

FORWARD

Beware the Yule Cat

By Anthony Pryor



Beware the Yule Cat

Author

Anthony Pryor

Project Manager

Edwin Nagy

Editor

Jeff Harkness

Art Director

Casey Christofferson

Cover Artist

Andrian Landeros

Interior Art

Andrian Landeros
Teresa Guido
Hector Rodríguez

Cartography

Robert Altbauer

Cover design

Lysanne Hudon

Layout & Interior Design

Lysanne Hudon
with Ainsley Christofferson

OSE Conversion

Ade Smith
Anthony Pryor

Development Manager

Michael Gross
Anthony Pryor

Project Manager

Edwin Nagy

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Necromancer Games is:

Bill Webb, Zach Glazar, Edwin Nagy, Mike Badolato,
Casey Christofferson, Jeff Harkness, and Ken Spencer

ISBN: 978-1-6656-0513-7
OSE PDF



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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.

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



Yuletide in Köldhorn

Welcome to Cold Corners, in the frozen depths of the Northlands! ***Beware the Yule Cat*** is a seasonally themed OSE adventure for characters of level 4–6.

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 chaos created by the Yule Cat to visit mayhem on 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. GMs can develop hooks appropriate to their campaign, or 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 a 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 Þöstiggs 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 Jólásveinar

Grýla and Leppalúði’s sons — known collectively as the Jólásveinar, 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

Jólásveinar 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 Jólásveina 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 Trygvysson

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 have stats as **normal humans**. Unless otherwise noted, all doors are locked or barred to prevent entry.

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. Þorbáddursson Farm

This small farmstead is covered in snow save for a few footprints. It consists of a **barn** and a **small house**.

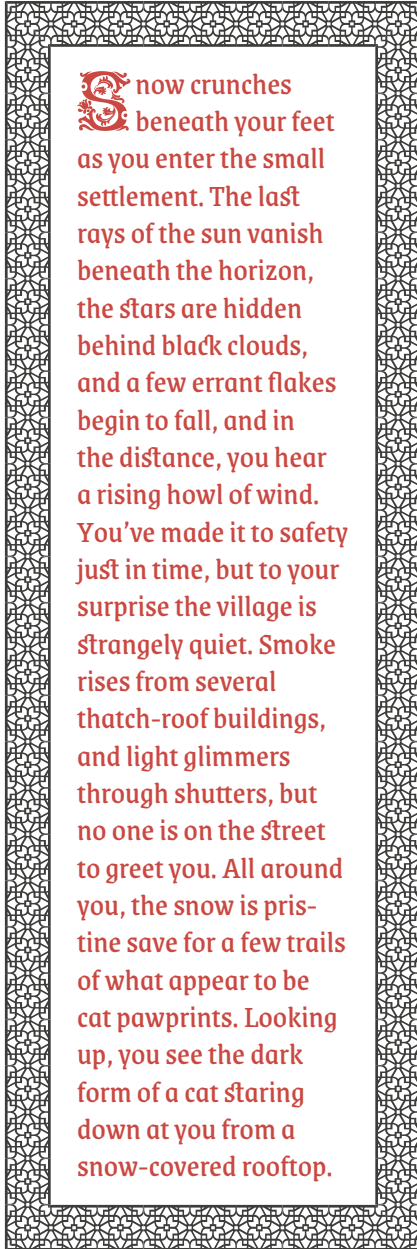
Farms: About 60 Köldhorners live on small farms within riding distance of Cold Corners.

Barn: Two dairy cows, a dozen sheep, and four goats are all safely secured in the barn.

Occupants: Hrauen, 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.

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.



▲ Read or paraphrase as the characters enter the town.

3. Snow Berm

The town proper is surrounded by a **low wall** of snow. The berm has no gate and opens only at the end of the Iceroad that allows access to the village. Snow crunches beneath the adventurers' feet as the party enters the settlement. They've made it to safety just in time, but to their 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 the party.

Berm: Six feet tall. The Köldhorners build this wall 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.

West: 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, the characters hear a rising howl of wind.

Cats: The snow is pristine save for a few trails of what appear to be cat pawprints. The dark forms of domestic cats stare from rooftops, and eyes glitter from the shadows.

4. Mead Hall

A **longhouse** painted red and yellow lies ahead. Outside is a **sign** in the Nørsk language hangs outside, swaying in the wind.

Sign: Written in Nørsk, it reads *Mead Hall*.

Walls: Brightly painted with fanciful designs and luck runes.

Doors: Shut and barred.

Occupants: Gunbörg Anfridsdóttir, along with her three sons and two daughters, drinking hall that is the social center of the village. They cower inside and won't let anyone in.

5. Homes

About 150 humans and 10 halflings live inside the village proper, where they maintain small, neat **homes**.

Homes: Most have 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.

Doors: 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

This large structure has a large, iron-bound door with Nørsk runes carved into the lintel above it.

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.

Doors: Unlocked.

Runes: The Nørsk runes spell the name of the goddess **Frigg**.

Priestess: A single gödi (priestess) named Vöka (**acolyte**), 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** below should the characters seek shelter in the temple.

Statues: The temple contains a small statue of Frigg and shrines to the other gods.

Fire: A hearth fire is kept constantly burning.

Yule Lads: 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.

Yule Cat: 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

This small house with an attached roof over the outdoor forge and anvil.

Occupants: This is the home of the blacksmith Jarne (**berseker**), 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** next).

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

This house has an attached structure with large doors. Several casks and barrels are piled up outside.

Brewery: The attached structure is the village brewery, currently closed for the winter. Inside are several ceramic pots, storage bins, mortars and pestles, vats, and other items used for creating beer and ale. All are empty.

Occupants: 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. Döstittg Family

This sprawling house is built in several styles, and appears to have been added to over generations. Outside is a fenced vegetable garden and an enclosure containing several dairy goats.

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. Like the other villagers, the Döstittgs 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).

Occupants: Grandmother Lilja and grandfather Borska (**halfings**) oversee their son Mikal (**halfing** with 2 HD, 8 hp), his wife Nadi (**halfing**) and their six children (**noncombatants**) in this sprawling home that has been extensively added to over the generations.

11. Council Hall

This appears to be the grandest structure in the small village — a longhouse with elaborately **carved beams**, a **wooden roof**, and **wide double doors**.

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 also used to stow ale kegs, sacks of grain, and vegetables when the storehouse is full.

Doors: Locked

Interior: Empty save for a **long table** and **chairs**.

12. Mayor's House

A large house stands here, which looks more like a townhouse from the southern regions — **two-storied**, with a **balcony**, **glass windows** and a large brick **chimney** emitting smoke.

Mayor is one of the village's wealthier and more influential citizens, a merchant named Hánsval Trygvysson (**noble**, without squire or retainers). 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.

Occupants: Hánsval 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

A plain, utilitarian structure stands here.

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 stocks are running lower than normal.

Door: Locked.

Interior: 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 mid-winter 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 Jólásveinar'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 CHA 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 Jólaveinar make their presence known.

The Storm Arrives

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 CON check or suffer a level of Exposure. Characters dressed in heavy winter gear don't need to make these rolls. (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 are made with a -2 penalty. The wind also extinguishes open flames and forces any flying creatures to land at the end of their turn or fall.

Heavy Precipitation: Thick blowing snow reduces visibility to nearly zero, imposing a -2 penalty on all ranged attacks and a -2 penalty on melee attacks on all creatures without infravision.

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 **save versus poison** or take 1 damage.

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.

Exposure

Throughout this adventure, characters exposed to the elements must succeed on CON checks or suffer from levels of Exposure. Each level of Exposure reduces the character's CON score by 1, and imposes a -1 penalty to Attack rolls. CON reductions may affect a character's Hit Points. The Cleric spell *resist cold* removes one level of Exposure. There are also several opportunities throughout this adventure to recover levels of Exposure as well. Characters who spend time in a warm environment, such as indoors, near a fire, etc., can also recover one level of Exhaustion per hour, as determined by the GM. Characters may also accumulate Fatigue, which acts in a similar fashion, and whose effects are cumulative with Exposure (see below).

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 Jólásveinar 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 GMs can come up with their own Jólásveinar 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.

Snowball: THAC0 13 [+6], 5-10/11-20/21-30, 1d4 damage; target must **save versus poison** or be blinded for 1d4 rounds.

Snowslide: The lads cause a mass of snow to slide off the steep roof of a nearby building. Any characters within 10 feet must make a DEX check or take 1d4 damage and be knocked prone. Prone characters suffer a +4 penalty to their AC (-4 AAC), a -4 penalty to melee attack rolls, and cannot make ranged attacks. A prone character takes a full round to stand up, during which time they cannot move but can attack, but attack rolls are made with a -4 penalty.

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

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

Illusory 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 DEX check is required to avoid the garbage; on a failure, the garbage hits the target squarely, forcing it to make a CON check or suffer a –2 penalty to all attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws for 1d4 minutes. The target's CHA 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 +2 DEX checks. Those that fail suffer 1d8 damage from collisions with heavy bodies and hooves. 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 **save versus wands** or take 1d6 damage. The water then freezes on the targets, inflicting another 1 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 Döstitg (**halflings**), 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, 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 Exposure to make a CON check, recovering one level of Exposure 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 (**Jólakötturinn**, see **Appendix 1: Monsters**), 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.

Jólakötturinn (Yule Cat)

AC 4 [15], **HD** 7*** (31 hp), **Att** 2 x claws (2d8), 1 x bite (2d6) or howl, **THACO** 13 [+6], **MV** 180 (60), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (7), **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 1,650, **NA** 1 (1), **TT** V

- **Surprise:** Cannot be surprised. Has exceptional hearing and sense of smell.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Electricity resistance:** Half damage from electricity-based attacks.
- **Find prey:** 1 mile range. Can automatically detect targets that did not receive new clothes on the most recent Yule Eve.
- **Keen Hearing and Smell:** 3-in-6 chance of tracking creatures through hearing or smell.
- **Howl:** 90-foot-radius. 1 minute duration. Selected creatures within range must

make a **Save versus paralysis** or become frightened (as *cause fear*). A new save can be made at the end of each round. Once a save is made the creature is immune to the Yule Cat's howl for the next 24 hours.

- **Regeneration:** Regains 3 hp per round.
- **Return from death:** If killed (0 hp), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- **Fire and acid:** Cannot regenerate damage from these sources. The only way to permanently kill Jólakötturinn.
- **Pounce:** Can leap up to 60 feet and attack.
- **Disembowelment:** If a target is successfully hit with both claw attacks the same round it automatically takes an additional 4d8 damage by slashing with its hind legs.
- **Seasonal immortality:** If slain, the Yule Cat returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.

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. 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 **normal humans**, but they don their militia



equipment, giving them AC 7 [12] (leather armor), and arm themselves with spears or shortbows. It's up to the GM 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 Döstitg (see **Location 10**), who have grown weary of enduring the Jólásveinar's cruelties and want to fight back. They may also be joined by Jarne 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

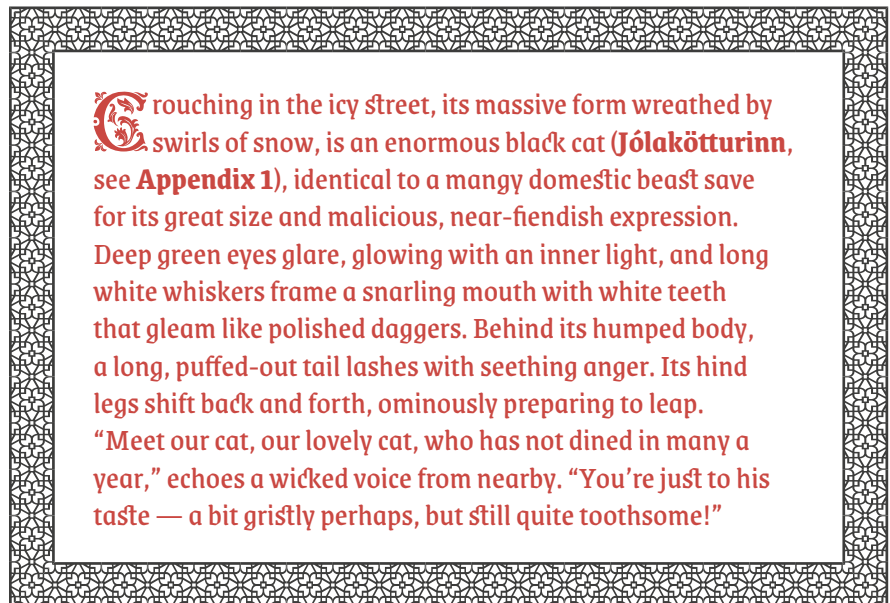
While the fight with the cat continues, the Yule Lads continue to delightedly harass and annoy the party. Spoon-Licker and Gully-Gawk are detached to kidnap the mayor's baby (this happens "off-camera," and the party can't prevent it), and some of the others keep up their various food-stealing and door-slamming 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**, the surviving Yule Lads are present, healed of all damage.

In addition to the lads, the GM 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 the GM's 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 DEX check fall prone. Prone characters suffer a +4 penalty to their AC (−4 AAC), a −4 penalty to melee attack rolls, and cannot make ranged attacks. A prone character takes a full round to stand up, during which time they cannot move but can attack, but attack rolls are made with a −4 penalty.

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



Jólasveinar (Yule Lad)

AC 2 [17], **HD** 5**** (22 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x short bow (1d6) or magic or taunt, **THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 90 (30), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 675, **NA** 1 (1), **TT** V

➤ **Surprise:** On 1–3. Only at night or during snowstorms.

➤ **Hit and run:** Against a target successfully surprised at night or during a snowstorm they can move up to 30 feet immediately after making an attack.

➤ **Immunities:** Unharmed by poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.

➤ **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.

➤ **Magic resistance:** +4 to all saving throws versus magic effects.

➤ **Environmental adaption:** A Yule Lad's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.

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

➤ **Magic powers:** Each can be used twice per day:

a. Dimension door.

b. Dispel magic.

c. Frost ray: 60 feet range. 1d8 cold damage (**save versus wands** for half). If the target's saving throw is unsuccessful their MV is halved for 1 round.

Scratch. Leaping from a roof, doorway, or windowsill, the cat tries to scratch a party member with a THACO 17 [+2] attack, inflicting 1 damage on a hit.

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 **save versus poison**. Anyone who fails this save suffers a –2 on all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks until the end of their next round.

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 DEX check to avoid the swarm. Those who fail their save take 1d4 damage and suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks until they spend a full round doing nothing else besides detaching the angry felines.

d. Hold person.

e. Illusionary image: 60 feet range. 10-minute duration. Can create the image of a creature, object or visual phenomenon no larger than 15 feet in size. The image makes no sound or smell and can be moved from one location to another during the casters turn changing its appearance when doing so. Any creature viewing the image that makes a successful **save versus spells** sees through the image, revealing it to be an illusion.

➤ **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. The target must make a **save versus spells** or become enraged by the sheer audacity and detail of the insult, and focus their attacks upon that Yule Lad.

A creature can make a new saving throw at the beginning of its turn and once successful the target can act normally and cannot be affected by the same Yule Lad's Taunt for 24 hours. However, it can be affected by Taunts from *other* Yule Lads.

➤ **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).

➤ **Individual Abilities:** Each Yule Lad has one or more unique ability. See **Appendix 1: Monsters** for details.

Aftermath: A Child is Missing

The woman is Hónsval'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 brief rest before leaving to recover and resupply. Those who succeed on a CON check can recover a level of Exposure, 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 CON checks 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.

The Yule Cat has fallen. 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 Hónsval, 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 Hónsval, her face streaked with tears and set in a mask of unbearable grief.

"Hónsval!" she cries. "Hónsval! 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 the party.

Read or paraphrase after
the Yule Cat is defeated.

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 Þöðstigg. “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.

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 GMs want to be less harsh, they can add healing potions and other enhancements to the loot taken from foes during the journey to Snow Mountain.

Chapter

Two

To the Mountain

The party sets off toward Snow Mountain, making 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 the mountain is about 18 miles away.

The party can travel at Slow, Normal, or Forced March pace, reaching the mountain in the time given below. 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.

Pace: If going Slow, the party reaches the mountain in about 10 hours, in eight hours if traveling at Normal pace, and if Forced Marching, the destination is reached in six hours. Note that some encounters will increase travel time. The party can travel mounted, but conditions are such that this does not decrease transit time, although it does provide a bonus to Fatigue checks (see next).

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	Remorhaz (7 HD)
12	White dragon

* See **Appendix 1: Monsters**

** Cannot be avoided with DEX checks

Barbegazi (Ice Gnome, mischievous variant)

AC 8 [11], **HD** 2* (9 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 25, **NA** 2d6 (3d6), **TT** C

➤ **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.

➤ **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.

➤ **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.

➤ **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:

a. Chill metal: Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Exposure: Party members who are wearing heavy winter clothing (such as that provided by the villagers) don't need to make CON checks to avoid Exposure. Characters shortsighted enough to shun such clothing need to make +1 CON checks each hour, taking a level of Exposure for each failure.

Fatigue: Even if the party avoids checking for Exposure, there is still a danger of over-exertion if they travel too fast in a hostile environment. If the party is traveling by Forced March, each member must make a +1 CON check each hour, taking a level of Fatigue for each failure. If the party is traveling at Normal pace, the CON checks are made with a –1 bonus. Mounted party members make Fatigue checks with an additional –1 bonus. Fatigue checks are not required if the party is traveling at Slow pace. Fatigue is gained in addition to any levels of Exhaustion already accumulated, or those gained by party members who aren't wearing winter clothing. Each level of Fatigue reduces a character's STR and HP by 1. HP lost to Fatigue can be recovered normally with *cure wounds* spells or healing potions. Each application of *cure serious wounds* or *cure disease* also restores 1 lost point of STR. Characters will have other opportunities to recover from Fatigue later in the adventure. They can also recover 1 level of Fatigue for each hour of rest.

Encounter Chance Per Hour: Roll 1d6 for each hour of travel. If Forced Marching, an encounter occurs on a roll of 1–3; if the party's pace is Normal, the encounter occurs on a 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**.

Detecting Encounters: Unless otherwise noted, party members can make a WIS check (+1 if Forced Marching, +0 if traveling Normal, –1 if traveling Slow) to detect the encounter before it occurs. If the encounter is not detected, creatures attacking the party receive a surprise round.

Avoiding Encounters: If an encounter is detected, it can be avoided if more than half the party succeeds on a DEX check (+1 if Forced Marching, +0 if traveling Normal, –1 if traveling Slow). Encounters such as weather events that can't be avoided with DEX checks are indicated in **Table 1: Encounters**.

Round Effect

1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
4	Freezing. 1d6 damage. Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
5	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Cold to touch.

b. Hold person.

c. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

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**. 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 encounters a deep crevasse, concealed by snow.

- ❄ The party member in the lead has a 1-in-6 (if Forced Marching), 2-in-6 (if traveling at Normal pace) or 3-in-6 (if traveling Slow) chance to detect a deep crevasse hidden by snowfall. If they fail, they must then make a DEX check (–1 if traveling Slow, 0 if traveling at Normal pace, +1 if Forced Marching) to avoid falling into the crevasse.
- ❄ If they do not detect the crevasse and succeed on their save, the next individuals in the party must make the same checks until someone either detects or falls into the crevasse.
- ❄ Those who fall into the crevasse must then make a +2 DEX check. On a failure, the individual falls, taking 3d6 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 STR check, with a penalty of +1 for every 10 feet fallen.
- ❄ If using a rope, the fallen individual can get out with a normal STR check. On a failure, they slip and take another 1 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 DEX checks.
- ❄ 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 WIS roll with a penalty of +1 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 rolls against Exposure and Fatigue.

Barbegazi Elder (Ice Gnome, mischievous variant)

AC 8 [11], **HD** 5** (22 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow, **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 425, **NA** 1 (1d4), **TT** L + T

- **Surprise:** On 1–3. Barbegazi elders apply stealth at every opportunity.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.
- **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:
 - a. Chill metal:** Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Round Effect

Round	Effect
1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin. Freezing. 1d6 damage.
4	Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
5	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Cold to touch.

b. Hold person.

c. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

Frost Giant

AC 4 [15], **HD** 10+1 (46 hp), **Att** 1 × weapon (4d6) or 1 × boulder (3d6), **THACO** 11 [+8], **MV** 120 (40), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10 (10), **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 900, **NA** 1d2 (1d4), **TT** E + 5,000gp

- **Boulder throwing:** Up to 200 feet.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Castle:** High upon snowy mountains.
- **Guardians:** 20% chance of 3d6 polar bears, 6d6 wolves otherwise.

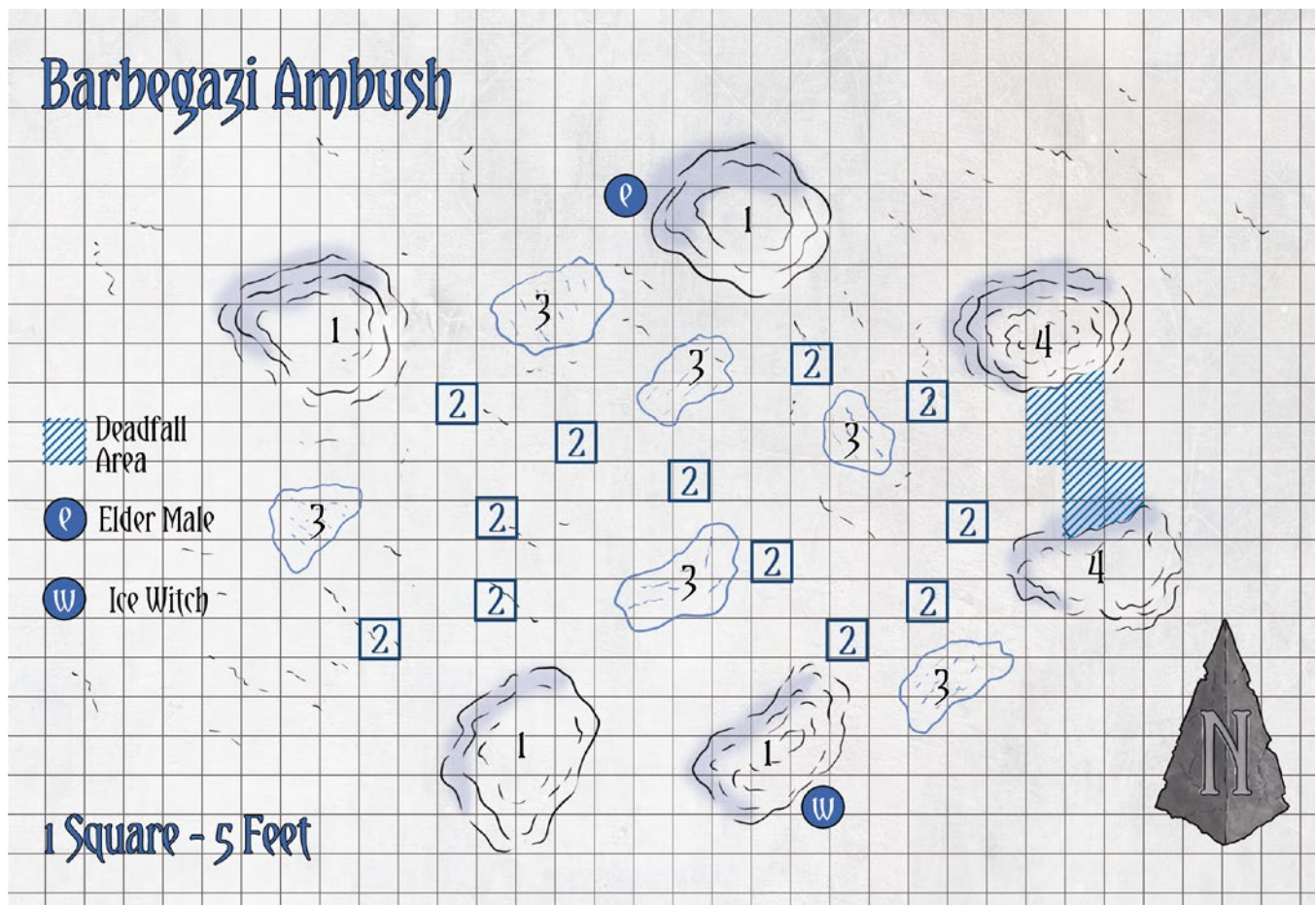
Fixed Encounters

In addition to random encounters, GMs can include some of the following fixed events, each of which increases travel time by one hour. These are optional, however, in case a GM thinks the party is having too easy a time of it, or to enliven the journey with more challenging encounters. These encounters can't be avoided with DEX checks.

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 mastodon-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 *frost ray* when the party is in range. They then swarm down, attacking immobilized or injured party members first.

- ❄ Each party member has a 1-in-6 chance of spotting the hidden barbegazi, but only if the party is traveling at Normal or Slow speed. If they are Forced Marching, the barbegazi automatically attack with surprise.
- ❄ A **barbegazi elder** (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.
- ❄ The barbegazi flee the ambush if half their number are slain, or if both the elder male and the witch are killed.

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 has a 2-in-6 chance of noticing the pit.
- ❄ Anyone who crosses the pit must make **save versus wands** or fall into it, taking 2d6 piercing damage from the icicles.
- ❄ Once they inflict damage, the icicles break and can't cause further damage.
- ❄ A creature can climb out of the pit with a successful STR check if it does nothing else on its round.

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.

- ❄ A character entering a square with an ice patch has a 2-in-6 chance of spotting it before stepping on it.

Barbegazi (Ice Gnome, mischievous variant)

AC 8 [11], **HD** 2* (9 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 25, **NA** 2d6 (3d6), **TT** C

- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.
- **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:
 - a. Chill metal:** Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Barbegazi Ice Witch

AC 8 [11], **HD** 3** (13 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 65, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** T

- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.
- **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.
- **Magic resistance:** +4 to all saving throws versus magical effects.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:
 - a. Chill metal:** Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Round Effect

1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin. Freezing. 1d6 damage.
4	Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
5	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Cold to touch.

b. Hold person.

c. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

Round Effect

1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin. Freezing. 1d6 damage.
4	Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
5	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Cold to touch.

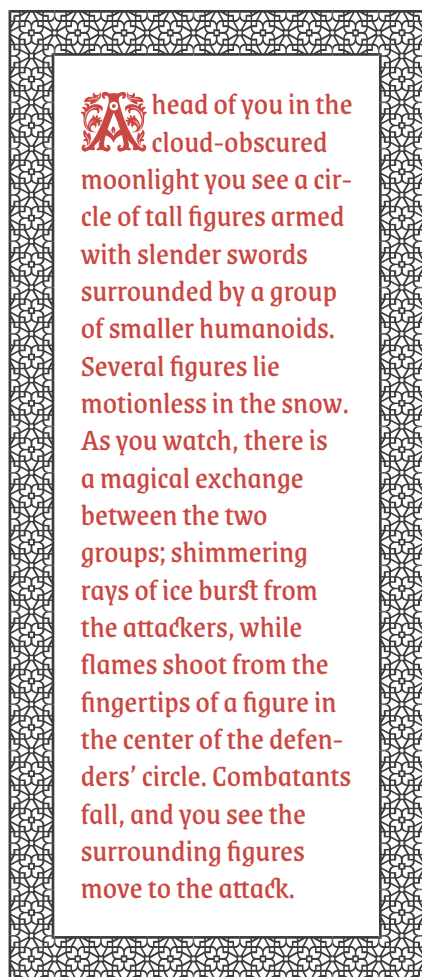
b. Frost ray: 60 feet range. 1d8 cold damage (**save versus wands** for half). If the target's saving throw is unsuccessful their MV is halved for 1 round.

c. Hold person.

d. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

➤ **Spellcaster:** Ice witch's are also able to cast the following spells as a 6th level Magic-user:

1st *magic missile*, *shield*
 2nd *invisibility*, *phantasmal force*
 3rd *dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*



▲
Read or paraphrase
if the party investigates.

Elf

AC 5 [14], **HD** 1+1* (5 hp), **Att** 1 × weapon (1d8 or by weapon), **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 120 (40), **SV** D12 W13 P13 B15 S15 (Elf 1), **ML** 8 (10 with leader), **AL** Neutral, **XP** 19, **NA** 1d4 (2d12), **TT** E

► **Spells:** Each individual has one random 1st level arcane spell.

► **Leader:** Groups of 15+ are led by an elf of level 1d6 + 1. The leader may have magical items: 5% chance per level for each magic item table.

- ❄ Anyone who steps in one of them must succeed on a DEX check or fall prone, losing the rest of their movement for the turn.
- ❄ Prone characters suffer a +4 penalty to their AC (−4 AAC), a −4 penalty to melee attack rolls, and cannot make ranged attacks.
- ❄ A prone character takes a full round to stand up, during which time they cannot move but can attack, but attack rolls are made with a −4 penalty.

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.

- ❄ Anyone entering the marked square has a 2-in-6 chance of spotting the trap before it is triggered.
- ❄ The deadfalls cannot 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.
- ❄ If the traps are not detected, they are sprung when entered, and everyone in the indicated areas of effect must **save versus wands**. A creature who fails is knocked prone and takes 3d6 damage.
- ❄ Prone characters suffer a +4 penalty to their AC (−4 AAC), a −4 penalty to melee attack rolls, and cannot make ranged attacks.
- ❄ A prone character takes a full round to stand up, during which time they cannot move but can attack, but attack rolls are made with a −4 penalty.
- ❄ Movement in the debris-filled areas costs double.

Snow Elves vs. Barbegazi

As they carry on through the snow, 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** and the defenders are 10 **elves** led by Gaela (**noble** with a +1 *sword*) and Mendiran (**acolyte**).
- ❄ 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 *frost ray* attacks remaining, and only five of the barbegazi still have access to their *hold person* ability.
- ❄ 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, up to three *potions of healing*, and up to three doses of enchanted elven wine that removes one level of Exposure or Fatigue (each character can only take one dose of the wine, however) in gratitude. 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: Monsters**), 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 Jólásveinar's description in **Appendix 1: Monsters**, while the Yule Lads are mischievous, often cruel, and sometimes cause physical harm, they also love animals. They raised Jólabbjörn 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. If slain, the bear returns next Yule, but its death saddens the Jólásveinar, possibly even making them reconsider their past behavior.

- ❄ Jólabbjörn 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.
- ❄ While play-fighting, the Yule Bear's attacks inflict only minimal damage.
- ❄ A successful WIS 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, and cause it to stop fighting if asked.
- ❄ If the bear is persuaded to stop fighting, it 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 Jólabbjörn, it continues play-fighting until they inflict at least 8 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.

Barbegazi Elder (Ice Gnome, mischievous variant)

AC 8 [11], **HD** 5** (22 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 425, **NA** 1 (1d4), **TT** L + T

- **Surprise:** On 1–3. Barbegazi elders apply stealth at every opportunity.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.
- **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:
 - a. Chill metal:** Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Jólabbjörn (Yule Bear)

AC 6 [13], **HD** 7 (31 hp), **Att** 2 x claws (1d8), 1 x bite (2d6). **THACO** 13 [+6], **MV** 120 (40), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (7), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 450, **NA** 1 (1), **TT** V

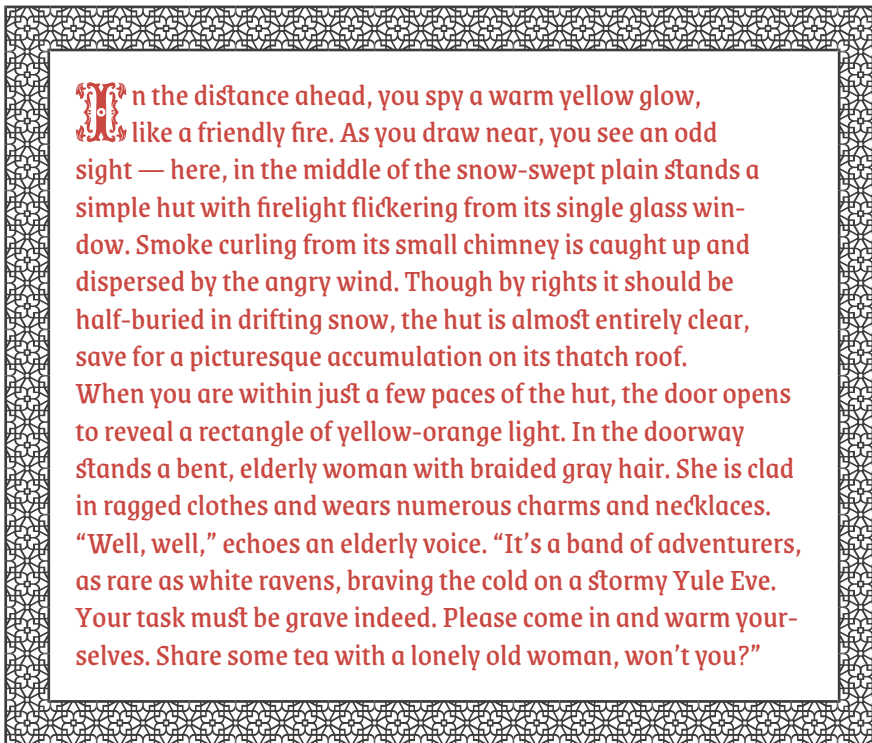
- **Bear hug:** If a victim is hit by both paws in the same round, the bear hugs for an extra 2d8 automatic damage.
- **Sense of smell:** Poor eyesight, but keen sense of smell. When hungry, will follow a track of blood by scent.
- **Bear frenzy:** Jólabbjörn is not slain if reduced to 0 HP. Instead, it enters bear frenzy. While in Bear Frenzy, Jólabbjörn may continue to act normally. At the end of every turn that Jólabbjörn is in Bear Frenzy, it must succeed on a **save versus death** or die.

Round	Effect
1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
4	Freezing. 1d6 damage. Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
5	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Cold to touch.

b. Hold person.

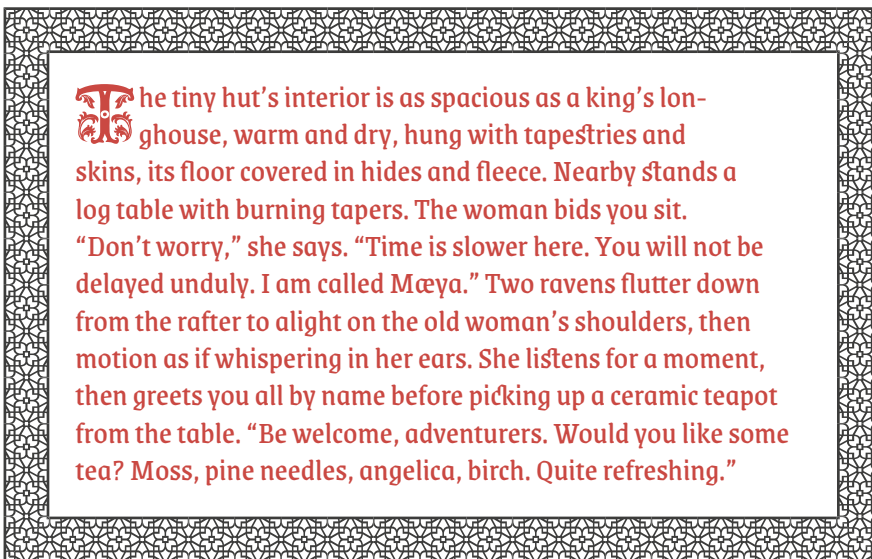
c. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

- **Play-fighting:** Unless it has taken more than 8 points of damage, Jólabbjörn views fighting as more of a game than anything else and seeks to engage its opponents with nibbles and playful hugs. If Play-Fighting, its Claws inflict only 1 point each, its bite and Bear Hug inflict only 2 points each. A character making a successful INT check reveals that the monstrous bear is holding back and not fighting seriously. If it takes more than 8 points of damage, Jólabbjörn first tries to amble off, tired of friends who play too rough, but inflicts full damage if cornered.
- **Seasonal immortality:** If slain, Jólabbjörn returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.



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. Visiting the hut does not cost the party any transit time.
- * 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 both Exposure and Fatigue 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* are inconclusive.
- * A successful INT check suggests only that Mæya 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 midwinter 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.
- ❄️ If attacked, individual lights instantly extinguish themselves, dealing 2d6 damage on their attackers unless they successfully **save versus spells**.
- ❄️ 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.
- ❄️ A Yule Spirit changes to a solid color when it bonds to a character, and the color is different for each spirit.
- ❄️ A bonded Yule Spirit continues to follow the selected character.
- ❄️ A bonded Yule Spirit provides its selected character with a +2 bonus to all CON checks against Exposure, and saving throws against cold-based magic and breath attacks.
- ❄️ A bonded Yule Spirit reduces cold-based damage by 1 per die rolled (a minimum of 1 per die is still inflicted).
- ❄️ Bonded spirits remain with the character and accompanies them past the fae portal to the Dimmuborgir; it departs when the party returns to Cold Corners.
- ❄️ 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 regions.

“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.”

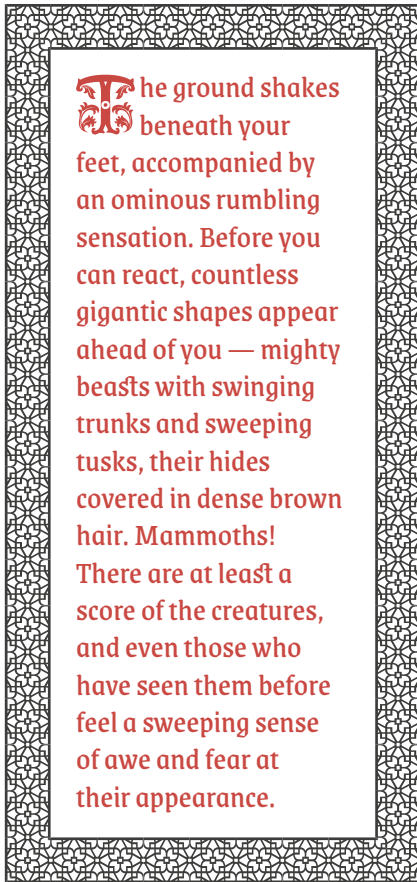
“Now, you have broken the pact and slain the Jólakötturinn and seek to slay Grýla to rescue a lost child. It is a noble quest, and you might even succeed, but if you do kill Grýla or her sons, they and the Jólakötturinn will return next Yule, seeking vengeance and bringing back old dark days. I ask that 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 mastodons draw near.

Mastodon Herd

There are clearly more creatures here than the party can effectively face in combat. Mastodons 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.

- ❄ The herd contains 20 adult **mastodons** and 8 noncombatant calves
- ❄ If the party remains calm and allows the herd to pass, make a group DEX check. If half or more of the party pass the check, the mastodons move on without incident.
- ❄ If more than half fail their DEX checks, the mastodons trumpet in alarm and stampede.
- ❄ If the herd stampedes, each party member must **save versus breath** or suffer 2d10 bludgeoning damage as the mastodons thunder past.
- ❄ If anyone is so foolish as to attack the mastodons, 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.

Mastodon

AC 3 [16], **HD** 15 (67 hp), **Att** 2 × tusk (2d6) or 1 × trample (4d8), **THACO** 9 [+10],
MV 120 (40), **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (8),
ML 8, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 1,350, **NA** 0 (2d8),
TT Tusks

- > **Charge:** In first round of combat, when not in melee. Requires a clear run of at least 20 yards. Tusks inflict double damage.
- > **Trample:** 3-in-4 chance of trampling each round. +4 to hit human-sized or smaller creatures.
- > **Ivory:** 2d4 × 100gp per tusk.

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, and take an additional 1d4 hours to locate the cave, making CON rolls against Exposure as appropriate.

Chapter

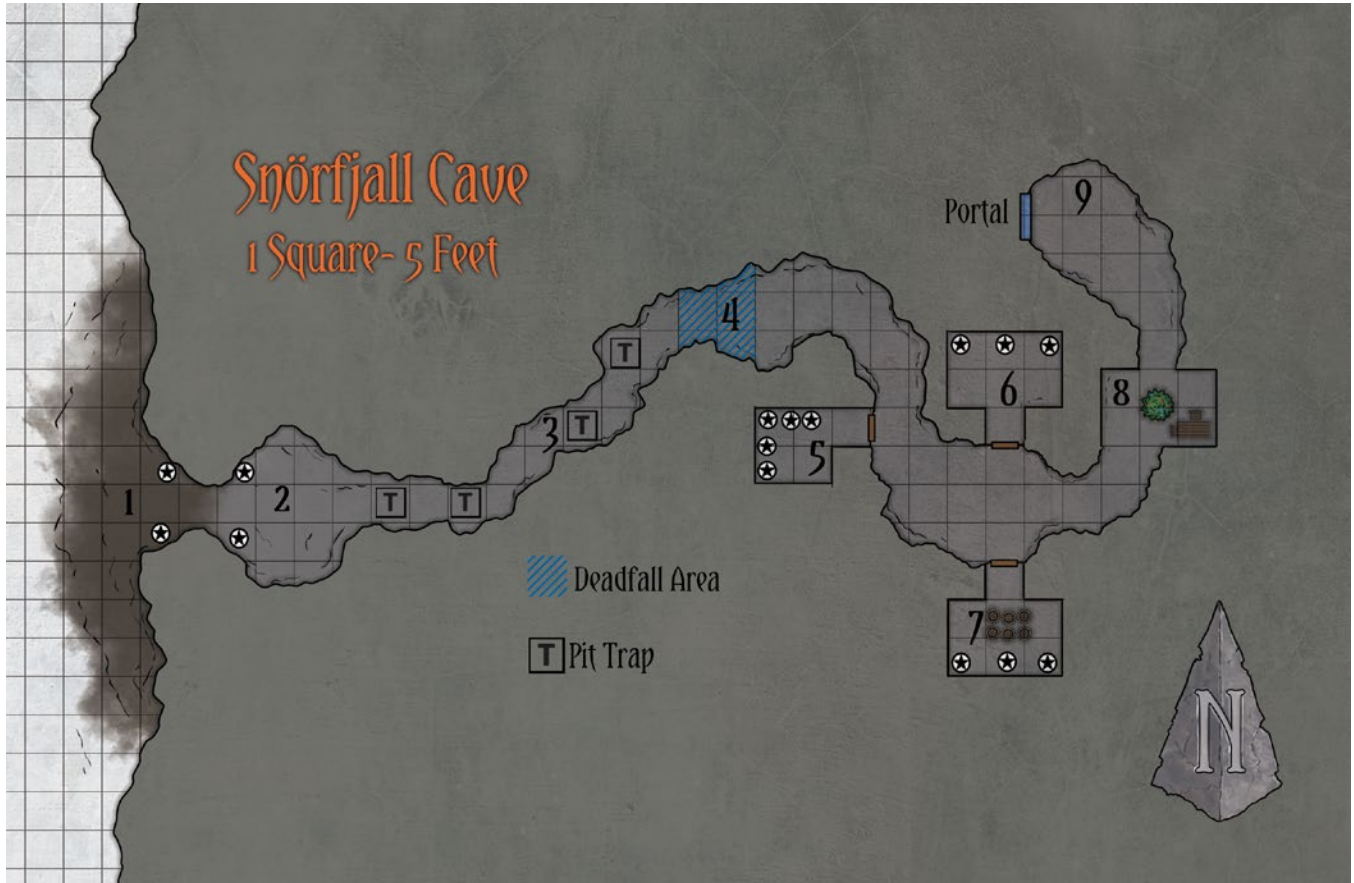
Three

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



Animated Armor

AC 1 [18], **HD** 6* (27 hp), **Att** 2 x slam (1d6), **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 90 (30), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 500, **NA** 0 (1d6), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.
- **Immunities:** Unharmed by gas and poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.
- **Antimagic susceptibility:** If targeted with a *dispel magic* spell will be rendered inert for 1 minute. **Save versus spells** negates.
- **Magical origins:** Often created by powerful wizards and clerics.

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. Doors are unlocked unless otherwise specified.

I. Entrance

A bleak, frozen cave opening yawns ahead. Two statues of soldiers flank the entrance.

Weather: 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.

Statues: If approached within 10 feet, the "soldiers" clank into motion, revealing themselves as **animated armor**, examples of the Yule Lads' craftsmanship.

2. Foyer

A number of **painted wooden panels** hang on the walls of this small chamber. Two **statues** like the ones outside flank a tunnel entrance that leads deeper into the mountain.

Wooden Panels: 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. They are 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.

Statues: 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. The tunnel is rough, its floor strewn with rubble, and the air is chill.

Traps: The tunnel has been set with **pit traps (T)** along its length to discourage intruders. If not detected, anyone in the pit's square falls in, taking 1d6 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.

- ❄ 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 of debris fall must **save versus paralysis**, taking 3d6 damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

5. Guardians

This rectangular chamber appears to have been hewn from the very substance of the mountain. It is empty save for five tall, motionless figures clad in armor.

Guards: Five **málmaður**, or **clockwork guards** (see **Appendix 1: Monsters**) stand idly in this otherwise empty room. These are some of the lads' more sophisticated creations and are more powerful than the clockworks encountered so far.

Reaction: If the party triggers the deadfall at **Area 4**, the **málmaður** activate, exit

Table 2: Pit Features

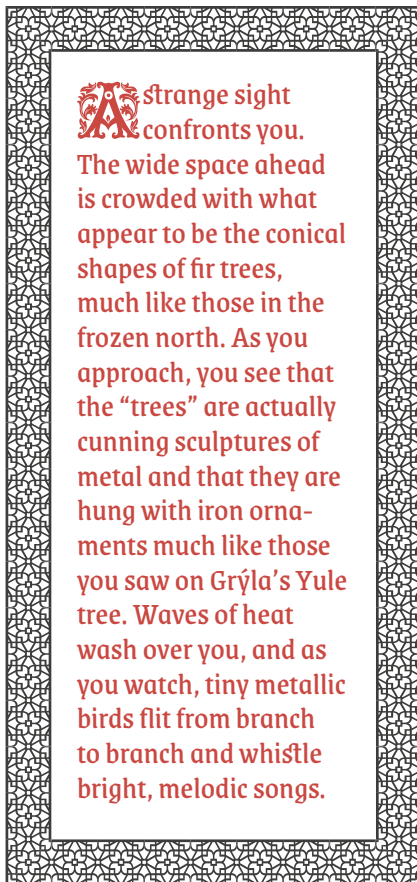
6 Feature

- 1 **Broken crockery:** Victim must **save versus wands** or take 1d6 damage.
- 2 **Garbage, offal, rotting food:** Victim must **save versus poison** or take 1d6 damage and suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws for the next 10 minutes.
- 3 **Icy water:** Victim must **save versus wands** or take 1d6 damage.
- 4 **Used cooking grease:** Victim must **save versus poison** or lose 1d6 points of DEX for the next 1d4 hours, or until they take a full five minutes to remove the grease.
- 5 **Pillows, cushions, and various stuffed toys:** No damage inflicted.
- 6 **Nothing:** Victim takes normal damage for the pit with no additional effects.

Málmaður (Clockwork Guard)

AC 3 [16], **HD** 6** (27 hp), **Att** 2 x long sword (1d8), **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 90 (30), **SV** D10
W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), ML 12, AL Neutral, **XP** 725, **NA** 1 (1), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal object of its type.
- **Immunities:** Unharmed by gas and poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.
- **Anitimagic susceptibility:** If targeted with a *dispel magic* spell will be rendered inert for 1 minute. **Save versus spells** negates.
- **Mimicry:** The clockwork guard can mimic humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful Wisdom check at -4.
- **Language:** Understands Nørsk but speaks only through the use of its Mimicry trait
- **Magical origins:** Often created by powerful wizards and clerics.



A strange sight confronts you. The wide space ahead is crowded with what appear to be the conical shapes of fir trees, much like those in the frozen north. As you approach, you see that the “trees” are actually cunning sculptures of metal and that they are hung with iron ornaments much like those you saw on Grýla’s Yule tree. Waves of heat wash over you, and as you watch, tiny metallic birds flit from branch to branch and whistle bright, melodic songs.

^
Read or paraphrase when the party enters Area 6.

Animated Armor

AC 1 [18], **HD** 6* (27 hp), **Att** 2 x slam (1d6), **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 90 (30), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 500, **NA** 0 (1d6), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.
- **Immunities:** Unharmed by gas and poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.
- **Anitmagic susceptibility:** If targeted with a *dispel magic* spell will be rendered inert for 1 minute. **Save versus spells** negates.
- **Magical origins:** Often created by powerful wizards and clerics.

the room, and move to investigate. If the party doesn’t trigger the deadfall, the guards remain in this room but attack if the unlocked door is opened. The *málmaður* fight until destroyed.

Dialog: The lads have set the clockworks 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?”

6. Decoys

A round, blue-and white painted door opens onto this room.

Trap: A bucket of ice-cold water is rigged above the door to fall on the first person to open it. A successful **save versus wands** avoids the bucket, but on a failure the character is stunned and cannot move, attack, or cast spells for one round.

Guards: Three sets of **animated armor** act immediately after the bucket falls. They are cunning clockwork duplicates of the Yule Lads, and **WIS** check is required in the dim light to see that they are 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.

Contents: 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 contains several barrels of various sizes 12 small casks and six large hogsheads.

Trap: This door also has a bucket of cold water suspended over it in the same fashion as **Room 6**.

Guards: 3 more suits of **animated armor** resembling soldiers attack anyone who enters.

Barrels: The hogsheads contain ale and the casks are filled with brandy. Each of the containers sells for **20 gp** if taken back to the Northlands.

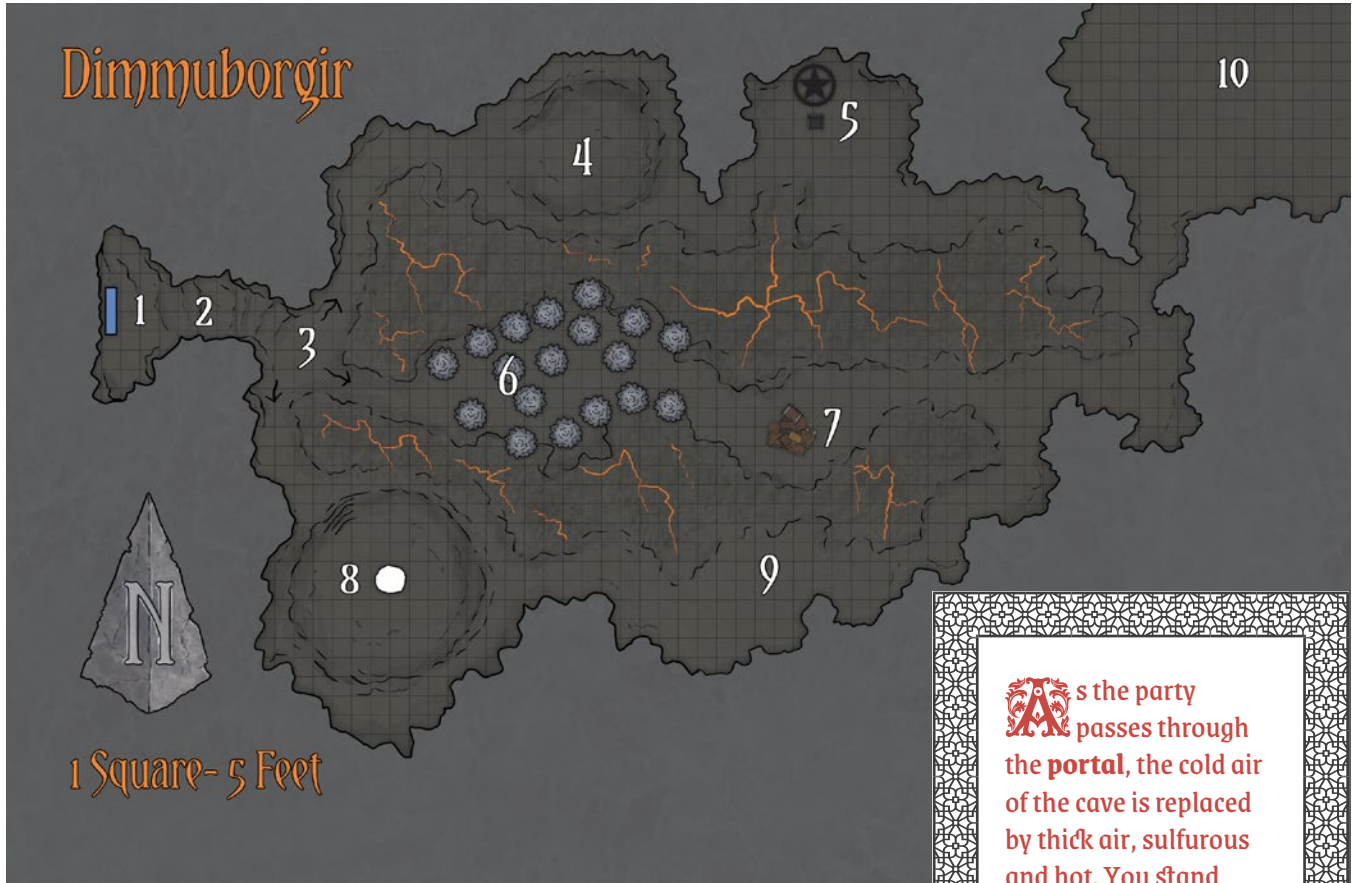
9. Fae Portal

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* on 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



As the party passes through the **portal**, 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 Gryla'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 and the Yule Lads are bound to the region and return here on the following Yuletide if slain, making 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.

Heat: It's currently the hot season. Though uncomfortable, the heat has no immediate effect on the adventurers unless they continue to wear heavy or protective garments intended to protect them from the cold, such as those provided by the villagers.

Read or paraphrase when the party passes through the portal.



If they continue to wear the heavy gear, the adventurers need to make CON checks every hour that they're in the Dimmuborgir or suffer one level of Fatigue. Checks for Exposure are not made while in the Dimmuborgir.

Encounters in the Dimmuborgir

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 the GM feels 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.

Table 3: Dimmuborgir Encounters

Roll	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

- ❄ Each party member takes 1d4 damage and must **save versus wands**.
- ❄ On a failure, the individual is on fire and takes an additional 1d4 damage and must **save versus wands**, continuing to take 1d4 damage for each failure, until they successfully save.

Tremors: Small earthquakes periodically rumble through the area as liquid lava shifts beneath the ground.

- ❄ All party members must **save versus wands** or fall onto a patch of hot or molten rock, taking 1d6 damage.

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 fire resistance*. "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. 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.

Portal: The portal is one-way, and the adventurers can only return via the portal in Grýla's lair (**Area 7N**).

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.

Ground: The ground is hot but not dangerous.

Walls: Individuals who touch the walls with bare skin must **save versus poison** or take 1d4 damage.

3. Split

The path splits here into three directions.

Paths: 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
- ❄️ 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

Several winged reptilian creatures lounge in a shallow depression, soaking up the warmth of the lava and incubating a clutch of eggs. They regard the party warily but seem disinclined to attack.

Fire Drakes: There are six of these creatures (see **Appendix 1: Monsters**).

Avoiding the Drakes: Characters can try to move quickly past the spot with a single DEX or STR check with a +3 penalty, or they can make three normal DEX or STR checks in succession if they wish to move more slowly and cautiously.

Failure: Failing any of these checks indicates that the character slips and falls into the depression and alarms the drakes. A final DEX or STR 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. 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.

Eggs: There is a total of **six eggs** in the nest; they can be sold for **100 gp** each if they are kept intact and warm.

Hrófi, Fire Giant

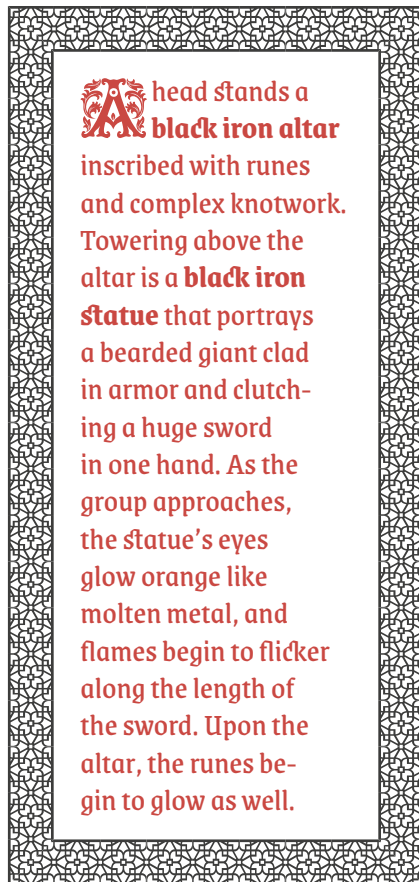
AC 4 [15], **HD** 11+2 (51 hp), **Att** 1 × weapon (5d6) or 1 × boulder (3d6), **THACO** 10 [+9], **MV** 120 (40), **SV** D6 W7 P8 B8 S10 (11), **ML** 9, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 1,100, **NA** 1d2 (1d3), **TT** E + 5,000 gp

- **Boulder throwing:** Up to 200 feet.
- **Fire immunity:** Unharmed by fire.
- **Castle:** Black, low-walled. Made of baked mud and raw iron.
- **Guardians:** 20% chance of 1d3 hydras (**p182**), 3d6 hellhounds (**p180**) otherwise.

Drake, Fire

AC 4 [15], **HD** 4** (18 hp), **Att** 1 x bite (1d6) or breath weapon (2d8), **THACO** 16 [+3], **MV** 90 (30) / 180 (60) flying, **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4), **ML** 8, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 175, **NA** 1 (1d2), **TT** V

- **Breath weapon:** 40-foot-long cone of fire, **Save versus breath** for half. Can be used up to five times per day.
- **Fire immunity:** Unharmed by their own breath weapon or blood and lesser versions thereof. Automatically save versus fire-based spells.
- **Pyrophoric blood:** A fire drake's blood is highly flammable, igniting upon contact with the air. A creature making a successful attack with an edged or pointed weapon (including natural weapons like claws) must make a **save versus breath** or take 1d3 points of damage from the splashing blood.
- **Blood bomb:** Fire drake blood can be sealed in an airtight container and used as a firebomb equal to a burning flask of oil. It can also be used to coat weapons inflicting an additional 1d6 points of fire damage with each hit for 1d4 rounds.
- **Territorial:** Fire drakes are very territorial, and will fight other drakes that move into the area.



^ Fire shrine.

5. Fire Shrine

Statue: A successful INT 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.

Inscription: Those who can read the Nørsk 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 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 INT checks to figure it out.

Shrine: The shrine at the foot of the statue has a **bowl-shaped indentation** at the top that is clearly intended for offerings.

- ❄ 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 are in the Dimmuborgir.
- ❄ Characters 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 (chainmail, plate mail, 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.

Mephit, magma

AC 8 [11], **HD** 3*** (13 hp), **Att** 1 x claws (1d4 + 1d4 fire) or fire breath (2d6), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 90 (30) / 90 (30) flying, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 80, **NA** 1d6 (2d4), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal mound of magma.
- **Immunities:** Immune to poison and fire-based attacks.
- **Cold vulnerability:** Double damage from cold-based attacks.
- **Fire breath:** 15-foot-cone of fire. **Save versus breath** for half.

➤ **Heat metal:** Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Heats metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Round	Effect
1	Warm to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Searing. 1d6 damage.
4	Save versus spells or suffer severe burns.
5	1d3 damage.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Warm to touch.

➤ **Death burst:** 5-foot-radius. Explodes in a burst of magma when killed. All creatures in range take 2d6 fire damage (**save versus breath** for half).

- ❄️ 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** (see **Appendix 1: Monsters**) 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

The wide space ahead is crowded with what appear to be the conical shapes of **fir trees**, much like those in the frozen north. Upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that the “trees” are actually **cunning sculptures of metal** and that they are hung with **iron ornaments** much like those on Grýla’s Yule tree. Waves of heat radiate from the iron forest, and tiny metallic birds flit from branch to branch and whistle bright, melodic songs.

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.

Movement: Rushing through quickly requires three +3 CON checks. The penalty drops to +1 if a character wishes to go more slowly, but five CON checks are required. Each failed CON check inflicts 1d4 damage as the character brushes against the trees or blunders into branches.

Creatures: Roll 1d6 each time a character makes a CON check 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

Result

- 1 A **songbird** flitters across a character’s field of vision, causing them to hesitate. They must succeed on a DEX check or reroll their last successful CON roll and replace the result.
- 2 A **squirrel** chatters and throws a metal pinecone (THACO 17 [+2] attack roll, 1d4 damage).
- 3 A **crow** flies directly into a character’s face. They must succeed on a +1 DEX check or take 1 damage, and reroll their last successful CON check and replace the result.
- 4 A **rabbit** darts between the character’s feet. They must succeed on a +2 DEX or STR check or stumble, taking 1d4 damage as they fall against a tree.
- 5 A **fox** rushes out, takes a bite at a character, then vanishes into the trees (THACO 15 [+4] attack roll, 1d4 + 1 damage).
- 6 A **raven** flies past in a rush of metal wings, pecking at a character as it goes (THACO 14 [+5] attack roll, 1d4 + 2 damage; if the character takes damage, they must reroll their last successful CON check and replace the result).

A 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.

7. Naughty or Nice

Chests and Boxes: 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.



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. TIME OF FORGIVENESS AND FESTIVE ENTERTAINMENT! TO COMPENSATE YOU SOMEWHAT FOR YOUR EFFORTS, AND THE PAINS YOU HAVE SUFFERED BETTING 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, BULLY 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 J LASVEINAR

Table 5: Packages

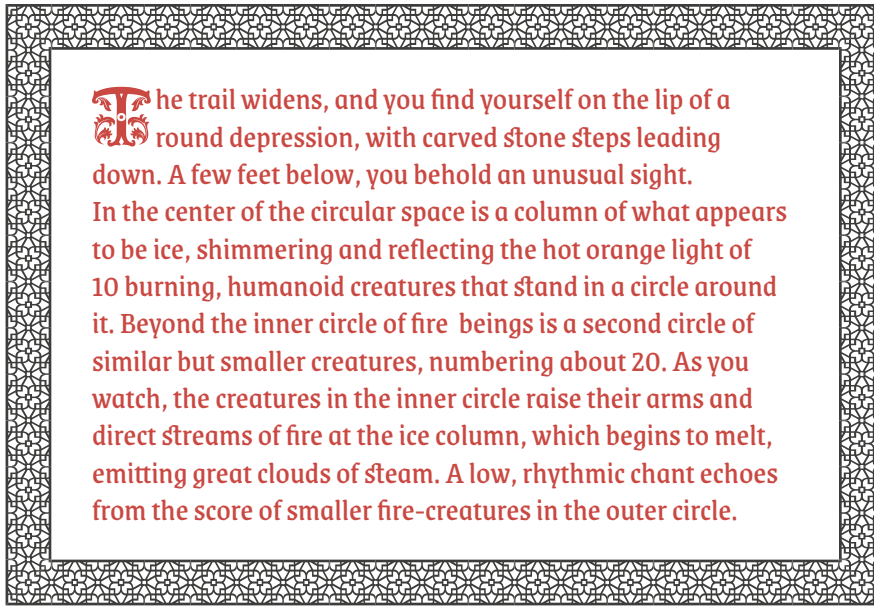


Result

- 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 **save versus wands** or take 2d6 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 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 protection*. 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 an INT 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 **save versus wands** or take 1d6 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 human-sized automaton with the same statistics as a **2 HD Veteran** and faithfully carries out its owner's instructions for one hour before vanishing, or until it is destroyed. 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** (see **Appendix 1: Monsters**) 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.

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 efforts 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. 



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 when the party reaches this location.

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.

Fire Elementals: The 10 creatures in the center are free-willed **lesser fire elementals** called here from the Plane of Fire to solemnly observe the season.

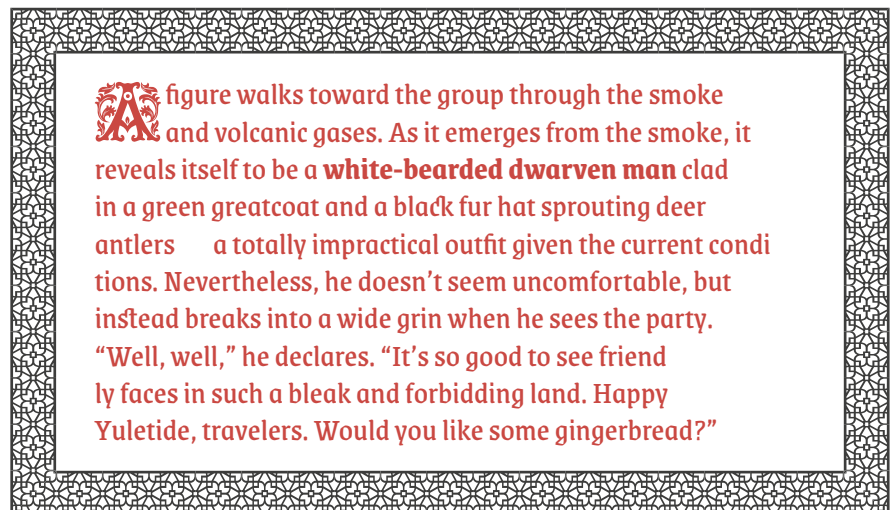
Azer: The elementals were summoned by 20 **azer** (see **Appendix 1: Monsters**) who dwell in the Dimmuborgir.

Ceremony: 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.

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

- ❄️ "You witnessed our sacred midwinter ritual, folk of the Material Plane," says one in thickly accented Common. "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 Exposure suffered by party members are removed. Any not suffering from Exposure are cured of 2d6 points of damage.



A figure walks toward the group through the smoke and volcanic gases. As it emerges from the smoke, it reveals itself 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 the party. "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?"

Read or paraphrase when the party encounters the Whiskey Man. ►

9. The Whiskey Man

The old man is 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.

Father Poga: A successful INT check recalls some of the stories of Father Poga (mountain dwarves make this check with a +4 bonus), 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." (Those who succeeded on their Religion check know that "The Whiskey Man" is another name for Father Poga, confirming their suspicions.)

Gingerbread: 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 a -4 bonus on their next saving throw.

Whiskey: The whiskey is similarly remarkable, as it functions as a spell of *cure disease*, *remove curse*, or *cure serious wounds*, at the GM's discretion, and removes 1 level each of Exposure and Fatigue.

10. Grýla's Lair

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



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.

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.



The family is inside playing with Kasða at **Area 12**, leaving the Yule Lads' clockwork toys to deal with unwanted visitors. Remember that any Yule Lads slain in the village won't be present in the lair but will return for the next Yule.

Windows: All **windows** are made of a dark and particularly tough, glass-like material that is very difficult to break (AC 3 [16], 20 hp).

Entrance: The building is accessible only through the main door at **Area 6**.

Walls: The **walls** are of thick volcanic rock and cannot practically be breached without taking considerable time and force.

Ground: **Rich volcanic soil** lies underfoot.

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.

Wall: Four feet tall.

2. Jólabbjörn'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, **Yule Bear** 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 8 points of damage on it, in which case it lopes away and returns to its hut.

3. The Jólageit

Another **stone wall** surrounds this straw-strewn compound, where **two giant goats** stand, idly chewing on fodder and contemplating the world around them. They look up curiously as the party approaches.

The Jólageit, or Yule Goats (**giant goats** with Seasonal Immortality identical to that of the Jólakötturinn; see **Appendix 1: Monsters**).

Goats: 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 Approaches: If the party comes within 20 feet of the goats, one of them noses the gate open and they charge. Each character has a 1-in-6 chance to see that the goats are opening the gate; otherwise, they charge across the intervening space and madly head-butt with surprise.

Goat, giant

Giant goats can usually be found in the more remote mountains or as herd animals for hill giants

AC 8 [11], **HD** 3 (13 hp), **Att** 1 x ram (2d4),
THACO 17 [+2], **MV** 150 (50), **SV** D12 W13
P14 B15 S16 (3), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 35,
NA 3d6 (5d6), **TT** None

► **Sure-footed:** +4 to a saving throws that would knock it prone.

► **Charge:** In first round of combat, when not in melee. Requires clear run of at least 20 feet. Ram inflicts double damage.

Animated Armor

AC 1 [18], **HD** 6* (27 hp), **Att** 2 x slam (1d6), **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 90 (30), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 500, **NA** 0 (1d6), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.
- **Immunities:** Unharmed by gas and poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.
- **Antimagic susceptibility:** If targeted with a *dispel magic* spell will be rendered inert for 1 minute. **Save versus spells** negates.
- **Magical origins:** Often created by powerful wizards and clerics.

4. Other Pets

This long stone structure houses the other **pets** lovingly cared for by the Yule Lads. There are **six hens, one rooster, and four rabbits**. 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.

Animals: The animals are all mundane creatures, and none are combatants, though they also possess the Seasonal Immortality feature.

Eggs: Large, but have no special effects.

5. Garden

This plot of **rich, volcanic earth** sports numerous **vegetables** — cabbage, leeks, cauliflower, carrots, turnips, and radishes — and a small apple tree. They seem to have been tended with considerable love and care. A clay **kiln** is also located in the garden.

Produce: The fruit and vegetables are normal and quite good if tasted.

Kiln: Made of bricks, about six feet tall, four feet wide.

6. Front Porch

A pair of **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.

Windows: The **windows** can be broken to enter the Common Room (**Area 7**) if all other attempts to enter fail.

Statues: If approached within 10 feet, the “soldiers” clank into motion, revealing themselves as **animated armor**. These are of course more of the Yule Lads’ mechanical creations.

Door: No apparent handle, hinge assembly, or other obvious means of opening. If checked with *detect magic*, the door radiates magical energy.

A successful INT check reveals that the door requires a password to open but doesn’t reveal the password itself.

This password is 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 Nørsk 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 WIS 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** (currently cold) 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**. 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. Light enters through two round windows that flank the front door. Two overhead **chandeliers** crafted from antlers and tusks of various huge beasts hang from the ceiling.

Tables: It's quite obvious that the larger, cruder-looking table is intended for the use of Gryla 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.

Shelves: A closer inspection of the shelves reveals finer-looking **plates** and **eating utensils** smaller than the massive iron implements the trolls use.

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, a round 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**.

Beds: Sized for small creatures, with finely embroidered sheets and pillowcases.

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.

Chest of Drawers: Contain clothes, books, toys, and various knick-knacks. 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 chamber, containing 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.

This workshop is where the Yule Lads toil on their various clockwork creations, works of art, tools, and toys for themselves and their pets.

Contents: The various items in the room can be taken and sold in the Northlands, though the lads will probably take exception to such treatment.

10. Grýla's Room

An unlocked, unadorned round wooden door opens on this chamber, 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. Four mismatched **chests** are set against one wall, and a pair of antler **chandeliers** hangs from the ceiling.

Chests: The **chests** are all locked. Two of the chests contain **clothing**.

Third Chest: The third chest 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. A huge **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.

Searching the Room: It takes about 15 minutes to give the room a moderately thorough search. The search reveals **150 gp** and **500 sp** scattered about, and a *maul of thundering* (+2 polearm, inflicts an additional 1d10 damage on a natural attack roll of 20), Leppalúði's favorite weapon when he's in a mood for fighting — which is rare.

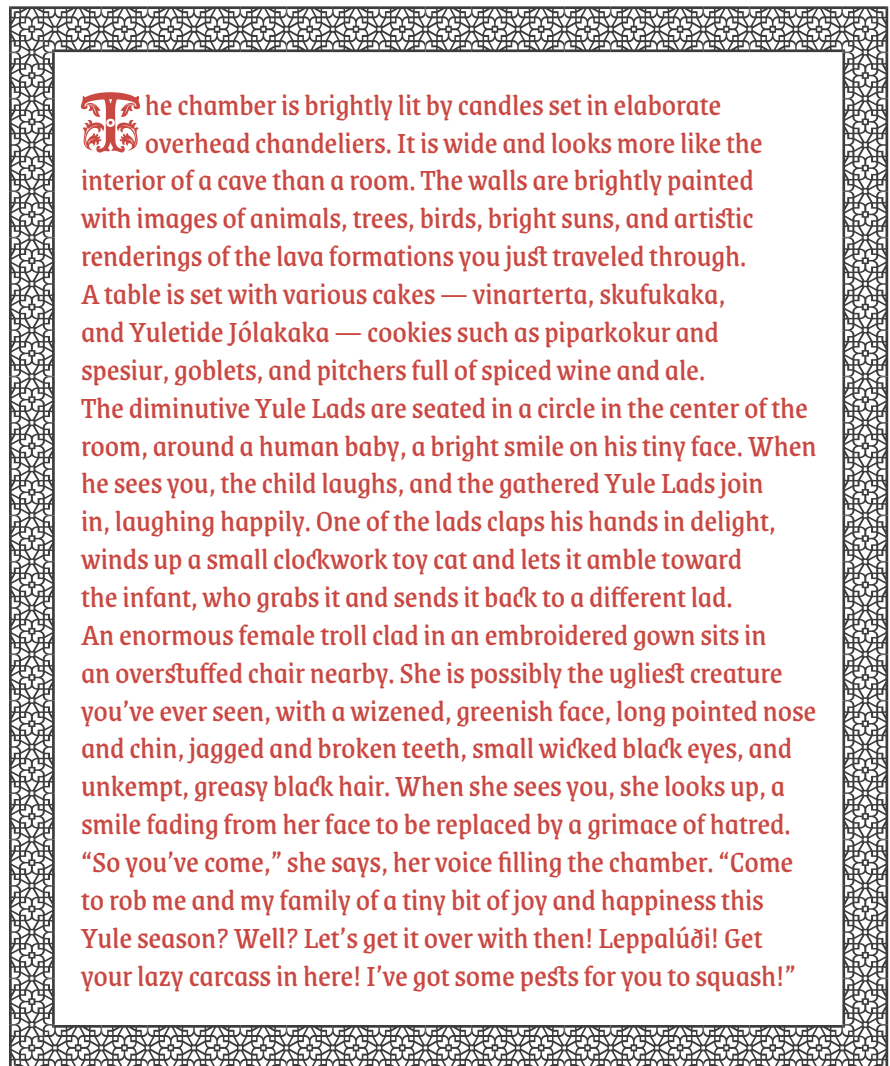
Leppalúði: The big troll sleeps through any searches of his room but awakens if attacked and defends himself. If pressed, Leppalúði tries to make his way to the Nursery (**Area 12**), where he calls on Grýla and the Yule Lads for help. If this happens, some of the Yule Lads call for a truce and try to negotiate, avoiding bloodshed if possible (see **Merriment or Murder?** next for more details on negotiating with Grýla and the lads).

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.

12. Nursery

Sounds: As they approach, the characters hear chuckles and peals of childish laughter echoing from the nursery. The GM may describe the sounds as “cruel laughter” and “shrieks of terror” if desired.

Any Yule Lads killed in the battle at Cold Corners will not be in the group, and the others will express vague annoyance at their absence, though they know their brothers will be back next Yuletide (they've been through this before, after all). Adjust the number of lads that the group needs to convince during negotiations accordingly.



Read or paraphrase when the party enters the room.

Leppalúði, Troll

AC 4 [15], **HD** 6+3* (30 hp), **Att** 2 × talon (1d6), 1 × bite (1d10), **THACO** 13 [+6], **MV** 120 (40), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), **ML** 10 (8 fear of fire), **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 650, **NA** 1d8 (1d8), **TT** D

► **Regeneration:** 3 rounds after being damaged, start regaining 3 hp per round. Severed limbs reattach.

- **Return from death:** If killed (0 hp), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- **Fire and acid:** Cannot regenerate damage from these sources. The only way to permanently kill a troll.
- **Fear of fire:** Morale 8 when attacked with fire or acid.

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 Norsk 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?** next 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.

Supplies: The room contains enough **food, beer,** and other **consumables** to easily get Cold Corners through the winter and beyond. There are also mundane **tools, weapons, armor,** and items of **clothing;** the exact items are up to the GM.

Treasure: 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 **spell scrolls** (one with *polymorph self* and *clairvoyance*, and one with *hold person, invisibility* and *web*), a +1 *battleaxe*, *oil of slipperiness*, *peript of proof against poison*, and a set of +1 *plate armor*.

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 the GM 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

This room contains another shimmering **portal** like that used by the party to reach the Dimmuborgir.

This one-way portal provides 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 Jólásveinar 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 the GM wishes 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 Jólásveina. 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, the GM 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 the GM determines 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.

A single spokesperson should speak for the party, and make WIS checks as they address each Yule Lad. The GM can apply bonuses or penalties to these rolls, depending upon the various lads' moods, or the persuasiveness of the party's arguments (bonuses for reasonable, thoughtful arguments, penalties for threats or similar conduct). Each success convinces one of the lads to let Kasða return home. If the GM doesn't want to make 13 successive ability checks, just roll 1d12 to determine how many lads are initially convinced (minus any Yule Lads who fell at Cold Corners).

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.

“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...

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, making more WIS checks against the skeptical lads.

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 WIS check reveals this, but Grýla keeps her true feelings well hidden.

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!” a lad declares. “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 below.

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 the following, 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 one more round of WIS checks against the holdouts, but with a +1 to +3 penalty. 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.

If the party discussed their meeting with Father Poga in the lava fields, 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."

Gleðileg 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 1,000gp 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**.

You stand on a low, snowy rise as the sun peeks 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 Jólaveinar 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 Hánsval rush forward, tears streaming down their faces. As the Yule Lads hand the baby over to his mother, Hánsval 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.

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, Gryla's cakes and cookies are 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 Gunborg'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 Gryla's family and the villagers. In the coming years, the Yule Lads change their behavior to be a bit more generous and less meanspirited, 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 joyful 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 as 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!

A p p e n d i x

O n e

M on s t e r s

Animated Armor

Lumbering suits of empty armor animated by powerful magic that are often used as guardians. Although unintelligent they have been known to be enchanted so that they are able to utter scripted speech, demand passwords or even appear to hold conversations.

AC 1 [18], **HD** 6* (27 hp), **Att** 2 x slam (1d6), **THACO** 14 [+5], **MV** 90 (30), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6), **ML** 12, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 500, **NA** 0 (1d6), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.
- **Immunities:** Unharmed by gas and poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.
- **Anitmagic susceptibility:** If targeted with a *dispel magic* spell will be rendered inert for 1 minute. **Save versus spells** negates.
- **Magical origins:** Often created by powerful wizards and clerics.

Azer

Azers are dwarflike beings native to the Elemental Plane of Fire. They wear kilts of brass, bronze, or copper, and bear broad-headed spears or well-crafted hammers in combat.

AC 2 [17]; **HD** 2* (9 hp); **Att** 1 x by weapon (1d6 + 1) or 1 x grasp (1d4 + 1); **THACO** 18 [+1]; **MV** 120/40; **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2); **ML** 8; **AL** Lawful; **XP** 25; **NA** 1d4 (3d10); **TT** Q

- **Fire immunity:** Unharmed by fire-based attacks.
- **Leader:** Groups of 20+ are led by an azer sergeant with 3 HD (14 hp) or a leader with 5 HD (23 hp).

Barbegazi (Ice Gnome, mischievous variant)

AC 8 [11], **HD** 2* (9 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow), **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 25, **NA** 2d6 (3d6), **TT** C

- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.
- **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:

a. Chill metal: Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Round	Effect
1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
4	Freezing. 1d6 damage.
5	Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
6	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
7	1d3 damage.
8	Cold to touch.

b. Hold person.

c. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

Barbegazi Elder (Ice Gnome, mischievous variant)

AC 8 [11], **HD** 5** (22 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 15 [+4], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow), **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5), **ML** 10, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 425, **NA** 1 (1d4), **TT** L + T

- **Surprise:** On 1–3. Barbegazi elders apply stealth at every opportunity.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.
- **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:

a. Chill metal: Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Round	Effect
1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
4	Freezing. 1d6 damage.
5	Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
6	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
7	1d3 damage.
8	Cold to touch.

b. Hold person.

c. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

Barbegazi Ice Witch

AC 8 [11], **HD** 3** (13 hp), **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x dagger (1d4) or magic, **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 90 (30) / (60 (20) burrow, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2), **ML** 7, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 65, **NA** 1d4 (1d4), **TT** T

➤ **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.

➤ **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.

➤ **Environmental adaption:** A barbegazi's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.

➤ **Magic resistance:** +4 to all saving throws versus magical effects.

➤ **Magic powers:** Each can be used once per day:

a. Chill metal: Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Chills metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Round	Effect
1	Cold to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
4	Freezing. 1d6 damage. Save versus spells or suffer severe frost bite.
5	1d3 damage. Items stick to exposed skin.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Cold to touch.

b. Frost ray: 60 feet range. 1d8 cold damage (**save versus wands** for half). If the target's saving throw is unsuccessful their MV is halved for 1 round.

c. Hold person.

d. Ice shards: 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide cone of ice shards. 1d3 + 4 cold damage, **Save versus spells** for half.

➤ **Spellcaster:** Ice witch's are also able to cast the following spells as a 6th level Magic-user:

1st *magic missile, shield*

2nd *invisibility, phantasmal force*

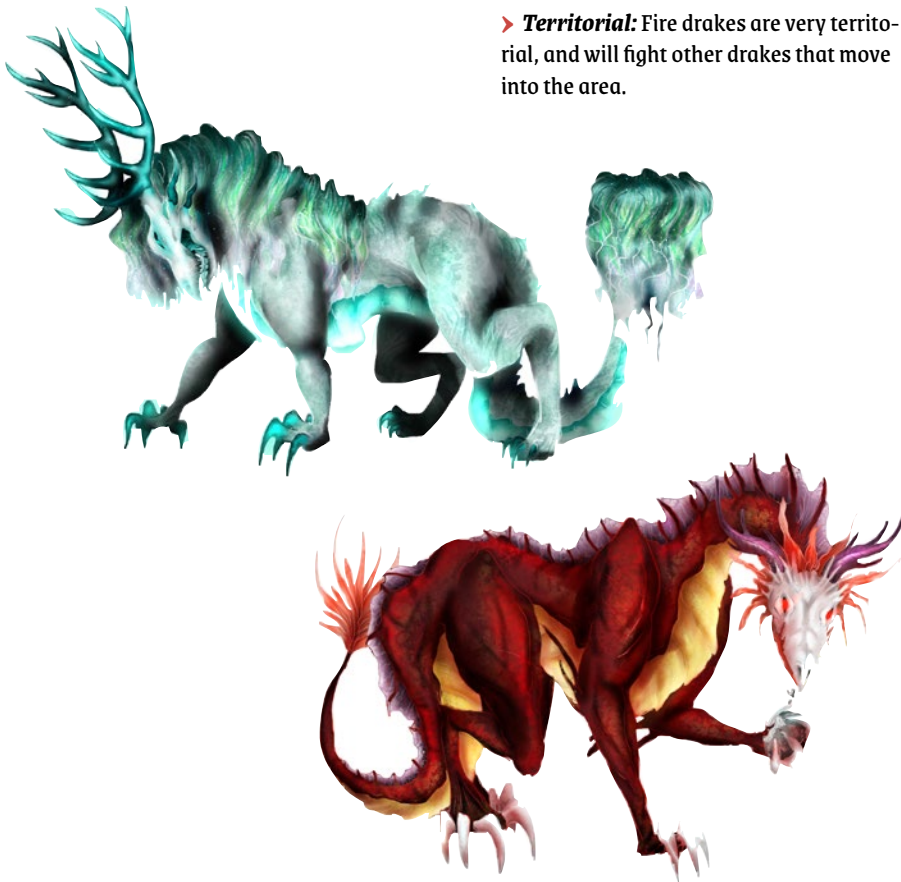
3rd *dispel magic, lightning bolt*



Drake, Fire

AC 4 [15]; **HD** 4** (18 hp); **Att** 1 x bite (1d6) or breath weapon (2d8); **THACO** 16 [+3]; **MV** 90/30, 180/60 flying; **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (4); **ML** 8; **AL** Neutral; **XP** 175; **NA** 1 (1d2); **TT** V

- **Breath weapon:** 40 ft. long cone of fire,
- **Save vs. breath** for half. Can be used up to five times per day.
- **Fire immunity:** Unharmed by their own breath weapon or blood and lesser versions thereof. Automatically saves versus fire based spells.
- **Pyrophoric blood:** A fire drake's blood is highly flammable, igniting upon contact with the air. A creature making a successful attack with an edged or pointed weapon (including natural weapons like claws) must make a **save vs. breath** or take 1d3 points of damage from the splashing blood.
- **Blood bomb:** Fire drake blood can be sealed in an airtight container and used as a firebomb equal to a burning flask of oil. It can also be used to coat weapons inflicting an additional 1d6 points of fire damage with each hit for 1d4 rounds.
- **Territorial:** Fire drakes are very territorial, and will fight other drakes that move into the area.



Drake, Ice (frostblood variant)

AC 1 [18]; **HD** 3**** (13 hp); **Att** 2 x claws (1d4); 1 x bite (1d6) or breath weapon (2d8); **THACO** 17 [+2]; **MV** 90/30, 180/60 flying; **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3); **ML** 8; **AL** Neutral; **XP** 95; **NA** 1 (1d4); **TT** V

- **Breath weapon:** 40 ft. long cone of freezing air, **Save vs. breath** for half. Can be used up to five times per day.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by their own breath weapon and lesser versions thereof. Automatically saves versus cold based spells.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used twice per day:
 - a. **Cause fear.**
 - b. **Sleep.**
- **Fire vulnerability:** Takes double damage from fire-based attacks.
- **Magic resistance:** +8 on saving throws versus magical effects.
- **Alternate form:** Twice per day: Assume the shape of a young white dragon as a standard action. It can remain in this shape for up to 2 hours and gains the statistics of a 6 HD (27 hp) white dragon. It retains its own ability to cast spells, loses its own breath weapon and does not gain the white dragon's breath weapon.
- **Blood bomb:** Ice drake blood can be sealed in an airtight container and used as a bomb inflicting cold damage equal to a burning flask of oil. It can also be used to coat weapons inflicting an additional 1d6 points of cold damage with each hit for 1d4 rounds.

Goat, giant

Giant goats can usually be found in the more remote mountains or as herd animals for hill giants

AC 8 [11]; **HD** 3 (13 hp); **Att** 1 x ram (2d4); **THACO** 17 [+2]; **MV** 150/50; **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3); **ML** 9; **AL** Neutral; **XP** 35; **NA** 3d6 (5d6); **TT** None

- **Sure-footed:** +4 to saving throws against being knocked prone.
- **Charge:** In first round of combat, when not in melee. Requires clear run of at least 20 ft., ram inflicts double damage.

Grýla

AC 3 [16]; **HD** 6+3** (30 hp); **Att** 2 x claws (2d6); 1 x bite (1d6); **THACO** 13 [+6]; **MV** 120/40; **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6); **ML** 10; **AL** Chaotic; **XP** 950; **NA** 1 (1); **TT** V

- **Magic resistance:** +4 to all saving throws versus magical effects.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Keen smell:** 3-in-6 chance of tracking creatures through smell.
- **Irritable:** Has a 2-in-6 chance of attacking a creature that inflicted damage to it the previous round. 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 the round.
- **Regeneration:** 3 rounds after being damaged, start regaining 3 hp per round. Severed limbs reattach.
- **Return from death:** If killed (0 hp), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- **Fire and acid:** Cannot regenerate damage from these sources. The only way to permanently kill Grýla.
- **Seasonal immortality:** If slain, Grýla returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.

Jólaljörnn (Yule Bear)

AC 6 [13]; **HD** 7 (31 hp); **Att** 2 x claws (1d8); 1 x bite (2d6); **THACO** 13 [+6]; **MV** 120/40; **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (7); **ML** 9; **AL** Neutral; **XP** 450; **NA** 1 (1); **TT** V

- **Bear hug:** If a victim is hit by both paws in the same round, the bear hugs for an extra 2d8 automatic damage.
- **Sense of smell:** Poor eyesight, but keen sense of smell. When hungry, will follow a track of blood by scent.
- **Bear frenzy:** Jólaljörnn is not slain if reduced to 0 hp. Instead, it enters bear frenzy. While in Bear Frenzy, Jólaljörnn may continue to act normally. At the end of every turn that Jólaljörnn is in Bear Frenzy, it must succeed on a **save vs. death** or die.
- **Play-fighting:** Unless it has taken more than 8 points of damage, Jólaljörnn views fighting as more of a game than anything else and seeks to engage its opponents with

nibbles and playful hugs. If Play-Fighting, its Claws inflict only 1 point each, its bite and Bear Hug inflict only 2 points each. A character making a successful INT check reveals that the monstrous bear is holding back and not fighting seriously. If it takes more than 8 points of damage, Jólaljörnn first tries to amble off, tired of friends who play too rough, but inflicts full damage if cornered.

- **Seasonal immortality:** If slain, Jólaljörnn returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.

Jólakötturinn (Yule Cat)

AC 4 [15]; **HD** 7*** (31 hp); **Att** 2 x claws (2d8); 1 x bite (2d6) or howl; **THACO** 13 [+6]; **MV** 180/60; **SV** D8 W9 P10 B10 S12 (7); **ML** 9; **AL** Chaotic; **XP** 1,650; **NA** 1 (1); **TT** V

- **Surprise:** Cannot be surprised. Has exceptional hearing and sense of smell.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Electricity resistance:** Half damage from electricity-based attacks.
- **Find prey:** 1 mile range. Can automatically detect targets that did not receive new clothes on the most recent Yule Eve.
- **Keen Hearing and Smell:** 3-in-6 chance of tracking creatures through hearing or smell.
- **Howl:** 90 ft. radius. 1 minute duration. Selected creatures within range must make a **Save vs. paralysis** or become frightened (as *cause fear*). A new save can be made at the end of each round. Once a save is made the creature is immune to the Yule Cat's howl for the next 24 hours.
- **Regeneration:** Regains 3 hp per round.
- **Return from death:** If killed (0 hp), will regenerate and fight again in 2d6 rounds.
- **Fire and acid:** Cannot regenerate damage from these sources. The only way to permanently kill Jólakötturinn.
- **Pounce:** Can leap up to 60 ft. and attack.
- **Disembowelment:** If a target is successfully hit with both claw attacks the same round it automatically takes an additional 4d8 damage by slashing with its hind legs.
- **Seasonal immortality:** If slain, the Yule Cat returns at full health and hit points on the following Yule Eve.





Þólasveinar (Yule Lad)

AC 2 [17]; **HD** 5**** (22 hp); **Att** 1 x short sword (1d6) or 1 x short bow (1d6) or magic or taunt; **THACO** 15 [+4]; **MV** 90/30; **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (5); **ML** 10; **AL** Chaotic; **XP** 675; **NA** 1 (1); **TT** V

- **Surprise:** On 1–3. Only at night or during snowstorms.
- **Hit and run:** Against a target successfully surprised at night or during a snowstorm they can move up to 30 ft. immediately after making an attack.
- **Immunities:** Unharmed by poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.
- **Cold immunity:** Unharmed by cold-based attacks.
- **Magic resistance:** +4 to all saving throws versus magical effects.
- **Environmental adaption:** A Yule Lad's movement is unaffected by snow and ice.
- **Traceless Passage:** While walking in snow, the Yule Lads leave no footprints or other signs of their passage and can't be tracked.
- **Magic powers:** Each can be used twice per day:
 - a. **Dimension door.**
 - b. **Dispel magic.**
 - c. **Frost ray:** 60 ft. range. 1d8 cold damage (*save vs. wands* for half). If the target's saving throw is unsuccessful their MV is halved for 1 round.

d. **Hold person.**

e. **Illusionary image:** 60 ft. range. 10 minute duration. Can create the image of a creature, object or visual phenomenon no larger than 15 ft. in size. The image makes no sound or smell and can be moved from one location to another during the casters turn changing its appearance when doing so. Any creature viewing the image that makes a successful **save vs. spells** sees through the image, revealing it to be an illusion.

➤ **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. The target must make a **save vs. spells** or become enraged by the sheer audacity and detail of the insult, and focus their attacks upon that Yule Lad.

A creature can make a new saving throw at the beginning of its turn and once successful the target can act normally and cannot be affected by the same Yule Lad's Taunt for 24 hours. However, it can be affected by Taunts from *other* Yule Lads.

➤ **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).

The 13 Jólasveinar

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

Stekkjárstaur (Sheep-Cote-Clod, Sheep-Worrier). Sheep-Worrier is hampered by his unbending peg-leg; his MV is 60/20.

➤ **Charm animal:** Three times per day. As *charm person* but only works on animals. Sheep-Worrier 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 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.

➤ **Thief skills:** Hide in Shadows: 30%, Move Silently: 40%, Pick Pockets: 40%.

Stúfur (Stubby). Little Stubby is even shorter than his brothers and likes the greasy remains found at the bottom of pans. His AC is 0 [19] due to his small stature.

Dvörusleikir (Spoon-Licker). Thin and frail due to a diet derived almost entirely from licking stolen spoons, Dvörusleikir only has 15 hp.

➤ **Grasping hand:** 30 ft. range. Three times per day. 1 minute duration. Can create a ghostly hand able to manipulate objects or carry up to 10 pounds as long as it remains within range. Spoon-Licker uses this power 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 40 hp and gains an additional +4 to **save vs. poison** checks.

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 an additional +4 to **save vs. wands** and **save vs. breath** checks.

Hurðaskellir (Door-Slammer). Prone to the fairly childish practice of waking or frightening families in the night by slamming doors and cupboards, Hurðaskellir is THAC0 11 [+8] and +3 damage with his short sword and gains +4 to **save vs. death** checks.

Skyrgámur (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 is THAC0 12 [+7] with his short bow and gains an additional +2 to **save vs. wands** and **save vs. breath** checks.

Gluggagægir (Window-Peeper). Gluggagægir sneaks through the streets, checking out windows to find unattended food and trinkets to steal.

➤ **Thief skills:** Hide in Shadows: 30%, Move Silently: 40%, Pick Pockets: 40%.

Gáttaþefur (Door-Sniffer). Gáttaþefur is possessed of an outstanding sense of smell.

➤ **Scent:** Can detect creatures within 60 ft., 120 ft. if downwind.

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 *shortsword* +2.

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 MV of 150/50.

➤ **Flee!!:** MV increases to 300/100 for 4 rounds.



Magmin

Fire elemental spirits bound into small humanoid creatures formed from magma that take delight in setting fires and burning down everything they can see.

AC 5 [14]; **HD** 2** (9 hp); **Att** 1 x burning touch (2d6 fire); **THACO** 18 [+1]; **MV** 120/40; **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (2); **ML** 9; **AL** Chaotic; **XP** 30; **NA** 1d6 (2d4); **TT** None

- **Mundane damage immunity:** Can only be harmed by magical attacks.
- **Fire immunity:** Immune to fire-based attacks.
- **Illuminate:** Can ignite themselves to cast a bright light within a 20 ft. radius.
- **Death burst:** 10 ft. radius. Explodes in a burst of fire and magma when killed. All creatures in range take 2d6 fire damage (**save vs. breath** for half).

Málmadur (Clockwork Guard)

AC 3 [16]; **HD** 6** (27 hp); **Att** 2 x long sword (1d8); **THACO** 14 [+5]; **MV** 90/30; **SV** D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (6); **ML** 12; **AL** Neutral; **XP** 725; **NA** 1 (1); **TT** None

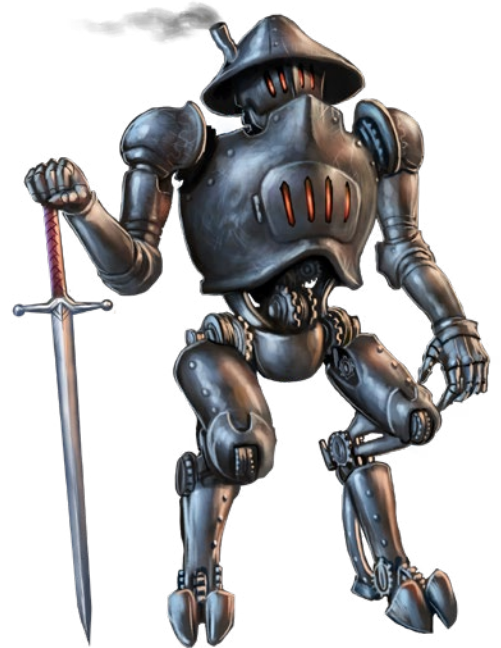
- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal object of its type.
- **Immunities:** Unharmed by gas and poison; unaffected by *charm*, *hold*, and *sleep* spells.
- **Anitmagic susceptibility:** If targeted by a *dispel magic* spell will be rendered inert for 1 minute. **Save vs. spells** negates.
- **Mimicry:** The clockwork guard can mimic humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful Wisdom check at –4.
- **Language:** Understands Nørsk but speaks only through the use of its mimicry trait.
- **Magical origins:** Often created by powerful wizards and clerics.

Mephit, ice

Small imp-like creatures from the elemental planes comprised of air and water standing around 3 feet tall. They are unfriendly and cruel creatures that delight in tormenting others.

AC 8 [11]; **HD** 3*** (13 hp); **Att** 1 x claws (1d4 + 1d4 cold) or frost breath (2d4); **THACO** 17 [+2]; **MV** 90/30, 90/30 flying; **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3); **ML** 8; **AL** Chaotic; **XP** 80; **NA** 1d6 (2d4); **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal shard of ice.
- **Immunities:** Immune to poison and cold-based attacks.
- **Vulnerabilities:** Double damage from fire-based and bludgeoning weapons attacks.
- **Frost breath:** 15 ft. cone of cold air. **Save vs. breath** for half.
- **Fog cloud:** 120 ft. range. 20 ft. radius cloud. 1 hour duration. Creates a cloud of fog that heavily obscures the vision of any creature in the area.
- **Death burst:** 5 ft. radius. Explodes in a burst of jagged ice when killed. All creatures in range take 1d8 cold damage (**save vs. breath** for half).



Mephit, magma

AC 8 [11], **HD** 3*** (13 hp), **Att** 1 x claws (1d4 + 1d4 fire) or fire breath (2d6), **THACO** 17 [+2], **MV** 90 (30) / 90 (30) flying, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 80, **NA** 1d6 (2d4), **TT** None

- **Surprise:** On 1–4. Until it moves, is indistinguishable from a normal mound of magma.
- **Immunities:** Immune to poison and fire-based attacks.
- **Cold vulnerability:** Double damage from cold-based attacks.
- **Fire breath:** 15-foot-cone of fire. **Save versus breath** for half.
- **Heat metal:** Range 30 feet, duration 7 rounds. Heats metal items of one target over a number of rounds. Items dropped/removed no longer cause damage.

Round	Effect
1	Warm to touch.
2	1d3 damage.
3	1d3 damage.
4	Searing. 1d6 damage. Save versus spells or suffer severe burns.
5	1d3 damage.
6	1d3 damage.
7	Warm to touch.

- **Death burst:** 5-foot-radius. Explodes in a burst of magma when killed. All creatures in range take 2d6 fire damage (**save versus breath** for half).

A p p e n d i x

T w o

The Yule Cat

Jólakötturinn

By Jóhannes úr Kötlum
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Þið kannizt við jólaköttinn
— sá köttur var gridarstór.
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 flik
þeim fullorðnu hjá.

Og er kveikt var á jólakvöldið
og kötturinn gægðist 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 flikina 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 hafði nú kannske í huga
að hjálpa, ef þörf verður á.
— Máske enn finnist einhver börn
sem ekkert fá.

Máske, að leitin að þeim sem líða
af ljósskortri 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 OSE adventure for characters of level 4–6.

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
PARTY LEVEL	1-3	4-6	7-10	11-12	13+			
PLAY EMPHASIS	40% SOCIAL		20% EXPLORATION		40% COMBAT			
GM PREPARATION	LOW		MEDIUM		HIGH			
DIFFICULTY TO RUN	EASY		MEDIUM		HARD			
PLAY TIME	1H	6-8 HOURS				4000+H		

Beware the Yule Cat
OSR PDF

ISBN 978-1-6656-0513-7



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