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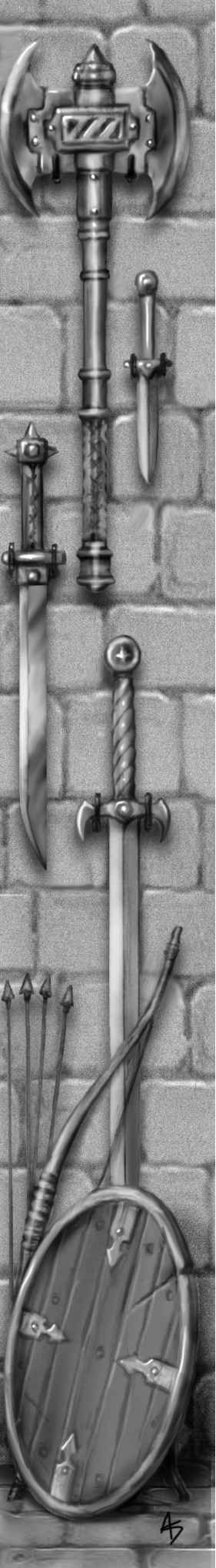
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THE MINI
SLAYER'S
GUIDE
TO

WINTER WOLVES



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The Mini Slayer's Guide To Winter Wolves

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INTRODUCTION

Winter wolves are the terror of the tundra, perfectly adapted to their wintry environment. Though wearing the form of a simple animal, the winter wolf's cunning and intellect approaches that of mankind, making these creatures far more dangerous than their physical appearance might otherwise suggest.

Built like a common wolf and yet standing taller than the fiercest dwarven warrior, a winter wolf is equally at home within the snow-laden wastes of the deep arctic or the towering heights of jagged, windswept mountains. During the heaviest blizzard, when all that can be seen are swirling shades of white in all directions, winter wolves prowl for food, heedless of the ice matting their pelts or the cold winds sweeping across their lupine faces. When fierce winter storms send sheets of freezing hail and sleet screaming across the snow-swept plains, and even the hardiest arctic inhabitants nestle deep in hidden burrows for warmth and safety, packs of winter wolves range the white wastes, seeking prey. Silently they stalk their unknowing quarry, slipping ghostlike through the snow-filled landscape, their tracks quickly erased by the howling arctic winds. Discovering a lone victim struggling through the bleak landscape, they add their own howls of triumph to the voice of the wind. Hearing this, the victim knows with dire certainty that all hope is gone, for none can evade these lords of the cold-lands for long. . .

Winter wolves are, above all else, survivors. In frigid areas where life is scarce, they eke out a living by ensuring that whatever prey found, they can take down and devour. Virtually nothing is safe from the ravenous bands of winter wolves; once prey has been spotted, they will track and harry their victim until they overcome it, no matter how long this might take. Even young white dragons are not safe from the predation of the hungry winter wolf - if one pack of wolves cannot overcome the reptilian menace, several may band together until their superior numbers finally overwhelm the dragon's defences. Furthermore, winter wolves have long memories and often hold grudges that last well over a generation. Should an attack on the dragon fail and the majority of a pack be slain, survivors will slink off back into the arctic wilderness to regroup and nurse their hatred, letting it fester and grow over the course of many years if need be. But once the

pack has replenished its members, they will hunt the dragon down and repay it for each wolf slain. Many say that when a winter wolf has no flesh to fill its belly, it survives on mere hatred - and those who have seen these beasts in action often swear this is no mere metaphor.

THE MINI-SLAYER'S GUIDES

This series of Internet-based supplements, designed for use in all fantasy-based d20 games systems, takes an exhaustive look at specific monster races, detailing their beliefs, society and methods of warfare. With the knowledge gleaned from the various Mini-Slayer's Guides, Games Masters will be able to make encounters within his campaign world logical, consistent, and easily visualised by his players.

WINTER WOLVES — MASTERS OF THE COLD

Each Mini Slayer's Guide features a single race, in this case the winter wolf. Within these pages you will find detailed information on winter wolf physiology, habitat, and society, giving you a basic overview on how this race exists and interacts with the rest of the world. Players can learn winter wolf hunting tactics and Games Masters are given guidelines on how to introduce winter wolves into their existing campaigns. They will also benefit from material demonstrating how to portray winter wolves to the players, so they stand out from the normal wolf. The section on foundlings may make for an interesting NPC (or even Player Character) background. Finally, a complete winter wolf lair is featured to be used as either an extended encounter or as an example of how such lairs are generally laid out.

There is far more to winter wolves than first meets the eye. After reading the Mini-Slayer's Guide to Winter Wolves, you will never view these cold-hearted monsters as mere animals again.





INTRODUCTION

‘There were eleven of us that started up the Skjeld narrows in search of old Knight’s lost group. Word had it that Knight and his gang had disappeared with some impressive magic – the kind of stuff that navigators and pirates pay a small fortune for.

‘Well, we’d been warned but didn’t listen. We were careful, only moving in the best of weather and were making good time until we came to the narrows proper. That time of year the straight is frozen clean solid and we figured it’d be an easy hop across and then we could start our search for Knight’s ship, the *Endeavor*.

‘We’d made it most of the way across the ice when we heard it. At first we thought it was the wind but there was an unearthly quality about it, that howl. As soon as the first wolf came into sight along our back-trail we knew.

‘These things were the size of ponies - and they were *fast*. They came over the hill behind us with the speed of thoroughbreds and started across the ice. Seven of them in a carefully dispersed line. The one spell Egart got off didn’t even slow ‘em. We quickly formed a battle line to keep the creatures off the mages and cleric so they could work.

‘Those seven in front let loose with a storm of icy breath like nothing I’ve ever seen. They hit the center of the line so hard that two of us went down. Yuzzo, though – that was just unreal. Standing right dead center, he took the main brunt of the blasts. The idiot was always like that. He was frozen clean through as far as I could tell - a pillar of solid ice. I’ll never forget those eyes. Wide open with fine coatings of blue-white ice over them. Those eyes are a nightmare that will always haunt me.

‘Three down of ten and we’d not yet swung a sword. Then it got worse. Four of them burst from beneath the snow on the shore we’d been approaching. They’d been lying in wait in perfect position - just behind the mages. Those creatures had *timed* it flawlessly. The blast of their howling breath weapons was the first warning we’d even had that they were there. They let loose just as the first wolves smashed into our fighting line like a hammer and those in the rear charged straight into our support. Egart’s throat was torn out before he could even mutter one of his famous multi-layered curses.

‘I fought like I’d never fought before and had one down in a twinkling with a spear through its evil silver eye. I ran to engage another when I was hit with what felt like a battering ram. I went sprawling. A wolf leapt over me, but I was too stunned to do much except shake my head in confusion and stare stupidly at the chunk of ice the size of my chest that had hit me and wonder where it had come from.

‘A spear the size of a bowsprit narrowly missed Owen and solved that mystery. A pair of white skinned, pale haired northmen stood on the bank behind their wolf pack. Each was at least twelve feet tall and one reached for another block of ice to hurl as his companion stepped towards me swinging an axe the size of a galleon’s iron clad ram!

‘I rolled to one side as the frost giant’s axe came down. It struck the ice a mere foot away with a thunderous crack, splitting it wide. The icy black waters beneath reached up and embraced me.’

The young scribe set down his pen and waved for another ale. ‘That’s an amazing story, sir. How did you get away?’ He stopped short, turning back to find the chair across from him empty.

‘*What makes you think I did?*’ whispered a voice that dissipated in a faint cold breeze drifting out the wayhouse’s open window.

WINTER WOLF PHYSIOLOGY

When an adventuring party spots its first winter wolf, nothing is liable to give away the creature's unnatural intelligence. After all, there is little in the winter wolf's physical build that hints at anything other than an overly-large wolf with white fur. These appearances are deceiving, however, for the winter wolf is one of the deadliest mammals to stalk the arctic wastes, and adventurers exploring such territory would do well to keep this in mind.

The average adult winter wolf stands some four and a half feet tall at the shoulder and reaches a good eight feet in length, with a tail adding another thirty or so inches. Females tend to be slightly smaller in stature than the males, with correspondingly shorter legs. Weight averages around 500 lb. for an adult male and about 450 lb. for a female. Rumours abound of winter wolves reaching nearly eighteen feet in length, although such tales have yet to be substantiated. If such a beast really did exist, it would tip the scales at an estimated 7,500 lb. and be a truly lethal predator.

Like other wolves, winter wolves have five toes on their forelimbs and four on the rear, although the first toes of the front feet are positioned high enough up the leg that they do not form part of the wolf's footprints when it walks. These digits are no more manipulative than are a normal wolf's, so winter wolves cannot grasp items in their paws, wield weapons or tools, or perform any of the thousands of mundane tasks most humanoids take for granted. Still, a winter wolf's high intelligence can overcome many of these difficulties. Whilst it could not open a closed door with a single paw, it might be able to do so by twisting a doorknob between its two front paws as it balances on its hind legs, or perhaps by using its jaws. As a rule of thumb, assume a winter wolf can manipulate objects as well as a man with a pair of heavy socks over his hands. If you can pick up a key and place it in a keyhole while wearing socks on your hands, then odds are a winter wolf would be just as successful in such an endeavour, given time.

Most winter wolves are able to speak two languages, the common tongue of the land and that of giants.

Given their inability to grasp objects, they cannot write in either of these languages and thus seldom learn to read. In addition, winter wolves have a non-verbal language of gestures, grunts, growls, whines, yips, and whimpers that allows them to get their meaning across to other, less intelligent, lupine species like dire wolves, worgs, and even domestic dogs. This last ability is equivalent to a continuous *speak with animals* spell that works only on wolves and other canine creatures.

PELTS

A winter wolf's pelt is generally uniform white, allowing it to blend in with the snow and ice of its native terrain. However, occasionally a winter wolf is born with fur closer to silver in colour. Silver winter wolves are treated no differently by their pack-mates and, indeed, tend not to be differentiated from 'whites.'

Regardless of the colour of pelt, a winter wolf's fur plays an important part in its general immunity to cold. These creatures are completely impervious to all cold-based attacks, such as the icy blast of a white dragon's breath weapon or a *cone of cold* spell. This is partly because the thick coat of fur traps a layer of air close to the body, which is then warmed by the wolf's body heat and acts as an insulator. The wolf also accumulates a thick layer of fat under its skin which not only serves as additional insulation but also as a food reserve when prey becomes scarce. However, it is generally agreed it is the winter wolves' magical nature that allows them to resist severe cold so well.

Of course, this cold immunity comes at a price, for winter wolves are highly susceptible to flame, generally suffering twice as much harm as normal from fire-based attacks. They are therefore leery of fire, and for good cause. Should a winter wolf lose its cold-resistant fur (usually as a result of surviving a fire-based attack, like a *fireball*, that burns it off) its resistance to cold drops from total immunity to only partial protection. (In game turns, a 'bald' winter wolf has Cold Resistance 5 until its fur grows back.)

Because of the protective nature of winter wolf fur, their pelts can be sold for as much as 2,000 gp in good condition. (Silver pelts, because of their rarity, frequently go for as high as 3,500 gp.) They are generally used in the manufacture of items such as cloaks, robes, and boots that provide protection from



WINTER WOLF PHYSIOLOGY

cold. As an example, *boots of the winterlands* are often lined with winter wolf fur.

HEIGHTENED SENSES

Winter wolves have excellent olfactory senses, allowing them to track prey by smell alone and differentiate between individuals solely by scent. Winter wolf packs often mark their territories with a few dribbles of urine along their self-proclaimed boundaries; winter wolves from other packs can tell at a sniff that the urine came from a creature outside of their own pack. Urine is also often used as a trail marker, so a winter wolf may find its way back to its lair after ranging many miles away on the hunt.

Winter wolves enjoy eyesight much keener than that of mankind. Their eyes are almost always an icy blue, although silver-coated individuals may occasionally sport silver eyes as well. A winter wolf has both darkvision to a 60-foot range and low-light vision, enabling it to see as well in moonlight as it can during the day. While most canines see only in black and white, winter wolves view the daylight world in full colour.

BREATH WEAPON

The winter wolf is so well adapted to its arctic environment, that it has even developed a breath weapon suited to an existence among the snow and ice of its bleak world. One of a winter wolf's lungs (usually the left) is surrounded by an internal fluid that acts as an organic coolant system, keeping the air in that lung almost frozen. Once every 1-4 rounds, a winter wolf can breathe out a cone of this super-cooled air to a range of 15 feet. This deals 4d6 points of cold damage to those within the area of effect by draining heat from the victims' bodies, just like a *cone of cold* spell. Because of their cold immunity, winter wolves suffer no ill effects from their own breath weapons.

It should be noted that since employing its breath weapon consists of doing nothing more strenuous than exhaling heavily, a winter wolf can use its breath weapon even whilst biting at opponents. In addition, winter wolves can blast this super-chilled air through their nostrils, so muzzling a winter wolf or otherwise keeping its jaws shut does nothing to prevent the use of this lethal breath weapon.

DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

Winter wolves are carnivores by choice, but omnivorous when circumstances dictate. They prefer large game like moose, caribou and musk ox, but will readily settle for smaller creatures such as arctic hare, lemming, fish and seal. They have no qualms against eating the flesh of humans or giants, but are well aware of the dangers inherent in hunting such game. As a last resort, a winter wolf will guzzle down berries or other fruits, lichens, and moss.



Their teeth are set so they naturally push food back into the creature's mouth when they chew, a handy adaptation for an animal that often begins devouring its meal before it is fully dead.

Another useful adaptation is the winter wolf's ability to survive for up to two weeks between meals. However, once prey has been killed, a winter wolf goes into what is often described as a feeding frenzy, ripping off flesh and swallowing it down practically without chewing, hence the phrase, 'wolfing down food.' During this time, a winter wolf treats even other members of its own pack as competitors; each is in a mad race to see which will consume the most food and it is not unusual for winter wolves to eat up to a quarter of their own body weight in one sitting after a successful hunt. Food being as scarce as it is in the arctic, very little of any prey is left to waste - winter wolves devour skin, bones, and fur as well as flesh. Finally, after spending up to an hour feeding in this fashion, the wolves skulk off on their own to regurgitate part of their feast into shallow holes dug just for this purpose. These secret caches are then covered up with snow remaining hidden as reserve food sources for the winter wolves, although each wolf depends upon its own food stores for survival. Sharing of these leftovers is virtually unheard of, even amongst mated pairs.

THE WINTER WOLF'S LIFECYCLE

Winter wolves mate for life, although usually only one mated pair in a pack will actually bear any young. Gestation time is but a few short months, with a litter of two to four pups born in the late spring or early summer. The pups are helpless at birth, unable even to open their eyes until they are two weeks old. The mother suckles her young for the first two months of their life, but at the end of one month the pups can eat half-digested meat disgorged by one of the adults.

Usually, the mother nurses her own young and keeps them clean and well-groomed, although any other adult female can step in for the mother and attend to these duties. Furthermore,

raising a winter wolf litter is a job taken on by the entire pack, with different individuals taking turns watching over the pups in the den whilst others hunt for game. Despite their inherently evil nature, winter wolves have a strong bond with the young of their pack and willingly risk their lives to keep them safe.

By six weeks, the pups are big enough and strong enough to accompany their mother on their first hunt. Often, prior to this, an adult will merely cripple a smaller animal and carry it back to the den for the pups to finish off on their own, giving them valuable practice in the killing of prey. Later in the year, pups will be able to hunt on their own, and may opt to leave the pack at that time to make their own way into the world. A winter wolf achieves its full adult size at two years, and can expect to live around fifteen years.



HABITAT

The majority of winter wolves are found in the cold regions of the arctic and subarctic climates. There they live as wild and free as their smaller brethren, those unhampered by the burdens of intellect and civilisation. Most winter wolf packs live a simple life, worried only about their next meal, next hunt, and next litter. They are the undisputed masters of their wintry realm, living off the land and looking only to their own abilities for survival. Others can be found in the snowy wastes of mountain-tops, eking out a similar existence amongst the chiselled peaks. A scant few can be found underground, usually after discovering the cave system they have taken for their lair continues deep into the earth, connecting to many subterranean passages. These wolves tend to do well for themselves, as the prey they encounter is seldom adapted for life in the frigid arctic, and thus easily falls victim to the wolves' breath weapons. More than one pack of winter wolves have explored so far into the deep caverns of the underdeep that their young have never known the light of day.

Regardless of their environment, whether it be open tundra or high-peaked mountains, winter wolves lair in dens. These may be natural caves, the burrows of other creatures taken for their own use or, rarely, a hole in the earth they have dug themselves. Since they often travel great distances, following herds of game animals as they migrate during the seasons, a winter wolf pack may have a series of dens covering a wide distance used whenever their primary source of food travels into that particular area. Indeed, a winter wolf den may be claimed by several different packs, each using it as they pass through a given area. Naturally, winter wolves rarely tolerate another pack using 'their' den, and such occurrences often lead to combat between them. In the case of two small packs fighting over a lair, it is often in their best interests to merge into a larger pack and share not only the den, but their own protective numbers. Even this more peaceful merger leads to a battle, for the competing pack leaders will need to determine which of them will lead the new, combined pack, and this decision is based on trial by fang and claw.

Winter wolf dens are seldom elaborate affairs. Since the creatures are immune to even the bitterest arctic chill, dens are protection not from the elements so much as from other predators. Most have

but a single entrance, so there is only one way for potential threats to attack and likewise only one area needing to be guarded and defended. Often, a winter wolf den will be one big community chamber, although occasionally mated pairs will carve out their own niches off from this. If there are any pups in the pack, they too may have their own side chamber, if only because pups tend to sleep different hours than adults. Adult winter wolves may sleep up to twelve hours a day, but this is not due to laziness; rather, the daily hunt for game – which can last all day in and of itself, not always with success – takes a lot out of the creatures.

Finally, if a winter wolf has adopted an outside member into its ranks (usually a humanoid being raised as one of the pack) the foundling will require the safety of the protected lair far more than the winter wolves that make up its new family. A typical winter wolf den is relatively warm, as it is sheltered from wind and warmed by the collective body heat of the pack members. Foundlings are often housed in small areas just off from the main chamber, as smaller areas are easier to keep warm than large, especially since no winter wolf will *ever* willingly allow a fire to be built inside its den, no matter how beneficial it may be to the foundling. A pack undergoing the rigors of raising a humanoid 'pup' may remain in the same lair for many years, since humanoids tend to develop at a much slower rate than wolves.

Any winter wolf den is liable to hold a good amount of treasure, usually the discarded remains of previously slain victims. Of course, as winter wolves cannot wield tools or weapons and lack a monetary system of their own, these 'treasures' are virtually useless to them. At best, some of the objects left behind by previous victims may find use as play-toys for the pups or if a band of winter wolves adopts a humanoid foundling, he or she may be able to put some of the objects to good use for the benefit of the pack.

WINTER WOLF SOCIETY

Most winter wolves live in small, family-based packs. Pack life has several advantages: The wolves rely upon a team effort to hunt down and kill their prey – hunting and killing larger creatures than they might on their own – and find safety in numbers against some of the more powerful arctic inhabitants such as white dragons, remorhaz, cryohydrae, and frost worms.

Upon occasion, several packs unite to form groups of twenty or more wolves, to take on particularly large and dangerous prey. These ‘super-packs’ have been known to raid entire humanoid villages and even to take on small groups of frost giants.

PACK STRUCTURE

The nucleus of any pack is the dominant mated pair composed of the largest and strongest male and

female. These individuals are referred to as the ‘alpha male’ and ‘alpha female,’ respectively. The majority of the pack are likely to be their offspring from the past several years.

Most winter wolf packs consist of no more than five or six members. This is a smaller pack size than is commonly found amongst normal arctic wolves, but then winter wolves are much larger and thus require substantially more food to survive. A winter wolf pack of two dozen individuals would have a difficult time finding sufficient food for all of their members in any one area, and so would not survive as a pack for long – they would be forced to split into two or more smaller units and seek prey in different hunting areas.

Order is maintained in a winter wolf pack through a rigid hierarchy in which males are dominant to females and the females dominant to pups. Furthermore, all males know where they fall in the ‘pecking order’ of the pack – that is, which males are more powerful than they and which ones they can best in combat – and likewise with the females and young. The pups establish their own hierarchy from the first days of playful combat in the nursing den, and thus know their lot in life from their first days in the pack.

THE ALPHA MALE

The alpha male is the unquestioned leader of his pack, and as such makes all the decisions that affect pack life. In winter wolf packs ‘might makes right,’ and the alpha male will have proven time and again through ritualistic combat that he is the strongest of the males in the pack. Any time another male believes he would make a better leader, he may challenge the alpha male for position. Combats are quick and often bloody, but seldom to the death; as soon as one opponent realises he’s out-classed, he assumes a submissive stance – laying on his back, with throat exposed to the victor, demonstrating his helplessness and the victor, having made his point, allows his defeated opponent to live. This is not only a smart move when living



in an environment where every able-bodied pack member adds to one's own overall strength, but is practically hardwired into the winter wolf's brain. However, due to its inherently evil nature, a victorious winter wolf might well scar his opponent as a permanent reminder of his defeat.

As the only active breeding male, the alpha male is father to most of the pack. The bonds of parenthood run deep in winter wolves, and the alpha male will do anything to protect the life of his pups, but once the litter has achieved adult size they are potential rivals to his power and will be treated accordingly.

THE ALPHA FEMALE

Despite the fact most adult males are bigger and stronger than the alpha female, there is no doubt she is the second most powerful member of a winter wolf pack. As life-long mate to the alpha male, she has someone at her beck and call who can defeat any other member of the pack, and the rest of the pack is well aware of this. Whilst by no means equal, the alpha female is accorded nearly as much respect as the alpha male.

The alpha female is the only pack member that gives birth to offspring for though other females may court males, they will only produce a litter if the alpha female is somehow removed. While pregnant, and for several weeks after giving birth, the alpha female remains in the communal den. She does not participate in hunts, and has her food brought to her. Usually, the alpha male consumes an extra-large portion of game and disgorges it upon his return to the den. Once the pups are active, the alpha female resumes her place in the hunt while the adults take turns looking after the pups.

THE RUNT

As is true of any hierarchy, someone has to occupy the bottom rung. Every winter wolf pack has a member at the very bottom of its pecking order, often the runt of a litter. Once a litter of new-born pups has established its own pecking order, the alpha male presents each of them with its name. Traditionally, the bottom member of the pack always receives the same name - Runt.

It is no fun to be Runt. Singled out since birth, Runt starts out at a disadvantage and the winter wolf pack structure is determined so things will stay this way. Runt is not allowed to eat until all of the other pack

members have had their fill. Thus, Runt is often left with the poorest choice of food and may be reduced to gnawing at bones for any scraps of meat and if food is scarce, Runt goes without whilst the rest of the pack splits what little food there is. This means that while Runt's litter-mates grow up strong and healthy, Runt remains undernourished and under-sized. This works to the pack's overall benefit, though, ensuring leaders remain well-fed and strong – especially the alpha male and female, whose line will pass on to the next generation.

Runt is also the pack scapegoat. Anytime a pack member wants someone to pick on, there is always Runt. If a winter wolf needs to vent its frustrations, there is always Runt to abuse. If there is an unpleasant task that requires doing, they can always bully Runt into doing it.

Eventually, Runt will become an adult member of the pack and Runt might see a new generation of pups born into his family. But even the lowest member of the pup hierarchy has it better than him; since the pack already has a Runt, there is no need to single out another from this new generation. Runt the adult now has a whole litter of new mouths that will be fed before he is. But Runt will not take it out on the new-borns. He can't. The instinct to preserve the pups runs too strong in Runt's blood, and like any winter wolf adult he will go out of his way to see to their survival. Runt will probably spend a great deal of time as a baby-sitter, guarding over pups while the rest of the pack goes out to hunt. But this works out for the best anyway, as Runt is unlikely to be able to keep up with the able-bodied adults in the pack.

If Runt ever tires of the abuse, he is free to leave the pack and seek fortune on his own, but without the pack to support and protect him, he is not liable to survive for long. Other winter wolf packs will view him as an outsider and chase him away from their hunting grounds. Still, fate is inexorable and Runt may one day meet up with another outcast of the opposite sex and start a pack of his own. This, of course, makes Runt the alpha male of his new pack, the leader of his family, the king of his tribe.

It is no fun to be Runt, but it sure is good to be the king!

FOUNDLINGS

In addition to the wolves making up a pack, there may occasionally be present a member of another race altogether present. This 'adopted' pack member is always a humanoid, usually taken from its parents as a baby or young child and raised amongst the winter wolves as one of their own.

There are many good reasons for this. Despite the fact that winter wolves share mankind's general level of intelligence, the creatures are well aware of their own limitations. Lacking opposable thumbs, they will never be tool users. However, by



raising a humanoid as one of their own, they gain a willing family member able to do many things wolves cannot. This works out much better than if a winter wolf pack captures a fully-grown humanoid and keeps it as a captured slave, since a slave will always desire its freedom and eventually attempt escape. A humanoid that has been raised by winter wolves, however, sees them as his true family and willingly devotes his abilities to their betterment. Having been raised to believe this is the normal state of affairs he will not try to escape, for he knows of no better world than the only one he has ever seen. The evil wolves ensure this holds true by raising the infant on tales of the inherent cruelty of his own race until he comes to despise his own people.

Winter wolves generally fear most humanoids, or at the very least tend to give them a great deal of respect, if only for their ability to wield fire. However, many a winter wolf pack overcomes its collective fears and goes on raids against small humanoid encampments, specifically for the purpose of capturing a humanoid infant for their subsequent use as a pack member. Adult humanoids that put up a fight also have their uses, but those tend more toward filling the wolves' bellies rather than filling their ranks.

Naturally, winter wolves must raise a humanoid child differently than they do one of their own.

Lacking an immunity to cold, the child must be kept warm, although this is done by wrapping him up in furs rather than maintaining a fire.

Humanoids take an exceptionally long time to grow to maturity when compared to a wolf, so a great deal of patience is also called for. It will literally be years, perhaps even an entire winter wolf generation before their foundling is capable of joining them on a hunt, and even then it will have a hard time keeping up with the rest of the pack.

As might be expected, humanoid foundlings raised by winter wolves tend to be a hardy lot. Given their upbringing, many foundlings rise as barbarians during the course of their lupine tutelage. Fortunately, winter wolves speak the common tongue, so a foundling will be taught at least one of the languages he normally would have learnt had he not been separated from his birth parents and winter wolves *want* their humanoid foundlings to be able to interact with others of their own race. That is often one of the things they hope to gain from the whole situation in the first place - a pack-mate capable of walking into a humanoid town and purchasing objects desired by the winter wolves with no questions asked. After all, most winter wolf packs have coins or other valuables in their dens, the detritus of any humanoid prey they have slain in the past. The humanoid go-between may purchase valuable items like picks and axes (useful in carving out additions to an ice den), warm clothing for itself and useful items like snowshoes, as well as weapons it can use to help fight against the wolves' enemies or healing salves and potions that may be used upon a wounded wolf. Most of the items purchased by the foundling for the





WINTER WOLF SOCIETY

benefit of its pack are things only it can actually use, although the winter wolves will always benefit from their foundling's use of such objects.

Because of the twisted lies a humanoid foundling is told during its upbringing, many despise their own race and feel true kinship only with the winter wolves that raised them. Most share the evil alignments of their adopted families.

OTHER RACES

A winter wolf views most other races merely as food sources. The one main exception to this rule are the frost giants. Winter wolves and frost giants often work in concert to mutual benefit. Frost giants, sharing the winter wolves' immunity to cold, are immune to the breath weapons of the wolves and are therefore difficult to kill, thus it is better to have them as an ally than as an enemy. Despite the appearance of a winter wolf at the side of a frost giant, this is no master/pet relationship – the winter wolf expects to be treated as an equal, and frost giants are canny enough to realise the benefits of such a relationship. Winter wolves are excellent scouts, hunters, and trackers, whilst frost giants can

wield tools, weapons, and occasionally powerful magic as well. Each race is powerful, but together they are both greater still.

The winter wolves' acknowledgements of the merits of the frost giant race do not prevent a pack from attacking a lone frost giant if they are hungry. The same holds true for a lone winter wolf against a frost giant hunting party. The two races may respect one another in great numbers, but nothing prevents individual members from ending up as a meal for pack and tribe alike.

The winter wolf tactic of taking on humanoid foundlings and raising them as one of their own is often used against them by frost giants. If a frost giant tribe learns of a newly-born winter wolf litter, they will often seek out the pack and attack it in great numbers, specifically to steal pups. Naturally, a litter of winter wolf pups raised immediately after birth will be much more loyal to their frost giant masters than a similar number of adult winter wolves entering into a working relationship of their own wary volition. Once properly trained, these stolen wolves remain as loyal to their new masters as they would to the alpha male of their own pack.

The wind screamed down off the glacier with force enough to flay the flesh from a man's bones even as it froze his blood solid. The horizontal snow ripped across the icy ground thick enough that Miquuquq couldn't even make out his sister's igloo only forty five feet away. He closed the old leather flap with a whispered prayer to the Whale and turned back to where his wife nursed his young son.

'Still miserable?' smiled Korielli, shifting young Vuq.

'The worst I've ever seen,' whispered the hunter. 'It is on nights like these that the ice demons hunt for flesh and souls.'

'Ice demons? Miquuquq, how can you believe in such old wives tales?' The hunter's wife snorted. 'Giant wolves with a breath like the storm itself? Ridiculous. I've never taken a word of it seriously. Stories to frighten children. That's all.'

'Believe what you like. I know what my father said.'

Korielli went back to nursing and the silence grew long in the icy room. It was broken, not by the family but by strange cries echoing on the wind. Korielli started to comment but her statement was cut short when a blast of winter far more fierce than the storm outside howled into the icy home. Korielli slumped, clutching at her bare breast, now gone white with hoarfrost while the frozen slab that had been their son thumped to the floor of packed snow with a sound like an old log. The door exploded inwards, the entire entry area collapsing in a shower of ice flakes to reveal a great lupine figure standing near to five feet at the shoulder.

Its eyes glittered silver in the guttering light of the the igloo's only fire before the wind extinguished the flame. Miquuquq imagined he could see the fang's gleam in the storm-wracked darkness as he reached for his spear.

The ice demons had come.

METHODS OF WARFARE

Lacking the ability to wield weapons or wear armour, the winter wolf approach to combat is almost identical to that of the normal wolf, despite its greater intelligence. Winter wolves prefer to attack en masse as a pack rather than fight individually, however, their enhanced intelligence allows them to fight far more effectively on the battlefield.

HUNTING PREY

Winter wolves spend a great deal of time seeking prey. They usually travel for miles on end in single file with the alpha male in the lead, until they happen across potential prey or the tracks of a possible victim. Once the target has been spotted, the wolves spread out downwind, stealthily moving in to surround it. This accomplished, each wolf in turn lunges to attack, either biting down with its powerful jaws or shooting a cone of its freezing breath at the victim, as circumstances dictate. Naturally, winter wolves are intelligent enough to realise when their breath weapons have no effect and will change tactics appropriately. Sometimes a winter wolf will gain a good grip on a victim's limb or throat and attempt to trip it. Once the victim is down on the ground, the wolves all pounce upon it and start ripping off gobbets of steaming flesh, often beginning their feast even before the prey is dead.

Against an entire herd of herbivores, such as caribou or moose, winter wolves use similar tactics. They attempt to split up the herd if possible and pick off stragglers one by one. The best scenario for a winter wolf pack up against a herd of large creatures is to get them into a panicked run. It is much easier to drag down the sick and young of a running herd, as they are generally slower than healthy adults and winter wolves would just as soon bring down those quicker to kill.

If the herd refuses to run, they will often form a protective ring with horns or antlers pointing outwards to the threatening wolves with the young safe on the inside. Against a pack of normal wolves this tactic is usually enough to send the predators skulking off in defeat, but winter wolves are seldom daunted for long against such defensive manoeuvres.

Usually, several of the tougher wolves will creep up close to the defensive ring, and then a pair of quicker, lighter wolves – often females – leap onto their backs, using them as springboards to jump over the horns of the outer ring and into the middle of the frightened prey. This sudden attack is usually enough to rout a herd into panicked flight, with the added bonus of bringing down one or more of the weaker herd members at the outset.

DEFENDING THE LAIR

As mentioned previously, winter wolves tend not to be too fussy in their choice of lairs; any old cave or burrow will do. As these dens usually have but a single entrance, defence is rather simple. When the wolves hunker down for the night in the safety of their den, one wolf sleeps near the entrance, ready to put up a fight and alert the others to any danger that might approach. Winter wolves on this guard duty tend to be light sleepers, easily returning to a state of complete alertness should the need arise. As to who pulls guard duty, it depends, as does so much within winter wolf society, on the mood of the alpha male. Some pack leaders prefer assuming the role themselves, feeling that as the biggest and strongest male they are best suited to the task and are well aware of the visible reminder of their power such a stance provides to the rest of the pack. Other alpha males rotate the duty among several of the adults, or allow individuals to volunteer if they wish to curry favour with him. Still others prefer assigning the watch detail to Runt, feeling that he or she is the most expendable, should a serious threat approach the den.

In addition to setting watch, winter wolves may add traps to the area of their den, something very few adventurers expect. Naturally, winter wolves cannot create these traps themselves, but often locate and steal the metal traps hunters lay to capture animals. Many are the winter wolf lairs with a saw-toothed metal trap lying just below a light dusting of snow immediately before the only entrance, waiting to clamp its metal jaws upon an intruder. Those packs with a humanoid foundling among their numbers often put its dextrous hands to work fashioning simple traps of a similar nature.



TRAINED WINTER WOLVES

Winter wolves raised from infancy by frost giants or other humanoids tend to co-ordinate their attacks with their masters, generally behaving as war dogs with increased intelligence. Many such creatures are put to use as sled dogs, pulling their masters along behind them as they rush into battle. A winter wolf-pulled sled can be the arctic equivalent to the horse-drawn battle chariot, but with far deadlier steeds.

Winter wolves trained in battle with their humanoid partners often use flanking manoeuvres, trapping their prey between the snapping jaws of hungry wolves and the flashing weapons of frost giants. Winter wolves use their breath weapons freely when fighting alongside frost giants, confident in the giants' ability to ignore the effects of the wolves' freezing breath, and the winter wolves' vocal abilities allow them to call out warnings and instructions to their non-lupine partners. Winter wolves usually speak the giant language when calling out in this fashion, since there is a lesser chance they will be understood by their mutual enemies.



Beli ran.

She leaped through the remains of a window, heedless of the flames that seared her clothing. Smoke which filled her lungs and the sound of the screams followed as the giant wolves ripped into her family. Out on the street, the snow burned her bare feet as she raced into the howling blizzard.

It pursued. She could hear it close behind. She waited for the blast of icy breath that would kill her but that cold never came. She ran for her life, leaping over the corpse of Villem the brewer where he lay in the street – his torn throat painting the snow around him crimson.

Fire. They feared fire. Knowing it was madness she darted through a doorway into a burning building, rolling into the one corner not on fire. Safe, she thought. Better to burn to death than to face the winter wolves.

A thump behind turned her, the scream catching in her throat as she saw an upright two-legged shape against the flames, a sword in one hand.

‘Oh, thank Valkonner!’ She gasped. ‘I thought you were - unnngh!’ She cried out in pain and surprise as the man drove his sword through her thigh, pinning her to the wall. His face caught the light as he leaned in close, seizing her hair in a grip of iron. She could make out his features through the gore spattering them - the young man who had come to the Inn two days ago. Handsome and quiet. She had brought him a cup of mulled wine and smiled at him, finding his bearded young face appealing.

Beli screamed as he yanked her head back and sank his strong white teeth into her throat.

ROLE-PLAYING WITH WINTER WOLVES

After examining how these creatures live, it is time to explore ways in which to present winter wolves within the Games Master's campaign. The goal is to make an encounter with winter wolves distinct and different than an encounter with a pack of similar creatures like dire wolves, worgs, displacer beasts, or krenshars.

The first likely difference will be the terrain as winter wolves are usually found in lands covered with ice and snow. Remember to describe the snow-covered terrain to the players, as well as the bitter cold and the howls of the arctic wind. With their white fur, winter wolves blend easily into such environments, gaining a +7 racial bonus to Hide checks (granting them an overall bonus of +13). Added to this is the wolves' ability to track scent, and it is likely the creatures will be aware of the players long before the players become aware of them. Use this to the wolves' advantage. With their high intelligence ratings, winter wolves are capable of sound tactics and will no doubt attempt to shape the battlefield to their own advantage.

One possibility is for the pack to conceal themselves in a wide ring and send out one individual (the hapless Runt, more likely than not, or possibly a humanoid foundling raised by the pack) to 'encounter' the players and flee in terror, luring them into an ambush. When a ring of winter wolves suddenly pop up out of the snow banks and surround the adventurers, they will have quite a battle ahead of them. Also remember that winter wolves speak the common tongue fluently, and could call out for help to lead the players into a similar ambush.

Winter wolves tend not to take chances with their foes. Any obvious spellcasters will be targeted first, for fear they might use fire-based attacks against the wolves. The players might be quite surprised to see what appears to be nothing more than a pack of large animals co-ordinating their attacks so well. Winter wolves use their trip attacks to their fullest, driving their prey down to the ground where they will be defending from a position of weakness.

Winter wolves are ruthless in battle, and a prone enemy will be attacked until there is no doubt of its death, before the wolves move on to the next target. From experience, winter wolves have learned that humanoids frequently use restorative magic to revive their unconscious members and restore them to battle-readiness, and the wolves would just as soon ensure that when an enemy goes down, it stays down.

WINTER WOLF NAMES

One of the alpha male's duties is naming the members of his pack. This is usually done a few weeks after the birth of a litter, when the pups have opened their eyes and begun to play and fight among themselves. However, the alpha male may also change the name of any member of his pack, at any time, for any reason. Winter wolf names tend to be descriptive of the individual's appearance, demeanour, or behaviour. Any of the following would be appropriate winter wolf names;

Bloodrage, Bonecruncher, Brightfur, Brokenfang, Giantslayer, Growl, Longtail, Rabbithunter, Scarnose, Seeker, Silence, Swiftfoot, Thinker, Twitch, Twistfoot

And, of course, many packs have one member named 'Runt.'

Winter wolf names can also be taken from the giant language. Some possibilities may include;

Boolentir, Bereketh, Berelak, Dorlog, Gondolar, Grontor, Hriggith, Irikith, Jarlorgor, Koorg, Kostgar, Runemir, Vorlog, Vorpek, Zorolar

When a winter wolf leaves its birth-pack and strikes off on its own, it effectively becomes its own alpha male or female (of a pack of one) and thus gains the opportunity to rename itself. Nearly all such wolves do so, especially if their former name was 'Runt.'



SCENARIO HOOKS & IDEAS

The following ideas provide several ways the Games Master can introduce winter wolves into a campaign. Any of these concepts can be used as a simple single-session adventure, or fleshed out to form the basis of a larger campaign goal that might take the players several game sessions to complete. Note that whilst some of these scenarios are suitable for lower-level parties, others may be more appropriate for more seasoned adventurers.

LONG LOST SON

The players are hired to rescue a young man long-since thought dead but recently discovered alive, apparently the captive of a pack of winter wolves. Of course, the players do not realise that the man has been raised by the wolves as a foundling, and has no intention of leaving his 'true' family.

PUPPY HUNTERS

Having gleaned from an arctic druid that a pregnant winter wolf was recently spotted in the vicinity, a renowned hunter hires the players to help him track down the wolves to their den, kill off the adults, and take the pups to be trained in the service of human masters. If successful, the players might be rewarded with a winter wolf pup of their own to raise. Of course, the arctic druid may just take umbrage to this plan if he learns of it, and the players might find themselves fighting off more than just the wolves.

BREEDING STOCK

A dog breeder specialising in unusual guard dogs hires the players to capture an adult male winter wolf for breeding stock in an experiment – he intends to mate the wolf with a female hell hound and see what attributes the resulting whelps exhibit. The players might also be sent to acquire the hell hound.

RESCUE MISSION

A young winter wolf on one of its first hunts with

the adults has fallen into an ice fissure and is stuck. Unable to fit into the cleft to retrieve the wedged wolfling, the alpha female remains with her offspring while the other wolves seek out humanoid help in the form of the players. With the life of one of their young at stake, the winter wolves are unwilling to take no for an answer; the players *will* save their pup, or suffer the full wrath of the entire pack! A kind Games Master might have the grateful pack of winter wolves reward the players with some 'junk treasure' (junk to the wolves anyway, who cannot use it themselves) upon a successful rescue.

HE'S GOT WHAT WE NEED!

An item the players are seeking (something stolen from them earlier, or an item they have been hired to retrieve) has found its way into the hands of a frost giant jarl. Tracking the item to its current location, the players must find a way to overcome not only the jarl's band, but also their guard-beasts: a small pack of winter wolves who have worked with the frost giants all of their lives.

THE SNOW STALKER

As an interesting solo adventure, have one of the players suddenly teleported into the middle of an arctic wasteland. (This could be the result of a magical accident, a *gate* spell gone awry, a malfunctioning planar gateway, or perhaps even a spell cast upon the player by a hated enemy.) Lacking the proper warm clothing for the climate, the player must battle the frigid environment, find shelter, and make his way back to civilisation, all the while being stalked by a lone young adult winter wolf, having recently left its pack to strike out on its own.

TRANSFORMATION

At the end of an adventure, the players discover a cloak of white fur as part of a treasure hoard. If a *detect magic* spell is cast on the cloak, it is found to radiate strong transmutation magic. When a player (or NPC hireling, as best suits the players and campaign) puts it on, however, he instantly polymorphs into a winter wolf, changing to a neutral evil alignment in the process! The transformation is permanent, unless the other players can find a way to capture their erstwhile companion and reverse the process, perhaps by something as simple as a *dispel magic* spell, or possibly requiring the party to seek out a high-level cleric for a *miracle* spell. Their

now-evil associate in winter wolf form, of course, does everything in his power to elude capture and resist returning to humanoid form.

THE SUPER-PACK

The players are sent to investigate tales of a winter wolf pack of nearly ten times normal number that has been attacking humanoid villages and leaving nothing alive in its wake. This 'super-pack' is rumoured to be led by an oversized wolf of devious cunning and extraordinary power. Tracking down the large pack without being noticed should be an adventure in itself, but when the players finally meet up with the alpha male they learn that he's a half-fiend winter wolf of huge size!

Runt stared at the pups. Loyalty and affection warred with hatred and fear as he watched the tiny white furballs play rough and tumble with one another. Already, the smallest one had been singled out for special mistreatment and the others would nip and tease it before driving it away.

'My own life in miniature,' Runt thought silently. 'Pack or no pack I'm tempted to tear into them just for the meat!'

His reverie was interrupted by the return of the hunting party led by Silvereye himself. The alpha wolf pack leader took a snap at Runt as he passed, drawing blood with his fangs and leaving yet another long mark on the smaller wolf's mangy, starveling flanks.

Runt ducked his head in submission and slumped away toward the cavern entrance. Again. He settled in his favorite spot, a small depression half behind an old skeleton by the entrance. The others knew where to find him, of course, but it was some small comfort that few bothered him here. He fought down foolish fantasies of challenging Silvereye and ripping his throat out whether he gave up or not. He dreamed of mounting the alpha's own bitch and forcing her into submission for all the years of pain and torment. He knew any of these things were death, but couldn't suppress the tiny growl of untarnished, gleaming hatred that burned in his veins. He was Runt. Starved. Hated. Abused. Without really meaning to, he slunk out of the cave, mulling his fantasies of hatred and murder. His whole life a blur of pain and hunger.

Much later he stopped short and looked about, taking in the wild tundra as if he'd never before seen it. For the first time in hours he was truly aware of his surroundings and it occurred to him that he had no idea how to get back to the cave. He considered predators. He considered starvation. It surprised him that neither of these things held as much terror for him as returning home.

Elated and terrified, Runt set about searching for his next meal – free at last.

DRAGON RAID

A white dragon has recently claimed as its own the primary hunting grounds of a pack of winter wolves. After having had several pack members slain by the hungry dragon, and unable to take it on themselves, the winter wolves approach the players, eager for an alliance to help them rid their territory of this reptilian menace. The wolves have no use for the dragon's hoard and bequeath all of the riches to the players if they will help slay the creature.



BRUTE'S DEN

Brute is the leader of a small pack of six winter wolves and a human foundling. They are currently holed up in an underground den, as Brute's mate, Longhowl, has recently given birth to a small litter of two pups, Silvereyes and Pouncer. These two are curious bundles of energy, three weeks old and ready to conquer the world. Two young adults from an earlier litter, Sleek and Runt, round out the wolveren members of the pack. The last member, Firehair, is a human woman of seventeen years, the oldest member of Brute's pack. Firehair was taken from her parents at the tender age of one and a half, captured by Brute's father (and previous pack leader), Scarmuzzle. In that sense, Brute has been lucky - his parents had the difficult task of raising a human child, yet he has reaped the benefits of their hard work since taking over the pack upon Scarmuzzle's death several years ago.

The den was dug into the ground at the base of a small rise many years ago, and has been used by various winter wolf packs for decades. Upon stealing Firehair as a child, though, Scarmuzzle's pack made this lair their permanent residence, needing a safe and secure place in which to raise a young human to adulthood. Now that Firehair's a full pack member, Brute is eager to move on and

seek out better hunting grounds – preferably those including humanoid villages, as Brute would not mind outfitting his adopted human with as many tools and weapons as he can take as spoils of war. Of course, Longhowl's recent litter has put off Brute's schemes for another couple of months, at least until Silvereyes and Pouncer are big enough to keep up with the adults.

The Games Master can use Brute's lair as the location for an encounter with a pack of winter wolves, perhaps to liven up the player's journey across the tundra on their way to accomplish other campaign goals. The lair is generic enough to be placed either on the arctic plains or up in the mountains, as best suits the campaign. Optionally, the Games Master can use the lair as a template for creating similar winter wolf dens of his own.

1. Defensive Perimeter

Brute has a ring of caltrops encircling the entrance to the communal den. The caltrops were found in the backpack of a dwarven adventurer the pack slew several months ago. The adults in Brute's pack (including Firehair) are well aware of the location of the caltrops, which have been buried under several inches of blowing snow.

2. Entrance

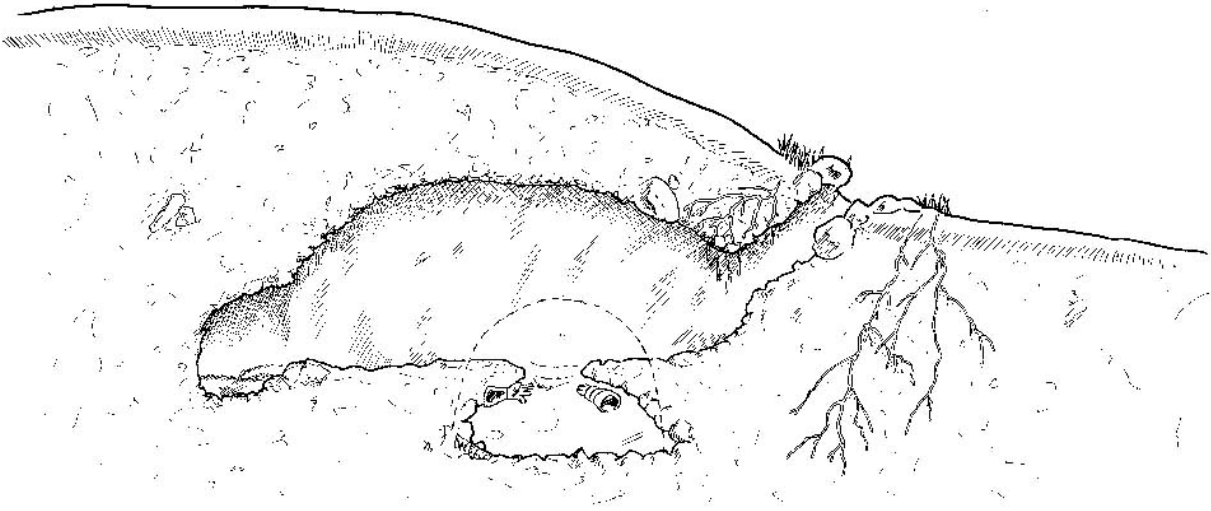
The only way into or out of the underground burrow is via this two-foot-tall hole. The adults must crawl on their bellies to fit through the entrance tunnel, which slopes down into the ground at a comfortable 30 degree angle. The pups are small enough to fit through the tunnel without a problem but have yet to do so, as Longhowl prefers they grow a bit bigger before allowing them out of the safety of the lair.

3. Communal Chamber

This large, circular chamber is roughly 20 feet in diameter and is where the bulk of the pack sleeps. At night, Brute himself guards the entrance by blocking it with his massive body while he sleeps (one of the reason for his name is his great physique; Brute is nearly 10 feet long and has maximum hit points for a winter wolf). Scattered along the edges of the chamber are a few bones, and the rest of the pack's 'treasure,' although the wolves see little value in it and regard it mainly as playthings for the new-born pups:

85 gp scattered loose along the floor; a battered steel helmet, sized for a dwarf; a woollen blanket





torn in several places (the wolves enjoy a good game of tug-of-war with it, although Firehair frequently claims it as part of her bedding when it is not otherwise in use); a diamond worth 150 gp (although it is partially embedded in the ice along the wall, and requires a Spot check, DC 15, to notice it); the thoroughly ripped remains of a canvas backpack, and a sealed *potion of cure serious wounds* in a metal flask (the potion is frozen solid and must be thawed out in order to activate its curative magic). The potion is labelled in Dwarven runes, although none of Brute's pack can read it, or any other language for that matter.

The communal chamber carries a general animal smell and anyone entering it for the first time, even if the entire pack were elsewhere, would realise that some type of animal had been living there recently.

4. Pups' Chamber

Dug down deeper from the communal chamber, for added protection, this area is where Longhowl gave birth to her newest litter. The new-borns seldom leave this section of the den, and have yet to see the outside world. Scattered on the floor of this chamber are the pups' favourite toys, a pair of *gauntlets of ogre power* that have been well-chewed but remain fully functional (Firehair refuses to wear them, as they came from the hated humans). Longhowl occasionally sleeps in this area to provide comfort for the pups, although this has become less necessary as the pups have grown older.

If the PCs enter the lair, all of the adults attack with a +2 circumstance bonus to their attack rolls whilst defending the pups.

5. Firehair's Chamber

In the back of the den is a narrow fissure where Firehair sleeps. It is the only 'bedroom' she can remember, as she has no memories of her life before being 'rescued' by the pack. Barely wide enough to turn around in, the niche is filled with a wide variety of untanned hides, the remains of many previous kills. These sorry hides serve as Firehair's mattress and blankets, although on particularly cold nights she often cuddles up against one of the other wolves for added warmth.

Named by Scarmuzzle for her shocking head of bright red hair, Firehair has grown into a sturdy young woman. Her lupine upbringing has developed her into a 2nd level barbarian. She would have no trouble surviving on her own in the arctic wilderness, but she loves her wolf family and will not willingly leave them. Unfortunately, Scarmuzzle's frequent stories of the inherent cruelty and evil of the human race have worked only too well upon Firehair, for she now has an unreasonable fear of all humanoids, and her first instinct is to flee them at first glance. Firehair does not differentiate between humanoid races, considering elves and dwarves to be human as well. Undaunted, Brute and Longhowl are determined to channel her fear into hatred, so their human foundling might at least join them in battle against the human villages Brute is so eager to raze. To that end, they have told Firehair that the dwarf they recently slew had been sent by his human tribe to capture her and take her back for interrogation and torture. Naturally, Firehair believes this, as she trusts everything Brute tells her. She will react to the sight of the players initially with unbridled fear, then immediately use her barbarian rage in an attempt to slay them all before



BRUTE'S DEN

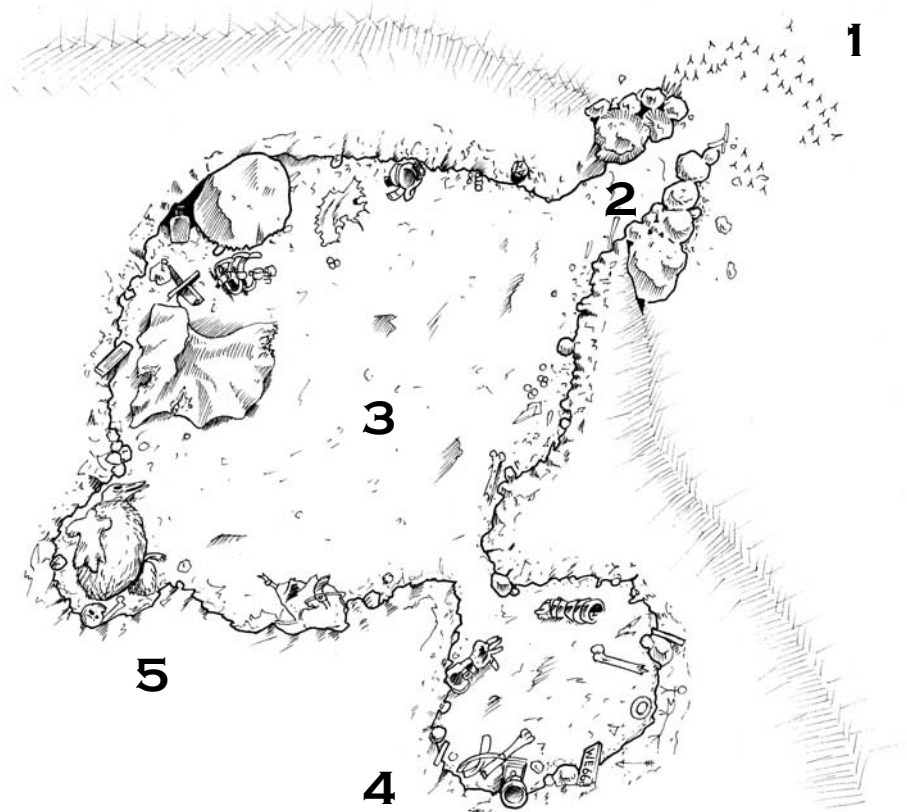
they can capture her and take her away from the pack. Unlike the winter wolves, however, Firehair is not truly evil, only misguided. Despite her understanding of the common tongue, she will be unlikely to believe anything the players say that contradicts the lies she has been told her entire life.

Firehair wears mismatched hide armour made from the pelts of various arctic animals, awkwardly sewn together with sinew. She wears Scarmuzzle's hide as a cloak, not only for warmth but also to keep the spirit of her 'first-father' close to her. With the old wolf's head flipped up over her own like a cowl, she might be mistaken for a winter wolf herself at a distance, especially if crouching down. Firehair wields a bone dagger and a spear, both of which she can hurl with deadly accuracy, although she usually throws the spear and then closes in for melee with the dagger.

USING BRUTE'S DEN

Depending upon how the Games Master uses Brute's Den in his campaign, the encounter with the pack could have several outcomes. The players might see Firehair as a willing accomplice to the obviously evil winter wolves, and slay her with little or no compunction. Given her willingness to slay the players to protect her 'family,' it would be difficult to fault the players for such an action. However, the Games Master might wish to drop clues about the true nature of Firehair's relationship with her adopted family, perhaps by having them encounter a small human settlement before meeting up with

Brute and his pack. The members of this settlement might warn the players that there are winter wolves in the area, or perhaps one of the trappers in the village can provide the players with much of the information in this Mini-Slayer's Guide, information he has gleaned from numerous encounters with the beasts. Informed of the winter wolves' tendency to capture and brainwash human infants as they are raised in lupine society, the players may recognise Firehair as the victim she truly is and hesitate to slay her despite her willingness to do the same to them. Indeed, a good-aligned party might see it as their duty to rescue Firehair from the wolf pack regardless of her lack of desire to be 'rescued' from the family she has come to love. The Games Master should grant the players full experience for merely subduing Firehair rather than killing her. This option holds the potential for several follow-on courses of action - 'deprogramming' Firehair from her hatred of humanity, reintegrating her into civilised society, and perhaps even reuniting her with living relatives who have long since given her up for dead, believing her to have been killed along with her parents when Scarmuzzle's pack attacked some sixteen years ago.



WINTER WOLF REFERENCE LIST

The following are provided as a quick and easy reference for Games Masters to use on short notice. However, it is suggested that Games Masters use these examples as mere starting points to build unique winter wolf adversaries for their player characters to confront. Several ideas for unusual winter wolves might be to give a few of them (perhaps the alpha male and female of a pack) a few levels as a barbarian, or perhaps by applying the half-fiend or half-dragon template onto a normal winter wolf. Note that such powerful winter wolves would tend to be very rare and thus are best when not overused.

Alpha Male

Large Magical Beast (Cold)

Hit Dice: 8d10+32 (76 hp)
Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: Bite +12 melee
Damage: Bite 1d8+7
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, trip
Special Qualities: Scent, cold subtype
Saves: Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities: Str 20, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 12
Skills: Hide +0*, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +2*
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative

Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: 1/10 coins; 50% goods; 50% items
Alignment: Always neutral evil

Alpha Female

Large Magical Beast (Cold)

Hit Dice: 7d10+21 (59 hp)
Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 16 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural)

Attacks: Bite +11 melee
Damage: Bite 1d8+6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, trip
Special Qualities: Scent, cold subtype
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 11
Skills: Hide +0*, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +1*
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative

Challenge Rating: 6
Treasure: 1/10 coins; 50% goods; 50% items
Alignment: Always neutral evil

Pack Member

Large Magical Beast (Cold)

Hit Dice: 6d10+18 (51 hp)
Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)
Attacks: Bite +9 melee
Damage: Bite 1d8+6
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, trip
Special Qualities: Scent, cold subtype
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +3
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10
Skills: Hide +0*, Listen +9, Move Silently +7, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +1*
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative

Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: 1/10 coins; 50% goods; 50% items
Alignment: Always neutral evil

Adult Runt

Medium Magical Beast (Cold)

Hit Dice: 4d10+4 (26 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 40 ft.
AC: 15 (+5 natural)
Attacks: Bite +7 melee
Damage: Bite 1d8+2
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Breath weapon, trip
Special Qualities: Scent, cold subtype
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +3
Abilities: Str 14, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 13,



WINTER WOLF REFERENCE LIST

Cha 8

Skills: Hide +4*, Listen +11, Move Silently +7, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +1*

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: 1/10 coins; 50% goods; 50% items

Alignment: Always neutral evil

Winter Wolf Pup

Small Magical Beast (Cold)

Hit Dice: 2d10+4 (15 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural)

Attacks: Bite +2 melee

Damage: Bite 1d4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Breath weapon (5 ft. cone, 2d6 damage), trip

Special Qualities: Scent, cold subtype

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +0

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 10

Skills: Hide +6*, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +1*

Feats: Alertness

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: 1/10 coins; 50% goods; 50% items

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

*All winter wolves also receive a +7 racial bonus to Hide checks in areas of snow and ice, as well as an additional +4 bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Foundling

Medium Humanoid (Human)

2nd-Level Barbarian

Hit Dice: 2d12+4 (17 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 hide armour)

Attacks: Dagger or spear +6 melee

Damage: Dagger 1d4+4 or spear 1d8+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Rage 1/day

Special Qualities: Fast movement, uncanny dodge

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +9, Jump +9, Listen +6, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +5

Feats: Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Hide armour, winter wolf fur cloak, spear, bone dagger

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

‘Now you listen and listen good!’ The arctic ranger hissed, his voice low with menace. ‘I can see you’re stupid enough to go regardless of any warning I give you, so pay attention because my next words might prevent you from being dinner. There’re winter wolves on the Skjeld.

‘A winter wolf is nothing to be trifled with. An average ice wolf is over eight feet from nose to tail-tip and weighs at least as much as a pony. But they aren’t just big. They aren’t just strong either although they’re both of those. They’re *smart*. Smart as you and me. They’ll use that to set traps, encircle you. Even fool you by pretending to be a traveller in trouble. They can talk, remember that – not that you can bargain with them.

‘More, they’re the ultimate in northland creatures. They can see through snow and aren’t even the least bit bothered by weather that would flay the skin from your bones. Their breath will freeze your blood solid and they aren’t limited in using it like a dragon. Fact is, I’ve seen a pack of winter wolves bring down a white dragon and only lose one of the pack doing it!

‘Don’t go up the Skjeld, southron. You won’t come back alive.’

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