal Immortality. If slain, the Yule Cat returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.

Actions

Multiattack. The Jólakötturinn makes two Claw attacks and one Bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 9 (1d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Howl. Each creature of the Yule Cat's choice that is within 90 feet of it and can hear it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for one minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the Yule Cat's Howl for the next 24 hours.

Pounce. The Jólakötturinn can leap up to 60 feet forward and make two Claw attacks. It can end its leap at any solid point up to 30 feet above the ground.

Jólakötturinn (Yule Cat)

Beloved pet of the troll matron Grýla and her sons, the Jólakötturinn is an absolute terror to everyone else. In the past, this enormous, mangy black cat with glowing green eyes and razor-sharp white teeth preyed upon the people of the region, taking special interest in the village of Cold Corners, where it devoured some townsfolk and carried others up to an even worse fate in Grýla's stewpot. When the villagers forced Grýla to agree to a truce, the cat was forced to limit its prey to those who didn't get new clothes as gifts on Yule Eve. Needless to say, the villagers caught on quite quickly and carefully conformed to the agreement, exchanging any new garment — even a single, simple sock — to frustrate the Yule Cat's hunger. Only unfortunate travelers who came near the village on Yule Eve were fair game, and these were few and far between. The Yule Cat grew hungrier and more bad-tempered with each passing Yuletide. Now, it sees an opportunity to feast on a group of unfortunate adventurers who have stumbled into Cold Corners on Yule Eve. They may be tough and not especially tasty, especially the fighters, but the Yule Cat is in no position to be choosy. Its first decent meal in years awaits!

Jólasveinar (Yule Lads)

The 13 Yule Lads, or Jólasveinar (singular Jólasveina), are the sons of the fae troll Grýla and her good-for-nothing husband Leppalúði. Grýla is known to have other children by her two previous (deceased) husbands, but the Jólasveinar are by far her best-known progeny. Resembling diminutive gnomes or dwarves, the lads all sport white beards and dress in red and green garments. They're known for their mischievous behavior and their sometimes-cruel pranks.

Despite their meanspirited trickery, the Jólásveinar are not actually evil, don't want to kill anyone, and avoid direct combat if possible. They're also quite fond of animals, paying special attention to their mother's foul-tempered cat, the Jólakötturinn, and their own favorite, Jólaljörnn, the Yule Bear. It could, in fact, be argued that the lads' petty cruelties are a result of their parents' neglect, and given the chance, their kinder and more generous natures may one day be revealed.



Jólásveinar (Yule Lad)

Small fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 82 (15d6 + 30)

Speed 30 ft.

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

9 (–1) 19 (+4) 14 (+2) 10 (+0) 16 (+3) 8 (–1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +4, Wis +5

Skills Athletics +1, Acrobatics +6, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5

Damage Immunities cold

Condition Immunities poisoned, charmed, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Giant

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Hit and Run. This action can be taken only at night or during a snowstorm. The Yule Lad makes a Dexterity (Stealth) check and moves up to 30 feet, then makes a Shortsword attack. The target is allowed a Wisdom (Perception) check against the lad's Stealth roll to see the incoming attack. On a success, the target is allowed an opportunity attack as the Yule Lad moves away. Allies of the target within 10 feet are also allowed to make Wisdom (Perception) checks at disadvantage, and on a success, they too can make opportunity attacks if the attacking Yule Lad comes within range and then leaves during his movement.

Taunt. A Yule Lad calls out choice insults to a single target who can hear him, his voice rising above any wind or other environmental sounds. A target who hears the insults must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is enraged by the sheer audacity and detail of the insult, and moves immediately toward the Yule Lad, attacking if they come within melee range. If it has not moved before taking its Taunt action, the Yule Lad may use its reaction to move away from its enraged target. At the beginning of its turn, an affected target can make another DC 13 Wisdom saving throw, and on a failure, it must continue to move toward the Yule Lad, which may take another reaction to move away. If the target can't see the Yule Lad, it continues to move in the same direction. On a successful save, the target is no longer affected and can act normally and cannot be affected by the same Yule Lad's Taunt action for 24 hours. However, it can be affected by Taunts from other Yule Lads.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Magic Resistance. The Yule Lad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. The Jólásveinar's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13). Jólásveinar can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*, *minor illusion*

3/day each: *dispel magic*, *ray of frost*, *silent image*

1/day each: *blindness/deafness*, *hold person*, *misty step*, *suggestion*

Seasonal Immortality. If slain, the Yule Lad returns at full hit points on the day that it normally appears during the Yule season (see description).

Traceless Passage. While walking in snow, the Yule Lads leave no footprints or other signs of their passage and can't be tracked.



The 13 Jólásveinar

All 13 Yule Lads share the statistics listed above, but each has some unique qualities or powers as described here.

Stekkjarstaur (Sheep-Cote-Clod, Sheep-Worrier). Sheep-Worrier is hampered by his unbending peg-leg; his speed is 20. He can innately cast *animal friendship* three times per day and uses this to persuade ewes to let him steal their milk. Unfortunately for him, ewes don't give milk in the wintertime, but he's not the wisest of the lads (his Wisdom score is 6) and nevertheless keeps trying.

Giljagaur (Gully-Gawk). Gully-Gawk specializes in hiding and stealth, which he uses to creep into barns to steal milk buckets or to take milk directly from the dairy cows. He has advantage on all Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Stúfur (Stubby). Little Stubby is even shorter than his brothers and likes the greasy remains found at the bottom of pans. His AC is 19 due to his small stature.

Þvörusleikir (Spoon-Licker). Thin and frail due to a diet derived almost entirely from licking stolen spoons, Þvörusleikir has only 60 HP, but he gains advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and can cast *mage hand* 3/day. He uses this spell to surreptitiously lift dirty spoons from bowls and dishracks.

Pottaskefill (Pot-Scraper). Pottaskefill takes food left over in bowls after meals. As one of the more rotund of the lads, Pot-Scraper has 100 hp and advantage on Constitution saving throws.

Askasleikir (Bowl-Licker). Villagers often don't have proper tables but instead eat their meals seated on chairs or beds, setting down their lidded bowls — called *askur* — when they're finished, often for the family pets to lick. Askasleikir lurks under beds, waiting for his chance to grab the abandoned bowls and take the food intended for the family pets. He has advantage on all Dexterity-based skill checks and saving throws.

Hurðaskellir (Door-Slammer). Prone to the fairly childish practice of waking or frightening families in the night by slamming doors and cupboards, Hurðaskellir has a Strength score of 18 and advantage on Constitution saving throws.

Skýrgámur (Skyr-Gobbler). Skyr is the yogurt-like, sour milk cheese the folk of Cold Corners greatly enjoy. Gluttonous and inconsiderate, Skyr-Gobbler breaks into their homes and storehouses, seeking out this delicious treat.

Bjúgnakrækir (Sausage-Swiper). In good times, the folk of Cold Corners make sausages and sometimes hams and other meats; they hang the meats from smokehouse rafters to cure or store them when they're done. Sausage-Swiper craves such food and breaks into their smokehouses; he swings across the beams to reach his goal. Bjúgnakrækir has a Dexterity score of 20, a Dexterity (Acrobatics) bonus of +7, and advantage on all Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks.

Gluggagægir (Window-Peeper). Gluggagægir sneaks through the streets, checking out windows to find unattended food and trinkets to steal. He has advantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks, and on Dexterity checks to gain entry through windows and doors.

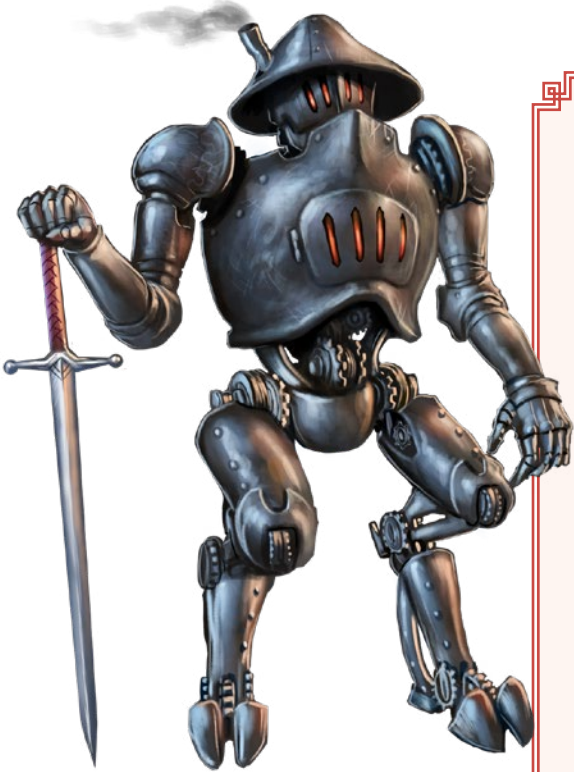
Gáttaþefur (Door-Sniffer). Gáttaþefur is possessed of an outstanding sense of smell. His Wisdom (Perception) score is +7, and he has advantage on all smell-based Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Ketkrókur (Meat-Hook). In addition to his knife and bow, Ketkrókur carries a long hook that he uses to snare sausages and hams from their hiding places. He's as reluctant to kill as his brothers, but if needed, his meat-hook acts as a +2 *shortsword*.

Kertasníkir (Candle-Beggar). Candles in Köldhorn are made of tallow and are edible (if slightly disgusting). Kertasníkir, however, has a taste for these greasy treats and breaks into houses to steal them. He'll also follow and frighten children into abandoning their candles, which he takes before speedily fleeing. He has a speed of 40 ft. and can cast *expeditious retreat* 1/day.

Málmaður (Clockwork Guard)

The jolly Jólasveinar are known mostly for their pranks and often destructive misbehavior, but they're also skilled craftsmen, with a talent for painting, carving, and building elaborate toys and devices. Their clockwork guards, or Málmaður (literally "metal man"), are among their most advanced creations. Resembling sword-armed warriors, these devices can be instructed to follow simple commands and repeat specific phrases using their Mimicry feature. Several of these devices guard the Material Plane side of Gryla's domain and her main house in the Dimmuborgir.



Málmaður (Clockwork Guard)

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 68 (8d8 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	6 (–2)	5 (–3)	1 (–5)

Skills Perception +1

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

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

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

Languages Understands Nørsk but speaks only through the use of its Mimicry trait

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The clockwork guard is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the clockwork guard must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for one minute.

Constructed Nature. A clockwork guard doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

False Appearance. While the clockwork guard remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal object of its type.

Mimicry. The clockwork guard can mimic humanoid voices.

A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

Actions

Multiattack. The clockwork makes two Broadsword attacks.

Broadsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

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The Yule Cat

Jóla-kötturinn

By Jóhannes úr Kötlum
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Þið kannizt við jóla-köttinn
— sá köttur var gríðarstór.
Fólk vissi ekki hvaðan hann kom
eða hvert hann fór.

Hann glennti upp glyrnurnar sínar,
glóandi báðar tvær.
— Það var ekki heiglum hent
að horfa í þær.

Kamparnir beittir sem broddar,
upp úr bakinu kryppa há,
og klærnar á loðinni löpp
var ljótt að sjá.

Hann veifaði stélinu sterka,
hann stökk og hann klóraði og blés,
og var ýmist uppi í dal
eða úti um nes.

Hann sveimaði, soltinn og grimmer,
í sárköldum jólasnæ,
og vakti í hjörtunum hroll,
á hverjum bæ.

Ef mjálmað var aumlega úti
var ólukkan samstundis vís.
Allir vissu, að hann veiddi menn
en vildi ekki mýs.

Hann lagðist á fátæka fólkið,
sem fékk enga nýja spjör
fyrir jólin — og baslaði og bjó
við bágust kjör.

Frá því tók hann ætíð í einu
allan þess jólamat,
og át það svo oftast nær sjálft,
ef hann gat.

Því var það, að konurnar kepptust
við kamba og vefstól og rokk,
og þrjónuðu litfagran lepp
eða lítin sokk.

Því kötturinn mátti ekki koma
og krækja í börnin smá
Þau urðu að fá sína flík
þeim fullorðnu hjá.

Og er kveikt var á jóla-kvöldið
og kötturinn gæðist inn,
stóðu börnin bísperrt og rjóð,
með böggulinn sinn.

Sum höfðu fengið svuntu
og sum höfðu fengið skó,
eða eitthvað, sem þótti þarft,
— en það var nóg.

Því kisa máti engan eta
sem einhverja flíkina hlaut.
Hún hvæsti þá heldur ljót
og hljóp á braut.

Hvort enn er hún til, veit ég ekki,
en aum yrði hennar för,
ef allir eignuðust næst
einhverja spjör.

Þið hafið nú kannske í huga
að hjálpa, ef þörf verður á.
— Máske enn finnist einhver börn
sem ekkert fá.

Máske, að leitinn að þeim sem líða
af ljósskorti heims um ból,
gefi ykkur góðan dag
og gleðileg jól.

The Christmas Cat

By Jóhannes úr Kötlum
(translation by Hallberg Hallmundsson)

You all know the cat of Christmas
— that cat was huge and fat.
No one knew where he came from
nor where he was at.

He opened his glowering eyes wide,
each like a burning gem.
— It wasn't for the faint of heart
to face them.

His back was arched, his breath foul,
like barbs his whiskers keen,
and his claws more awesome
than anything you've ever seen.

And waving his wicked tail
like a whip threateningly,
he was either up in the valley
or out by the sea.

He roamed, fierce and famished,
in freezing Christmas snow,
chilling every human heart,
both high and low.

The sound of his monstrous meowing
meant that he craved a prize.
And everyone knew he fancied folks
but frowned on mice.

He savaged the poorest people
— too poor to get anything new
for Christmas — those who drudged all day
as driven to.

From them he ever so often
took all their Christmas food,
and then he would eat them also
— if he could.

So the women labored long days
at the loom, and they spun and knit
that the children might soon have something
to show for it.

For the cat mustn't come there prowling
and catch their daughters and sons.
They had to be given garments
by grown-up ones.

And when candles were lit at Christmas
and the cat peeked inside,
the kids, strutting their gifts, stood there
all starry-eyed.

Some may have had new shoes on,
some a blouse with a cuff.
Getting any useful gift
was good enough.

For puss couldn't ever eat those
who got anything new to wear.
Then he uttered an ugly hiss
and was off from there.

If he's still around, I know not,
but nothing would be his fare
if everyone could on Christmas have
new clothes to wear.

So maybe you'll have a heart
and give help to the weak and small,
for numerous needy children
get nothing at all.

And searching for those who suffer
from shortage of light for true,
may perhaps make your Christmas
merry, too

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Welcome to Cold Corners, in the frozen depths of the Northlands!
Beware the Yule Cat is a seasonally themed adventure for
Tier 2 characters.

Set in the village of Köldhorn (Cold Corners) and the nearby peak of Snörfjall (Snow Mountain), the adventure incorporates elements of Icelandic legends and monsters, with some background information explaining the tale's origins. The adventurers arrive in the village of Köldhorn just ahead of a fierce storm on a wintery Yule eve, only to find the villagers unwilling to offer shelter or hospitality. They soon learn that the town is to be visited by the ferocious Jólakötturinn — the Yule Cat — who stalks the streets and devours those who haven't received new clothes, as well as those who offer them shelter.

PARTY SIZE	I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
PARTY LEVEL	TIER I	TIER II	TIER III	TIER IV				
PLAY EMPHASIS	40% SOCIAL		20% EXPLORATION		40% COMBAT			
GM PREPARATION	LOW		MEDIUM			HIGH		
DIFFICULTY TO RUN	EASY		MEDIUM			HARD		
PLAY TIME	1 H		6-8 HOURS			4000+ H		

Beware the Yule Cat - 5e PDF

ISBN 978-1-6656-0509-0

