

REIGN OF WINTER



THE SNOWS OF SUMMER

PART ONE: AN EARLY FROST

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To investigate a puzzling incursion of wintry weather and rescue a missing noble kidnapped by bandits, the PCs venture into the Border Wood, mysteriously blanketed in snow even at the height of summer.

PART TWO: THE DEPTHS OF WINTER

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Delving deeper into the forest, the PCs discover a magic portal that is the source of both the wintry weather and dangerous invaders from the far north.

PART THREE: LAND OF THE WHITE WITCHES

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Compelled to undertake a dangerous quest to save their world, the PCs cross through the portal into the winterbound land of Irrisen, where they soon make new friends and enemies among the local inhabitants.

PART FOUR: THE PALE TOWER

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To close the winter portal and save Taldor, the PCs must assault the Pale Tower, an ice fortress controlled by an ambitious winter witch.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

“The Snows of Summer” is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

- 1** The PCs begin this adventure at 1st level.
- 2** The PCs should be 2nd level by the time they find the winter portal in the Border Wood.
- 3** The PCs should be 3rd level by the time they arrive in the village of Waldsby in Irrisen.
- 4** The PCs should be 4th level before their final battle against Radosek Pavril in the Pale Tower.

The PCs should be well into 4th level by the end of the adventure.

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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Exactly 1,400 years ago, a powerful witch from another world named Baba Yaga arrived on Golarion with her *Dancing Hut*, a formidable artifact that can travel between worlds and even between the planes. In a quick, brutal conflict known as the Winter War, the self-proclaimed Queen of Witches conquered the eastern Linnorm Kingdoms of Raemerrund and the Djurstor Confederacy and founded a new nation locked in eternal winter—the land of Irrisen. After installing her daughter Jadwiga on the throne as Irrisen's first queen, Baba Yaga departed in her *Dancing Hut*, but she returned to Irrisen exactly 100 years later to replace Jadwiga with a new daughter, Morgannan, taking the former queen and the first generation of her descendants with her when she left again. Baba Yaga has continued this tradition every 100 years for the last 14 centuries, resulting in a succession of 14 queens of Irrisen. Most people assume Baba Yaga takes her daughters to explore strange new worlds, times, and dimensions, sharing with them the secrets of the multiverse. But the truth, hidden even from Baba Yaga's daughters, is far darker.

Baba Yaga is a nearly immortal witch of mythic power, and the source of both her longevity and her arcane might is one of her greatest secrets: The daughters that Baba Yaga removes from Irrisen's throne do not move on to bigger and better things—instead, they are sacrificed to fuel their mother's power. Baba Yaga temporarily grants each daughter the crown of Irrisen only so she can mature like fine wine, whereupon Baba Yaga returns after 100 years to drain that daughter's vitality and replenish her own. She then imprisons the withered, undead husk deep inside her *Dancing Hut* and crowns another daughter queen of Irrisen until her next return. This ploy has worked, almost without flaw, for 1,400 years. Only a few of Baba Yaga's daughters have rebelled against their mother to retain their crowns, but even then, none of them knew anything of Baba Yaga's true plans for them.

Now, the time to abdicate the crown draws near for Irrisen's current queen, Elvanna, the fourteenth daughter of Baba Yaga to hold that title, and she has begun to suspect that the popular belief regarding the fate of Baba Yaga's daughters—propagated by her sister, Queen Aelena, 900 years ago—might not be the truth. Through decades of research and magical divination, Elvanna learned that every queen of Irrisen has disappeared, never to be heard from again—not on any planet, plane, or dimension she could find. Though Elvanna could not divine the exact fate of her lost sisters, she discovered enough that she refused to simply wait for her mother to return and subject her to the same fate. Unlike her previous rebellious sisters, however, Elvanna seeks much more than simply to retain the throne of Irrisen. To defy

THE WITCHWAR LEGACY

The Reign of Winter Adventure Path assumes that the events in *Pathfinder Module: The Witchwar Legacy* have already taken place. In that adventure, Queen Elvanna sought the *Torc of Kostchtchie* to increase her own power in her eventual showdown with her mother. Unfortunately, things did not go as Elvanna planned—a band of heroes defeated her granddaughter, Ilivorr Karanasi, and stole the torc, before subsequently losing the artifact to agents of Kostchtchie sent by the demon lord to reclaim it. As a result, Elvanna turned her efforts to other means of keeping her throne—and these new plans set in motion the Reign of Winter Adventure Path.

Alternatively, if you would like to use *The Witchwar Legacy* to continue the campaign at the end of the Adventure Path, it is just as easy to assume that the events in the module have not yet occurred—leaving it to your PCs to seek out the Veil of Frozen Tears in search of the *Torc of Kostchtchie*.

In either case, the events of *The Witchwar Legacy* and the *Torc of Kostchtchie* itself do not impact the Reign of Winter Adventure Path in any significant way.

her all-powerful mother, Elvanna has decided to go all the way, and if successful, her rebellion will allow her to supplant the Queen of Witches herself.

With the help of her half-brother Grigori Rasputin, Elvanna lured Baba Yaga into a trap on the Queen of Witches' homeworld—Earth. A daunting contest of wills ensued, but Elvanna was victorious, and imprisoned her mother in Rasputin's fortress in Siberia. Despite Baba Yaga's seeming defeat, however, she had made her own contingency plans against such treachery. Suspecting something amiss in Rasputin's summons, Baba Yaga summoned her Three Riders—fey harbingers who appear in Irrisen every 100 years to herald her return—and informed them that if she did not make her scheduled appearance in Irrisen, then they should assume some ill fate had befallen her and come to her aid. Baba Yaga's plan was to leave a trail her loyal servants could follow, consisting of a number of items that act as keys for controlling her *Dancing Hut*. This trail would enable the Three Riders (or other rescuers) to track her down across various lands, and even other worlds, to free her.

Unaware of her mother's precautions, Elvanna returned to Golarion and shackled Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut* in Whitethrone's Market Square as a trophy and evidence of her success in overthrowing her mother, taking care to deactivate all of the keys inside that could be used to control the *Dancing Hut*, so no one could steal it from her. At the same time, Elvanna created a back door into the

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hut for herself—a magic mirror portal that allows her to freely pass between the Royal Palace in Whitethrone and the hut's inner sanctum.

With the hut thus secured, Elvanna embarked on a hunt for Baba Yaga's Three Riders. While she was able to capture and kill two of the Riders, the Black Rider managed to evade capture, only to discover that with its keys deactivated, he could not use the *Dancing Hut* himself to find Baba Yaga. Taking the deactivated keys with him to Iobaria, the Black Rider fled into the wilderness. Enraged, Elvanna instructed her armies to hunt down the Rider even as she turned her attention to the next part of her ambitious plan.

Leaving most of the day-to-day administration of Irrisen's government in the hands of her daughter, Princess Cassisoche, and a small army of Jadwiga bureaucrats, Elvanna began performing complex rituals to expand Irrisen's eternal winter to cover all of Golarion and turn the unprepared and unsuspecting planet into an icy world under her iron control. With the power of a new ice age at her command, Elvanna believes that no force on Golarion or beyond could ever challenge her again. The first stage of Elvanna's plan has involved opening portals between Irrisen and numerous locations across the globe. As a result, small pockets of unnatural winter, along with monstrous denizens of the frozen north, have begun appearing all over Avistan and Garund—including near the small village of Heldren in the nation of Taldor.

This winter portal manifests because of the direct actions of the White Witch Nazhena Vasilliova, a member of Irrisen's ruling elite assisting Elvanna in her power grab. Nazhena's apprentice, a winter witch named Radosek Pavril, is carrying on her work while Nazhena returns to Whitethrone to report to Elvanna on their progress. Radosek has already sent many cold fey agents into the Border Wood near Heldren to strengthen Irrisen's presence in the area. The fey are under the leadership of a devious moss troll named Teb Knotten and a vicious ice mephit called Izoze, who are both charged with guarding the winter portal.

Soon after crossing through the portal into the Border Wood, the Irriseni invaders came into conflict with a group of bandits called Rohkar's Raiders operating in the forest, led by a conniving priest of Norgorber named Rohkar Cindren. Although Rohkar and his gang initially resisted the invaders, the bandit leader quickly came to realize that they were no match for the fey and surrendered. Believing that Rohkar might prove valuable in sharing information about Taldor and could act as their agent in the lands surrounding the Border Wood, Izoze was able to convince Teb to spare the bandits.

Now in an uneasy partnership, the bandits have helped Izoze explore the edges of the forest, where they came

upon the caravan of a young noblewoman named Argentea Malassene, who was traveling from the city of Zimar to one of Taldor's canals so she could return by boat to the capital in Oppara. Immediately recognizing the value of such a target, Rohkar urged Izoze to attack the caravan. The ice mephit agreed, provided the bandits took the noblewoman captive rather than sating their bloodlust. The bandits have taken Lady Argentea back to their lair, a sturdy lodge deep in the heart of the forest, but they have left a clear trail in the deep snow. Rohkar is savoring the moment when he can take Lady Argentea's life as a sacrifice for Norgorber, while Izoze and Teb Knotten have instead hatched a plan to use the noblewoman's stature in Taldan society to further their cause.

But Lady Argentea is not the only person to fall afoul of these villains. Some of the locals near Heldren have also encountered the bandits and their cold fey allies, as well as other creatures of the frozen north that were drawn through the portal. Rumors are already swirling about what this unseasonable weather could mean for the region. No one suspects that it could actually spell doom for the entire world.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

When a supernatural pocket of winter appears in the Border Wood near the village of Heldren, the PCs are sent to investigate, and to find and rescue a traveling aristocrat apparently kidnapped by bandits in the wood. At the center of the winter pocket, the PCs discover the source of the unseasonable weather: a magic portal leading to the frozen land of Irrisen, far to the north. But they soon realize that the threat endangers more than just Heldren when a dying horseman comes through the portal—the Black Rider, the last survivor of Baba Yaga's Three Riders. He charges the PCs with finding Baba Yaga to stop Queen Elvanna from spreading Irrisen's eternal winter over all of Golarion.

Driven by the need to save their homeland and compelled to act by the witchcraft of the Black Rider, the PCs cross into Irrisen through the open portal. The PCs have the opportunity to befriend the peasants of the village of Waldsby, but also make powerful enemies as well—for the White Witch who rules the region, Nazhena Vasilliova, is also responsible for creating the winter portal in Taldor. The PCs must journey to the White Witch's stronghold, a fortress of pure ice called the Pale Tower, and face Nazhena's apprentice, Radosek Pavril, a skilled winter witch in his own right. Only after Radosek is defeated can the PCs save their hometown of Heldren and shut down the winter portal. With the portal closed, the PCs find themselves trapped in Irrisen, but the Black Rider's quest points them toward the city of Whitethrone, the next stop in their search for Baba Yaga.

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PART ONE: AN EARLY FROST

The adventure begins in the village of Heldren, a small village in Taldor just north of the Border Wood near Qadira. Heldren is detailed in the article beginning on page 62. The PCs should all be residents of (or recent arrivals to) Heldren, where rumors of strange, unseasonable pockets of wintry weather appearing across Taldor have begun to circulate among the town's gossip mongers.

To set the scene and start the adventure, read or paraphrase the following to the PCs.

The sleepy village of Heldren has rarely seen so much excitement or concern. Hunters from the nearby Border Wood speak of unnaturally cold weather at the height of summer that descended on the forest just days ago. Heavy snow followed, and those who returned spoke of an uneasy presence in the woods, as well as new, dangerous predators. No one knows what this event means, but the town's soothsayer, Old Mother Theodora, claims dark times lie ahead.

As if in proof of that dire prophecy, a badly wounded mercenary arrived in town yesterday, claiming to be a bodyguard of Lady Argentea Malassene. He told the village council that the noblewoman's escort came under attack by bandits and strange, wintry creatures near the edge of the Border Wood. He alone escaped, and Lady Argentea was dragged away into the forest. Now the townsfolk cast fearful eyes toward the snowy forest, worried what else might emerge to threaten their peaceful village.

If the PCs gather to find out more about these recent events, allow them to attempt Diplomacy checks to gather information or Knowledge (local) checks, and consult the table below for the information they can learn about recent events in and around Heldren and the Border Wood.

LOCAL LORE

Result	Rumor
5+	Everyone says the weather is unseasonably cold for midsummer—it even snowed in the Border Wood! Most suspect magic is involved, and some fear Qadiran agents played a role in it.
10+	Old Man Dansby claims that someone keeps stealing from his fields. His farm lies closest to the Border Wood, where half his crops have died from an icy frost and the rest have been carried off.
12+	A farmer's son took ill a few days ago after falling through the ice over Wishbone Creek. The boy said he spotted a white stag in the forest—and heard it talking—then tried to follow it.
15+	A group of rangers in the Border Wood called the High Sentinels usually keep bandit activity curbed. They're doing a poor job if brigands could attack a well-armed caravan and abduct Lady Argentea.

WHY TALDOR?

The Reign of Winter Adventure Path kicks off in the small village of Heldren. This adventure assumes that Heldren is located in the nation of Taldor. However, the adventure can start almost anywhere on Golarion, enabling you to place Heldren in another nation to support the backgrounds of individual PCs. Heldren is generic enough that it could be a village in almost any Inner Sea nation, as long as it is close to a forest. Likewise, the abducted noblewoman Lady Argentea Malassene can easily be modified to represent any local aristocrat or significant NPC to serve as the catalyst for the PCs' investigation. If you decide to move Heldren, the village should not be placed in Irrisen, as a major part of this adventure involves the PCs crossing through a magic portal to that far-off land, and the adventure ends with the PCs trapped in Irrisen, far from their homes.

- 18+ Locals say a hunter named Dryden Kepp claimed he saw a giant white weasel on the High Ridge in the forest. No one believed him so he went back to trap it and prove them wrong.
- 20+ Two weeks ago, Lady Argentea Malassene traveled past Heldren on her way from Oppara to Zimar to meet her betrothed. Rumor has it the two didn't get along and Lady Argentea caused a scandal by calling off the engagement and returning home.

If the PCs don't seem interested in investigating these strange occurrences or Lady Argentea's disappearance, the village council, led by **Ionnia Teppen** (NG female human commoner 7), eventually approaches them. The councilors confirm the rumors that a pocket of unearthly winter weather has recently appeared in the Border Wood, and inform the PCs that a rider from Zimar arrived in town the previous day bearing ominous tidings. The rider, an Ulfen mercenary named Yuln Oerstag, was part of the guard escorting Lady Argentea Malassene from Zimar to Oppara. As the caravan skirted the Border Wood, however, the noblewoman's carriage came under attack by bandits and strange, wintry creatures. Lady Argentea was carried off, and Yuln was the only one to escape. He is badly wounded, but he has been able to describe the horrific creatures that attacked the noblewoman's party. A native of the far north, Yuln recognized some of the icy creatures that emerged from the forest, and the tales he shared with the council have everyone rightly concerned.

Heldren is barely large enough to marshal a decent militia to protect the town, so it needs the assistance of local heroes like the PCs. Councilor Teppen asks the PCs

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to investigate these events, encouraging them to rescue Lady Argentea and determine the source of the threat hiding in the icy heart of the forest.

SPEAKING WITH YULN

Before heading into the Border Wood, the PCs may wish to speak with **Yuln Oerstag** (LN male human fighter 2), the lone survivor of the attack on Lady Argentea Malassene's caravan. The village councilors take the PCs to the Willowbark Apothecary, where the wounded bodyguard is recovering. Wrapped in bandages, the Ulfen mercenary's nose, fingers, and toes have taken on a black hue from serious frostbite, and he is still heavily wounded. Despite the best efforts of Elder Safander, Heldren's village priest, it will take some time before Yuln is hale and hearty enough to travel again, much less wield a weapon. Despite his obvious pain, however, he waves the PCs closer to speak with them.

"Would that I could go with you," he says. "My ancestors would ridicule my lack of valor for fleeing rather than fighting to the end. But I faced enemies that even the greatest warriors in the Linnorm Kingdoms have faltered against, though I think I slew at least one of them before they dragged Lady Argentea away."

If the PCs question Yuln further about the attack, his most likely answers follow. A native of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, he can also relate the tale of Baba Yaga's conquest of Irrisen, and warn the PCs of the cruelty of the White Witches who rule there—all described from the perspective of an Ulfen warrior with centuries of bitter resentment bred into him.

Who attacked you? "We thought they were just bandits at first—outlaws who hide like wolves in the forest. They were no match for us. But then came the cold fey of the north. They appeared among us and the battle turned quickly. My people speak of the winter-touched all the time, but I never expected to meet them this far south."

What are the "winter-touched"? "Fey creatures who have sworn themselves to the White Witches of Irrisen, those who stole our lands from us during the Winter War. Tiny sprites no taller than the length of a man's forearm. But don't be fooled by their small stature. Legends say they have taken a sliver of ice into their hearts, and their touch bears the harsh bite of winter."

Where did they take Lady Argentea? "Into the forest, back through the ice and snow. Beyond that, I don't know."

I followed as far as I could, but the winter-touched were too many and too hard to fend off in the snow alone. I barely escaped, and rode to seek help here."

Why would they want Lady Argentea? "I don't know. But if one of the White Witches took her, no good shall come of it. The winter-touched do nothing without the leave of those who placed the ice in their hearts. If they're here, it's because a White Witch sent them. And much worse will follow."

How do you fight the winter-touched? "With cold iron and burning flame. Both burn them, and both are weapons they fear."

Yuln has little additional information to share, but he is willing to loan the PCs his cold iron longsword to assist them in rescuing Lady Argentea. Once the PCs have finished questioning Yuln, they can buy equipment and prepare themselves for their journey into the wilderness, but the village council urges them to make haste if they want to find Lady Argentea alive.



YULN OERSTAG

TRAVELING CONDITIONS

The attack on Lady Argentea's caravan took place approximately 6 miles south of Heldren. None of the intervening territory has been affected by the wintry weather over the Border Wood yet, though the air grows noticeably cooler the closer the

PCs come to the forest's edge. Once the PCs pass inside the tree line where the pocket of winter begins, however, the weather proves much worse, with temperatures below freezing and falling snow. The snow reduces visibility by half, imposing a -4 penalty on Perception checks and ranged attacks (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 438).

The temperatures inside the winter pocket are considered cold (approximately 30° F during the day, and 10° F at night). Every hour spent in the wintry conditions requires a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) to avoid taking 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. Those who have taken nonlethal damage from exposure suffer from hypothermia (treat as fatigued), and if this condition is not remedied, they also suffer from frostbite (*Core Rulebook* 442). If the PCs secure cold-weather outfits before leaving Heldren, they receive a +5 bonus on Fortitude saves against exposure to the weather while adventuring in the forest.

Additionally, within the edges of the Border Wood, 6 inches of snow cover the ground, reducing overland travel rates by half. During combat, entering a snow-covered square costs 2 squares of movement. Snowshoes (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 91) can significantly reduce these penalties, but no one in Heldren makes or sells them.

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However, a PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Craft (shoes) skill check can fashion a serviceable pair.

A. MASSACRE SITE

Yuln can give the PCs clear directions to the site of the attack on Lady Argentea Malassene's caravan. Retracing his trail, the PCs come across the remains of the noblewoman's escort on the fringes of the Border Wood. When the PCs reach this location, read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

Near the forest, the temperature grows noticeably colder. The road ahead is littered with debris and the corpses of slain humans and horses. A carriage stands in the roadway, its team of horses missing or cut free, while another overturned carriage lies sprawled and broken next to the tree line. To the south, more bodies have fallen around what appears to be a statue of ice. A snowy trail leads deeper into the forest.

This close to the winter pocket, the temperature has dropped considerably, hovering just above freezing, and a light dusting of snow covers the ground. Lady Argentea's entourage included two carriages, a few handmaidens and servants, and 10 guards. Only she and Yuln survived. The rest were slain in the coordinated attack by Izoze, her winter-touched allies, and Rohkar's Raiders. Most of the bodies lie pierced with tiny needles and shards of ice, the handiwork of winter-touched fey arrows and Izoze's icy breath weapon. All of the bodies, with the exception of the captain (see area A4) have been stripped of armor and weapons.

A1. Wrecked Carriage

Rohkar's bandits already looted this overturned carriage. Two of Lady Argentea's handmaidens lie dead inside.

Treasure: The broken chests and boxes strewn across the ground contain the handmaidens' spare clothing, including three courtier's outfits worth a total of 90 gp.

A2. Locked Carriage (CR 1)

The decorative chasings on this expensive carriage bear the marks of Taldan heraldry, as well as damage from the many arrows fired in the battle that took place here. A spear has been wedged between the handles of the carriage doors to hold them closed. Removing the spear to open the doors is a move action.

Creatures: Muffled sounds of movement emanate from inside the carriage. Rohkar stuffed two slain guards inside and then animated them as zombies. He locked them in the carriage as a surprise for anyone investigating the massacre. He recently animated more undead to defend his lair in the Border Wood (see area H), so these zombies are no longer under his control, but they still attack as soon as anyone opens the carriage.

ZOMBIES (2)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 12 each (Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 288)

Treasure: While looting Lady Argentea's carriage, the bandits missed a small jewelry box under the seat, which can be found with a successful DC 15 Perception check. Lady Argentea's signet ring is still inside, as are a pair of earrings worth 25 gp, a set of pearl-inlaid bracelets worth 90 gp, assorted gold and silver necklaces worth a total of 75 gp, and one sapphire pendant worth 50 gp.

A3. Ice Statue

The remains of the Taldan captain tasked with escorting Lady Argentea from Zimar back to Oppara stand here as a gruesome statue, his slain body mostly encased in ice. Izoze made an example of him for others to find. Unfortunately, the captain's body is no longer intact, as the mephit carved away pieces of him that now lie in blocks of slowly melting ice at his feet.

Treasure: The frozen captain still wears his breastplate, emblazoned with Taldan heraldry, and one of the chunks of ice contains the captain's arm, still grasping his masterwork longsword.

A4. Snowy Trail

At the edge of the massacre site, an obvious trail leads between a copse of trees and over a snowy plain toward the Border Wood. Rohkar's bandits took the surviving horses from Lady Argentea's carriage with them, transporting both the noblewoman and the valuables they looted from her belongings. The bandits were unable to hide their trail in the heavy snow, so it can be followed easily without the need for Survival checks. The trail leads all the way to their lair at the High Sentinel Lodge (area H).

B. TRAILSIDE TRAP (CR 2)

As it enters the full expanse of the Border Wood, the trail passes through a small clearing among the taller trees before continuing uphill and out of sight. A large chest lies half-buried in the snow, apparently dropped or discarded by those who hastily passed this way.

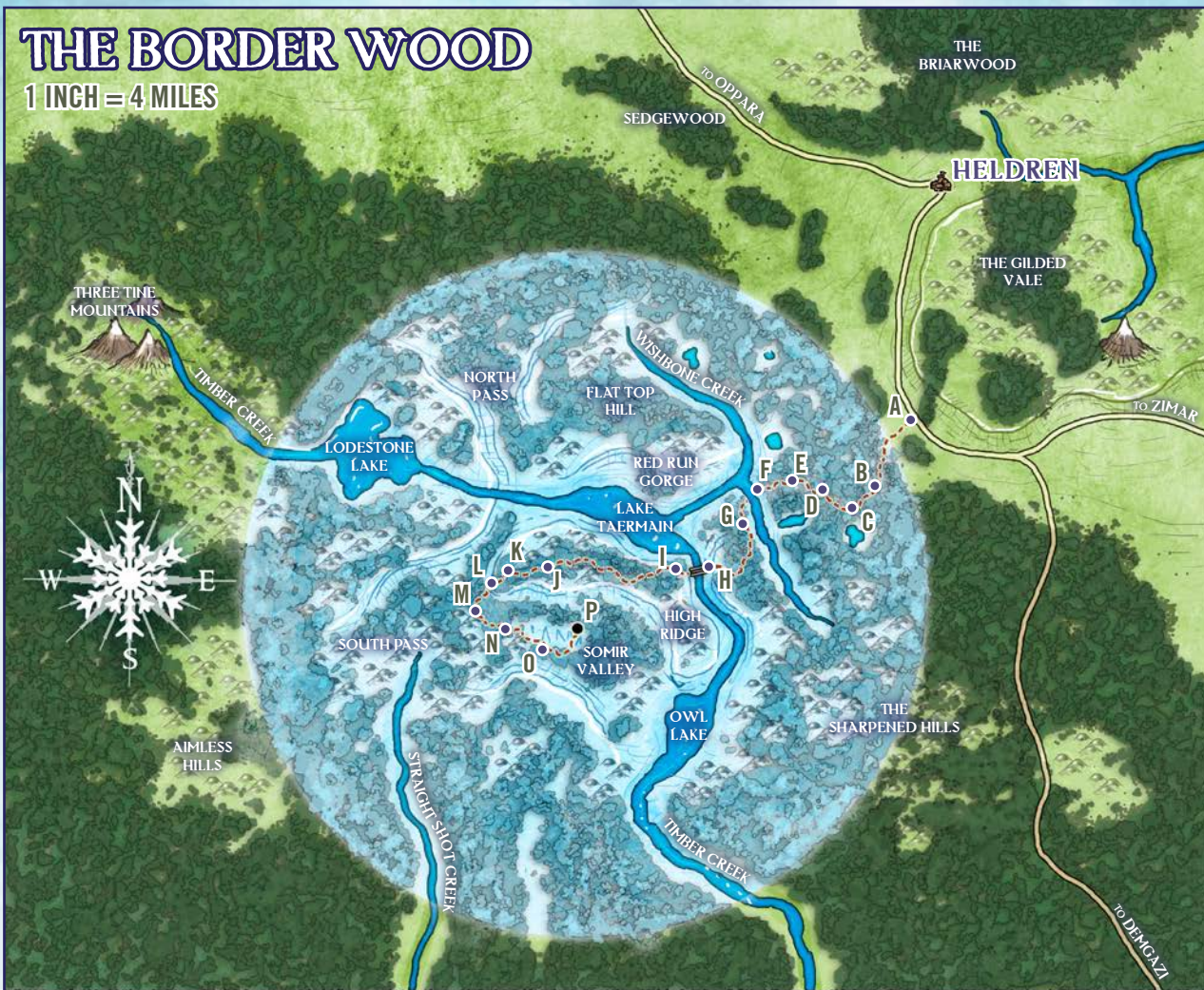
Rohkar's bandits buried the bulkier spoils from Lady Argentea's caravan here so the gang could make faster progress to the lodge that serves as their base, planning to reclaim the goods at a later time.

Trap: The bandits left a surprise to protect their buried loot, using a heavy chest taken from Lady Argentea's carriage. The packed snow hides a rope they strung through the undergrowth to a spiked log suspended high in the trees. Once the trap is triggered, the log drops down

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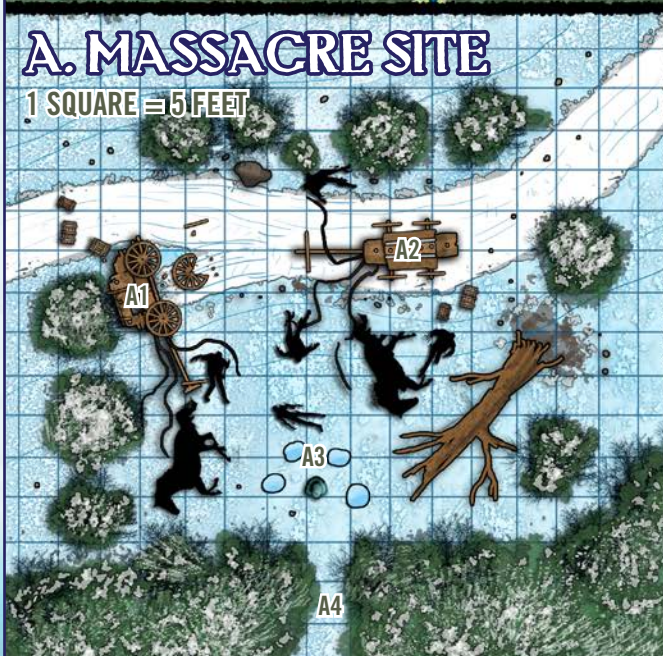
THE BORDER WOOD

1 INCH = 4 MILES



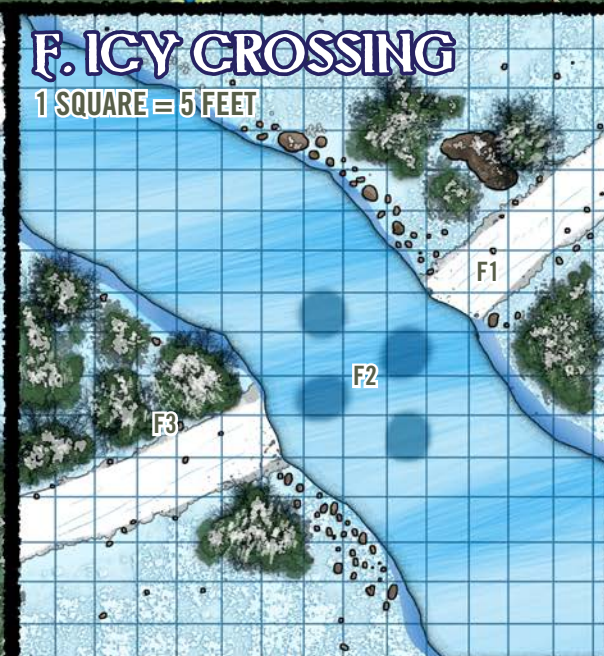
A. MASSACRE SITE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



F. ICY CROSSING

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



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and sweeps through every target gathered around the chest and along the trail.

SPIKED LOG TRAP CR 2

XP 600

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect Atk +10 melee (1d8+3/19–20 bludgeoning and piercing damage); multiple targets (all targets in a 20-ft. line)

Treasure: The half-buried chest is empty, but the bandits buried their spoils beneath it. If the chest is dug up, the loot is plainly visible. The cache contains the majority of the weapons and armor stripped from Lady Argentea's guards, including five sets of leather armor, three sets of studded leather armor, a masterwork chain shirt, two light wooden shields, seven longswords, two spears, a masterwork dagger, and three light crossbows with a total of 25 bolts.

C. HEAVY SNOWDRIFT (CR 2)

The snow becomes increasingly deep in this part of the forest, where a windswept gully carves a path through a tree-covered ridge. A soft cascade of snow falls from an overhead branch, hissing softly as it strikes the ground.

Because of the deep snowdrifts in the gully, entering a snow-covered square requires 4 squares of movement.

Creature: Among the many predators released into the Border Wood with the opening of the winter portal from Irrisen was a white-scaled, arctic-born tatzlwyrms that now hunts the forest. At first, it fed on native wildlife caught unprepared for the sudden shift in weather. But heavy snow drove most of its prey into unaffected areas of the forest, so now the tatzlwyrms hides in the snow-covered undergrowth of the gully waiting for new prey to wander past. The arctic tatzlwyrms gains a +6 racial bonus on Stealth checks in snow, so PCs must succeed at a DC 26 Perception check to notice it.

ARCTIC TATZLWYRM CR 2

XP 600

Variant tatzlwyrms (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 261)

hp 22

TACTICS

During Combat The tatzlwyrms relies on its superior Stealth skill to remain hidden before choosing its first victim—preferably someone unarmored and easier to bite. Then it pounces and rakes before grappling with its grab ability. Thereafter, it uses its poison gasp to weaken a victim before dragging her under the snow to suffocate her. If driven out

of the gully, the tatzlwyrms climbs the nearest tree, carrying anyone still caught in its coils. If the tatzlwyrms is slain while holding someone in a tree, the victim must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save to catch herself on a tree branch or she takes falling damage.

Morale The tatzlwyrms fights to the death.

D. DECORATED TREES (CR 2)

Feathered bundles and strange fetishes hang from the lowest branches of the trees in this part of the forest, swaying and shifting in the wind. All are stuck through with small pins holding pieces of leather bound around them.

The feathered fetishes are actually the frozen corpses of dead crows, pierced with tiny sprite arrows, clear evidence of the malevolent fey presence filling the Border Wood. At Teb Knotten's direction, Izoze led several winter-touched sprites into the Border Wood to scout for dangers they might face as they establish a foothold in Taldor. Initially, these fey helped Rohkar's Raiders assault Lady Argentea's entourage, but on their way back, the sprites discovered a flight of crows in this part of the forest. Since then, they've busied themselves with eliminating the pests and making horrific examples of them, harboring the same resentment and hatred for the birds as the people of Irrisen.

Creatures: Three winter-touched sprites named Pym, Shor, and Vosi remain here, but they soon turn their attention to the PCs as new targets. Initially, the sprites hide among the trees, masking their luminosity and surrounding the PCs on different sides of the trail (Perception DC 30 to notice). Any sprite detected by the PCs purposefully increases its luminosity and casts *dancing lights*, shaping the spell to give the impression that a whole host of sprites accompanies them.

PYM, SHOR, AND VOSI (3) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

Male and female winter-touched sprite fighters 1 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 256 and page 72)

CE Diminutive fey (cold)

Init +3; Senses detect evil, detect good, low-light vision; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+3 Dex, +4 size)

hp 10 each (2 HD; 1d6+1d10+2)

Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1

DR 2/cold iron; Immune cold

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee short sword +3 (1d2–2/19–20 plus numbing cold)

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Ranged shortbow +8 (1d2–2/x3 plus numbing cold)

Space 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks numbing cold (DC 11)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +6)

Constant—*detect evil*, *detect good*

At will—*dancing lights*, *daze* (DC 11)

1/day—*color spray* (DC 12)

TACTICS

During Combat Initially, the sprites snipe at the PCs while hiding in the trees. After firing, they can attempt another Stealth check at a –20 penalty to stay hidden. If anyone closes on their position, the sprites forgo further attacks until they can silently relocate to another tree. Any sprite spotted by the PCs fights defensively to protect itself, drawing the PCs' attention so its companions can sneak up behind the PCs and catch their enemies in a *color spray*. They take turns with this tactic to blind, stun, and knock out as many targets as possible, then rain arrows infused with numbing cold on those who remain.

Morale If the sprites are faced with fire-based attacks or the PCs manage to slay the majority of them, the remaining sprites flee, seeking out Fawfein (at area E) or Izoze (at area H4) for protection. They cast *dancing lights* once more to mask their retreat, sending the lights in different directions as they dim their own luminosity in the hope of leading pursuers astray.

STATISTICS

Str 7, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8,

Cha 13

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 8

Feats Alertness, Deadly Aim

Skills Escape Artist +15,

Fly +21, Perception +6,

Sense Motive +5, Stealth +20,

Survival +4

Languages Common, Sylvan

SQ luminous

Gear short sword, shortbow

with 20 arrows, 14 gp

E. THE TALKING STAG (CR 3)

A narrow game trail winds its way through the trees and undergrowth here. Hoofprints mark the underlying snow, leading in both directions.

Creatures: A winter-touched atomie named Fawfein and his pet stag wander

this part of the forest, exploring the Border Wood to locate future sites and paths for the Irriseni invaders to use. Normally, Fawfein hides on the stag's back, blending in with its white fur (Perception DC 30 to notice). Once he or the stag detects the PCs, however, Fawfein turns invisible and has the animal approach them. Fawfein attempts to engage the PCs in conversation, making a Bluff check to pretend to speak through the stag and make the PCs think the animal is a friendly magical beast. He gathers as much information as he can about the PCs, including why they've come to the forest, so he can warn Izoze and Teb Knotten. A PC who succeeds at a Sense Motive check sees through Fawfein's Bluff to realize someone other than the stag is talking. If discovered, he and the stag attack in unison.

FAWFEIN

CR 1

XP 400

Male winter-touched atomie (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 28

and page 72)

hp 9

TACTICS

During Combat Fawfein uses his *speak with animals* ability to direct the stag to charge and gore the least armored foe. Meanwhile, he invisibly flies

after the most dangerous opponent to target that character's weapon with *shrink item* and tip the odds in his favor. Thereafter, he casts *reduce person* on enemies and flanks with the stag to make sneak attacks.

Morale If the stag is slain, Fawfein flies into a rage to avenge it, fighting to the death while cursing the killers in Sylvan. Otherwise, if Fawfein is reduced to 3 hit points or fewer, he commands the stag to flee, turns invisible again, and attempts to flee as well in order to bring word of the PCs to his superiors.

THE TALKING STAG

CR 1

XP 400

Elk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 147)

hp 15



WINTER-TOUCHED SPRITE

THE SNOWS OF SUMMER

F. ICY CROSSING

With the sustained wintry weather over the past several days, a small stream called Wishbone Creek has frozen over. Teb Knotten and Izoze have sought out natural barriers like this during their exploration of the forest within the wintry pocket created by the portal from Irrisen so they can better position their allies. Use the map on page 12 for this encounter.

F1. Trail Sign (CR 3)

A human-sized snowman stands in the middle of the trail before a frozen stream. A crude wooden sign leans against it and bears the words "Trespassers Turn Back."

Trap: Teb Knotten's minions placed an especially nasty ward here in the guise of a snowman. When anyone comes within 15 feet of the snowman, it seemingly stirs to life and speaks in Common. This effect is actually a *magic mouth* spell, which addresses those who triggered it by saying, "Can't you read? The sign says turn back! Now get lost!" Anyone who ignores this warning and approaches within 5 feet of the snowman activates a *sound burst* that erupts as a scream of frustration from the frozen guardian.

SOUND BURST TRAP

CR 3

XP 800

Type magic; Perception DC 27; Disable Device DC 27

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (5 feet, *alarm*); **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*sound burst*, 1d8 sonic damage plus stunned for 1 round, Fort DC 18 negates stunned effect); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-foot-radius spread centered on the snowman)

Development: The *sound burst* alerts the elementals lurking in the stream below the ice (at area F2), who emerge from the ice to attack any stunned creatures.

F2. Wishbone Creek (CR 3)

A solid sheet of ice extends across this frozen stream, while snow-covered rocks line its banks.

The stream is 20 feet wide at this point, but its surface is frozen (see Hazard, below).

Creatures: Two Small ice elementals named Skrikks and Szassh watch over this creek, acting as guardians toward anyone trying to cross. They patrol the stream in opposite directions before returning here every few hours to consult with one another. For swifter movement, they use their swim speed to navigate the cold waters beneath the

ice, emerging to challenge anyone in this part of the forest. While they're not exceptionally bright, the elementals share their reports with Izoze on a regular basis when she visits to check on them. So far, they've had little to discuss other than the waylaying of a farmer from Heldren, but the mephit has since warned them that additional travelers may come searching for Lady Argentea.

SKRIKKS AND SZASSH (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Small ice elemental (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 114)

hp 13 each

TACTICS

During Combat Skrikks and Szassh attempt to force opponents toward the weakened areas of ice, using combat maneuvers to bull rush or reposition them there if necessary. Otherwise, they emerge in the more solid areas to block and flank those trying to cross, using their slam attacks and numbing cold to stagger and kill anyone still standing.

Morale The elementals fight to the death.

Hazard: The frozen creek acts as an ice sheet; entering a square covered in ice costs 2 squares of movement, and the DC of Acrobatics checks increases by 5 in such squares. A successful DC 10 Acrobatics check is required to run or charge across the creek. The ice is weakened, as the ice elementals have shaved away portions of the surface from below (marked with dark circles on the map). A Medium or larger creature entering one of these squares must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid falling through the ice into the water below. The creek is only 6 feet deep, but any immersed in the cold water must immediately succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or they each take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage and suffer from hypothermia (treat as fatigued). These penalties (and the ensuing damage) only end if the victims change into dry clothes, get warm, and heal the nonlethal damage taken from exposure.

F3. Dead Body

The legs and feet of a frozen corpse jut from a pile of snow next to the trees here.

The dead body of Old Man Dansby, a farmer from Heldren, lies here. He chased a couple of winter-touched sprites who were stealing crops from his fields into the forest and ultimately fell victim to the ice elementals.

Treasure: A former soldier of Taldor, Dansby kept his possessions in good repair, and they remain with his body. They include a composite longbow (+1 Str) with 12 arrows; a dagger; a masterwork handaxe; and a pouch containing 14 gp, 25 sp, and 18 cp.

REIGN OF WINTER

G. BANDITS ON THE TRAIL (CR 1)

The trail begins to climb a ridgeline to the south beneath snow-laden trees. The prints of boots and horses mar the freshly fallen snow on the trail.

Creatures: Rohkar tasked three of his followers with staying behind here to intercept any pursuit that might come after Lady Argentea, and give the main force of bandits at the High Sentinel Lodge (area **H**) advance warning of their approach.

Without supervision, however, the lazy bandits have fallen to quarreling over their shares of the loot from Lady Argentea's caravan. If the PCs succeed at Stealth checks opposed by the bandits' Perception checks (the PCs gain a +5 bonus on their checks because of the bandits' distraction), they can easily take the inattentive bandits by surprise. If the bandits detect the PCs first, they hide among the trees to ready an ambush.

ROHKAR'S RAIDERS (3)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

Human warrior 1

CE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (+1 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 7 each (1d10+2)

Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** -1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword +3 (1d6+1/19-20)

Ranged shortbow +2 (1d6/x3)

TACTICS

During Combat If able to prepare an ambush, the bandits fire on the most heavily armored opponents first, hoping to wound them before engaging in melee. Thereafter, they drop their bows, draw their swords, and charge.

Morale If overmatched or caught by surprise, the bandits withdraw, believing the Taldan authorities have come to avenge Lady Argentea's abduction. Fighting defensively, they separate to put distance between themselves, covering each other with their bows, while they try to make it back to the lodge to warn the bandits of the PCs' presence. If pinned down (or flanked), they draw their swords and fight.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 13, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13

Feats Skill Focus (Stealth), Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Intimidate +3, Perception +0, Stealth +4

Languages Common

Other Gear padded armor, buckler, short sword, shortbow with 20 arrows, 8 gp, 5 sp

H. THE HIGH SENTINEL LODGE

For many years, an organization of Taldan rangers called the High Sentinels has operated out of a fortified lodge at the top of Red Run Gorge in the Border Wood, charged with guarding the forest against Qadiran aggression, lest Taldor's ancient enemy use the wood to hide another invasion force. Over time, however, the continued lack of hostility with Qadira dulled the sharpness of the Sentinels, and most of the unit's decorated veterans either retired or moved on to other posts, leaving inexperienced citizens of Heldren and the nearby cities of Demgazi and Zimar to fill the rangers' ranks. The Sentinels turned their attention to more local matters, hunting down bandits who used the forest to attack trade routes in the southern prefectures of Taldor.

Rohkar's Raiders have clashed several times with the Sentinels, and once the bandits joined forces with the Irriseni invaders, their leader, Rohkar Cindren, convinced Teb Knotten and Izoze that the rangers would have to be eliminated before the invaders could control the Border Wood. These newfound allies helped the bandits overrun their old enemy. As a result, all of the High Sentinels were slain, and Rohkar's Raiders now use the High Sentinel Lodge as a base from which to operate throughout the Border Wood. The bandits also use the lodge to hold prisoners, including Lady Argentea Malassene, who is being held because Teb Knotten plans to use her to slow Taldor's response to the growing threat in the Border Wood.

Since taking over the lodge, however, Rohkar's Raiders have fallen on hard times. They're still poorly equipped to deal with the wintry weather created by the portal to Irrisen, and nearly half of the bandits have fallen ill, succumbing to the early stages of a sickness called the chillbane shakes.

Rohkar fully expects his supposed allies to turn on him when he is no longer of use of them, so he is closely monitoring the health of those members of his gang who have fallen ill. If the sick bandits don't recover, Rohkar plans to use necromancy to turn them into an army of unfaltering skeletons and zombies he can use against the moss troll and his minions.

The High Sentinel Lodge is constructed of heavy timber and stone harvested from the forested highlands of the Sharpened Hills, a jagged, nigh-impassible region southeast of the lodge. Unless otherwise noted, all of the doors in the lodge are constructed of strong wood (hardness 5, hp 20) and are unlocked. Interior rooms are unlit unless detailed otherwise.

H1. Eastern Trailhead (CR 1)

After climbing at least a hundred feet into the hills, the snowy trail finally levels off. In a clearing among the trees, a large wooden lodge overlooks a ravine spanned by a long

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rope bridge. Smoke rises from the lodge's two snow-covered chimneys, and large woodpile is stacked against the outer wall. A small outbuilding stands east of the lodge, and a stone well nearly blanketed by snow is barely recognizable to the north. Several tracks lead southwest toward a detached stable.

Numerous horse and human tracks cross back and forth through the snow near the back porch of the lodge.

Trap: The bandits have set a crossbow trap with a trip line hidden in the snow at the trailhead. When the trap is triggered, the crossbow not only fires at the creature who triggered it, but also falls from its perch on the porch, dragging a string of attached pots and pans with it that alerts the bandits in area **H13**.

CROSSBOW TRAP CR 1

XP 400

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; Reset manual

Effect Atk +15 ranged (1d8+1/19–20/x2) and alarm

H2. Outhouse

The door to this small outhouse is frozen shut. A small hammer hangs by a rope from its upper eaves to chip away

the ice and provide access. Unfortunately, the weather has made the outhouse much less functional, and the stench of its recent use is somewhat overpowering.

H3. Stable

Twin doors open into this low stable, where five stalls hold three horses and a mix of loose straw. A rack of riding gear hangs on the east wall, and a cast-iron tub sits empty in the corner.

The Sentinels usually traveled on foot in the forest, but kept a few horses here as a swifter means of reaching Heldren or other nearby settlements. Two of the horses were killed during the bandits' assault, but Rohkar replaced them with mounts from Lady Argentea's escort. The riding tack on the eastern wall includes enough gear to equip each horse with a bit and bridle, riding saddle, and saddle bags.

H4. Bridge (CR 3)

A bridge made of rope and wooden planks spans a narrow ravine. It's already covered in ice and snow, and it sways alarmingly in the icy winds blowing through the gorge. The turbulent waters of a fast-moving creek surge through a couple of waterfalls far below.

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This 30-foot-long rope bridge spans Timber Creek, which runs through the Red Run Gorge 50 feet below. The bridge leads to the High Ridge, a stony backbone of forested cliffs overlooking the entire forest, and provides the swiftest means of reaching the rest of the Border Wood. Izoze and Rohkar's Raiders, like the Sentinels before them, use the small game trails on either side of the ridge to monitor those passing through the woods and guard the approach to the Somir Valley, where the winter portal to Irrisen now stands.

Hazard: Crossing the icy bridge under windy conditions carries considerable risk. Creatures moving faster than 5 feet per round while crossing the bridge must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex save or they lose their footing and fall into the 10-foot-deep creek below, taking 2d3 points of nonlethal damage and 1d6 points of lethal damage. Anyone who falls into the icy water must

also succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage and suffer from hypothermia (treat as fatigued).

Creature: The crafty ice mephit Izoze watches over the ravine, perched in a tree on the opposite side of the gorge from the lodge (Perception DC 22 to notice). She loathes the company of Rohkar's Raiders and the uncomfortable heat of their lodge, so she spends most of her time here, quietly mulling over her decision to spare the bandits when they surrendered to Teb Knotten. Izoze is thus far unimpressed with Rohkar's contributions to their efforts, and she keeps a close watch on the bandit. Thankfully, Lady Argentea's abduction has given them a bargaining chip to use with Taldor's nobility, either by holding her hostage to delay any response to the growing threat in the Border Wood, or as an opportunity to replace her with a well-trained spy. Izoze knows Teb Knotten has communicated with their superiors in Irrisen in anticipation of the latter, but she doesn't yet know who they'll get to impersonate Lady Argentea when the time comes. For now, Izoze waits and watches, guarding the bridge to dissuade anyone—including Rohkar's bandits—from venturing deeper into the Border Wood and closer to the winter portal. Izoze maintains her distance if newcomers arrive at the lodge, counting on Rohkar to handle them. She only fights the PCs if they attempt to cross the bridge or attack her directly. Otherwise, she merely notes their assault on the lodge, and if they rescue Lady Argentea, she flies away to inform Teb Knotten of the Taldan noble's escape.



IZOZE

IZOZE

CR 3

XP 800

Female ice mephit (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 202*)

hp 19

TACTICS

During Combat Izoze attacks any creatures on the bridge with her breath weapon in the hope of forcing them back. She then hovers in the air, casting *magic missile* and *chill metal* on those attempting to cross. She also tries to bull rush weaker opponents into the creek if possible.

Morale If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, Izoze flees to area P to report to Teb Knotten, counting on her fast healing to help her recover even as she abandons the bridge.

Development: If Izoze escapes, she returns later to ambush the PCs as they get closer to the winter portal (see area O).

H5. Tool Shed

The Sentinels stored most of their tools for the construction and upkeep of the lodge here. The shed contains a few shovels, axes, and hammers hanging from the walls.

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H6. Porch

A wooden roof extends over this wide porch. Double doors provide access to the lodge itself. Two small glass windows are set in the walls to either side of the doors.

This porch stands 3 feet above the snow-covered ground. The Sentinels used the porch for weapons training or the occasional celebration and sharing of drinks between fellow soldiers. One of the bandits from area **H13** steps outside here every half-hour to check on the bridge and stables. The bandits stay under the porch's covered roof; none care to cross the snow for fear of drawing Izoze's attention (at area **H4**). If the PCs linger here, they might also attract "Ten-Penny" Tacey's attention in the kitchen (area **H8**).

H7. Trophy Room

A bearskin rug dominates the floor of this trophy room, and the heads of several deer have been mounted on the walls. Doors lead north and south, while two hallways go farther east.

The Sentinels subsisted primarily on game they by trapped and hunted in the Border Wood, and kept these trophies as proof of their skill. A trap door lies concealed beneath the bearskin rug, opening into the cellar (area **H17**). A successful DC 15 Perception check reveals the presence of the trap door, which is locked with a padlock (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 18, Disable Device DC 20). Rohkar has the only key to the padlock.

H8. Kitchen (CR 2)

A large fireplace takes up most of the north wall of this room, its radiant heat providing palpable relief from the cold weather outside. Cabinets and shelves line the remaining wall space, and four windows look out on the wintry landscape surrounding the lodge.

Creature: The newest member of Rohkar's Raiders occupies this room—a down-on-her-luck half-orc burglar named Ten-Penny Tacey. Forced to flee Demgazi when a heist went bad, Ten-Penny soon found her way into the Border Wood, where Rohkar gave her shelter and then convinced her to stay on. Ten-Penny reluctantly agreed, and for now, she keeps the fire stoked in the kitchen and occasionally serves meals to her fellow bandits. She is currently simmering a pot of soup (made from one of the slain horses) for those suffering from the chillbane shakes (see area **H14**). So far, Ten-Penny isn't particularly fond of Rohkar's Raiders and harbors thoughts of slipping away when she gets a chance. If she spots any intruders, Ten-Penny calls for help, hoping to slow them down until

reinforcements arrive, but quick-thinking and persuasive PCs might be able to convince Ten-Penny to throw her lot in with them.

TEN-PENNY TACEY

CR 2

XP 600

Female half-orc rogue 3

CN Medium humanoid (human, orc)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 20 (3d8+3)

Fort +2, **Ref** +6 (+1 vs. traps), **Will** +0

Defensive Abilities evasion, orc ferocity, trap sense +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee short sword +5 (1d6+2/19–20)

Ranged mwk hand crossbow +6 (1d4/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

TACTICS

During Combat Ten-Penny makes no effort to slay the PCs, focusing purely on fighting defensively, though she takes advantage of opportunities to make sneak attacks.

Morale Ten-Penny had little to do with Lady Argentea's abduction and doesn't wish to die for Rohkar's crimes. If reduced to 5 hit points or fewer, she pleads for quarter, claiming no solidarity with the bandits as she surrenders.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +9, Appraise +4, Bluff +7, Climb +10, Disable Device +10, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +6, Perception +5, Sleight of Hand +9, Stealth +9

Languages Common, Goblin, Orc

SQ orc blood, rogue talents (surprise attack), trapfinding +1, weapon familiarity

Combat Gear *elixir of hiding*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of pass without trace*, *potion of spider climb*, tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** leather armor, dagger, mwk hand crossbow with 12 bolts, short sword, climber's kit, crowbar, grappling hook, key to chest in area **H12**, mwk thieves' tools, silk rope (50 ft.), 28 gp

H9. Corner Bedroom

None of the bandits have claimed this room for their own. It remains dark and silent. The wardrobe contains linens, a washboard, and nothing else of interest.

H10. Small Bedroom

A single rumped bed occupies this room. The bandits in area **H13** take turns claiming its single winter blanket. Otherwise, the room stands empty during the day.

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H11. Rohkar's Room

Three doors open into this room. A sturdy bed heaped with blankets sits near the only window, and a large maple chest occupies the southwest corner.

Rohkar claimed this room for himself, enjoying its closer proximity to the fireplace in area **H13**. He can usually be found here sleeping at night, but during the day, he spends most of his time upstairs in the planning room (area **H15**).

Treasure: The maple chest is locked with a sturdy lock (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 23, Disable Device DC 25) and contains an assortment of trophies and stolen goods Rohkar has collected during his time leading the bandits and murdering in Norgorber's name. Rohkar carries the only key. The chest currently holds a gold ingot engraved with the Taldan royal seal (worth 50 gp), a spyglass stolen from a captain out of Cassomir, a silver lady's ring (worth 25 gp), three shards of tiger's eye gemstones taken from a Qadiran merchant (worth 10 gp each), a fine pair of leather riding boots of elven make (worth 15 gp), a silver dagger with a hidden compartment in the hilt (Perception DC 20 to find) containing 1 dose of small centipede poison, and a leather portfolio containing several pieces of parchment, including a *scroll of endure elements*, two *scrolls of magic weapon*, and a *scroll of unseen servant*.

H12. Ten-Penny's Room

A bed and chest sit across from one another in this small room. Two doors serve as exits, and a window looks out on the north side of the lodge.

Rohkar gave "Ten-Penny" Tacey (see area **H8**) this bedroom as part of an effort to win her over and welcome her to the gang. During the day, it lies empty while Ten-Penny works in the kitchen or administers to the sick bandits in area **H14**.

Treasure: The chest in the room is locked (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 23, Disable Device DC 20) and contains a healer's kit (5 uses remaining), a belt pouch with 25 sp, and a *potion of lesser restoration*. Ten-Penny has the only key.

H13. Great Room (CR 2)

A large table and two benches run the length of this hall, and a twenty-foot-high vaulted ceiling rises into the rafters overhead. To the west, a roaring fireplace provides a welcome heat and light while to the south, a flight of stairs ascends to a wooden balcony overlooking the room. A set of double doors stands in the wall to the east.

This room served as a dining hall and gathering place for the Sentinels when they held the lodge. Now, Rohkar's

bandits use it as their sleeping quarters, huddling on straw mattresses and piles of blankets close to the fire. The bandits have barred the doors to the east leading to the lodge's back porch (hardness 5, hp 15, break DC 25).

Creatures: Five of Rohkar's bandits may be found here day or night. More active and alert than those battling the chillbane shakes (see area **H14**), these bandits post lookouts by the eastern windows to watch the approaches to the lodge during the day. Though their spirits were initially dampened by their surrender to Teb Knotten's invaders, the bandits were buoyed by their success in killing the hated Sentinels and ambushing Lady Argentea's caravan. They spend their time planning what they'll do with their share of the money once Rohkar ransoms the noblewoman. If alerted to the PCs' presence, the bandits rouse their sick comrades in the next room (area **H14**), sending a runner to alert Rohkar in area **H15** as well.

ROHKAR'S RAIDERS (5)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

hp 7 each (see page 16)

H14. Sickroom (CR 1)

Four beds, two large chests, and a single table with four chairs occupy this room. Three windows look out to the east, west, and south, providing a grand view of the snowy gorge outside the lodge.

Creatures: Four of Rohkar's Raiders lie bedridden in this room, having contracted an illness called the chillbane shakes—a less virulent strain of chillbane fever, a disease endemic to Irrisen (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Irrisen, Land of Eternal Winter* 48). The disease has left the bandits fatigued and sickened. As a result, they take a –2 penalty on all attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks, and a –2 penalty to Strength and Dexterity. The bandits are unarmored but have their weapons close at hand. Despite their condition, the bandits do their best to defend themselves and respond to any alarm raised by their companions in the great room (area **H13**).

SICK BANDITS (4)

CR 1/4

XP 100 each

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 7 each (see page 20)

Weaknesses fatigued and sickened

Hazard: This room is also a mildly infected area, with poorly ventilated air and sweaty blankets carrying the same germs that debilitated the bandits. Anyone who spends more than a minute in the room or rummages through

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the beds, chests, and discarded clothing is exposed to the chillbane shakes.

CHILLBANE SHAKES

Type disease, contact or inhaled; **Save** Fortitude DC 12

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect fatigued and sickened; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves

H15. Planning Room (CR 3)

An L-shaped table with many chairs takes up most of the floor space in this loft. A second smaller table sits near the entrance, and several windows look over the snowy grounds of the lodge. In the southwest corner, a large map hangs on the wall, opposite another door in the northeast wall.

The Sentinels planned their patrols in this room, marking the best routes on the map of the High Ridge hanging on the southwest wall. Rohkar uses the room for much the same purpose, and the map now depicts possible ambush sites and points of interest to his new Irriseni allies, which he frequently shares with Izoze. The location of the winter portal is also marked on the map, though there is no description of it.

Creatures: The leader of Rohkar's Raiders, Rohkar Cindren, is usually found here during the day. The bandits have no idea that Rohkar is a priest of Norgorber, a divine calling he discovered late in life but which he finds meshes well with his murderous acts of banditry in southern Taldor. Several unexplained murders and convenient disappearances among the original bandits aided Rohkar's rise to power—most of them were poisoned by Rohkar himself. Any revelation about his faith in the god of secrets and murder would likely shake the confidence of the bandits who still follow him. Most believe him to be a necromancer, a ruse he encourages, fearing that half of his gang might quit (or try to slay him) if they discovered the truth.

As a result, Rohkar works hard to keep his faith hidden, locking himself in this room to prepare his spells each morning. He claims he requires uninterrupted study with his spellbook and actually keeps an arcane tome with him at all times to further the deception. He even hides his unholy symbol, producing it at the last possible moment with Sleight of Hand checks when calling on Norgorber's aid.

One of Teb Knotten's allies, a winter-touched atomie named Hommelstaub (see area P1) correctly identified Rohkar's faith when the Irriseni invaders forced him to surrender and they discovered his unholy symbol. Rather than kill or reveal the murderous priest, Teb and Izoze offered him a chance to serve Queen Elvanna as a killing hand instead. Powerless to refuse, Rohkar accepted their offer, but he secretly plots revenge, planning to murder his

benefactors as soon as he can find a weakness to exploit. So far, he's applied himself to learning everything he can about the Irriseni, consulting with Hommelstaub, Izoze, and even Teb Knotten when the moss troll humors him with an audience. These discussions have helped Rohkar increase his own power, as the cold fey shared with him the means of animating skeletons infused with the fierce cold of Irrisen's winter, and Rohkar now commands two frost skeletons that he keeps here as bodyguards.

ROHKAR CINDREN

CR 2

XP 600

Male human cleric of Norgorber 3

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +2



ROHKAR CINDREN

REIGN OF WINTER

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +2 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 20 (3d8+3)

Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *short sword* +5 (1d6+2/19–20 plus greenblood oil) or dagger +4 (1d4+1/19–20)

Ranged light crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 13, 2d6)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +5)
5/day—bleeding touch (1 round), copycat (3 rounds)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +5)

2nd—*death knell* (DC 14), *hold person* (DC 14), *invisibility*^P

1st—*cause fear*^D (DC 13), *deathwatch*, *magic weapon*,
murderous command^{UM} (DC 13)

o (at will)—*bleed* (DC 12), *detect poison*, *purify food and drink*, *resistance*

D Domain spell; Domains Death, Trickery

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted to the PCs' presence in the lodge, Rohkar casts *deathwatch*, *invisibility*, and *magic weapon*. He also applies greenblood oil to his short sword.

During Combat Rohkar invisibly exits the room when the PCs arrive, squeezing past anyone at the door while his frost skeletons occupy them. If he finds any bandits unconscious or dying, Rohkar slays them with *death knell* to further empower himself, then uses his *scroll of animate dead* to create zombies from their bodies. Upon returning, he directs the undead while channeling negative energy to heal them. If faced with a cleric channeling positive energy, he counters with *cause fear* and his poisoned blade, activating his copycat ability to confuse anyone striking back.

Morale Rohkar lives to kill in the name of Norgorber, but has no desire to die himself. If reduced to 5 hit points or fewer, he throws down his weapon and feigns remorse, blaming everything on Izoze and Teb Knotten (see Development, below).

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 14, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14

Base Atk +2; CMB +3; CMD 15

Feats Deft Hands, Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +6, Disable Device +7, Disguise +6, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (local) +1, Sense Motive +6, Sleight of Hand +5, Stealth +6, Use Magic Device +3

Languages Common

Combat Gear *scroll of animate dead* (10 HD), greenblood oil (1), oil of taggit (2); **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, dagger, light crossbow with 10 bolts, mwk short sword, *cloak of the yeti* (see page 60), mwk thieves' tools, ring of keys (key to trap door in area H7, chest in H11, and cage in area H16), stolen spellbook (contains *alarm*, *chill touch*, *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *identify*, *locate object*, and ray of *enfeeblement*), wooden unholy symbol of Norgorber, 15 gp

FROST SKELETONS (2)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

Variant burning skeleton (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 251, *Classic Horrors Revisited* 54 with the following changes: damage energy type and immunity change from fire to cold, vulnerability changes from cold to fire)

hp 5 each

Development: If Rohkar surrenders to the PCs, he claims Izoze and the cold fey forced him and his gang to cooperate. While this is true, a successful Sense Motive check opposed by Rohkar's Bluff check can discern he's holding back at least part of the story. Regardless, he does everything in his power to convince the PCs to trust him, offering up information about Izoze, Teb Knotten, and the rest of their allies, hoping the PCs will die attacking his enemies while weakening them enough for him to finish the job. He also shows them the captured winter-touched sprite in the storeroom (area H16), giving the PCs the opportunity to interrogate the creature, if they wish. He turns over Lady Argentea, explaining that Izoze and Teb Knotten had some devious plan for her, though he doesn't know the specifics (he just knows they wouldn't let him kill or ransom her). In the meantime, Rohkar continues to pass himself off as a necromancer rather than a priest of Norgorber, knowing full well his faith will earn him little sympathy from anyone. To carry off this ruse, he hides his unholy symbol with a Sleight of Hand check as soon as possible.

H16. Storeroom (CR 1/2)

Dozens of small boxes, bottles, and papers fill this musty storeroom. A small iron cage sits on the top shelf, emanating a flickering light like that of a candle.

The Sentinels used this small room for record-keeping and writing missives for their commanders in Oppara. Rohkar now keeps a special captive imprisoned here.

Creature: Despite agreeing to serve Teb Knotten, Rohkar secretly captured one of the cold fey to better study and understand their capabilities. The captive, a winter-touched sprite named Vrixx, is locked inside the cage (Disable Device DC 25); Rohkar has the only key. Rohkar has made sure to keep Vrixx hidden from Izoze when she visits, knowing full well the mephit and her allies would slay him for the affront. Vrixx has grown increasingly despondent trapped in his tiny prison, his luminosity waxing and waning with his mood. When the PCs arrive, he begs for his release. Anyone foolish enough to free him enables him to fly back to Teb Knotten to tell of Rohkar's treachery and the PCs' presence in the wood. If the PCs question him, Vrixx promises an increasingly horrifying number of tortures he expects his friends to inflict upon the PCs when they find them. He

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refuses to tell the PCs more, knowing full well the White Witches will pierce his heart with a sliver of ice if he talks.

Vrixx

CR 1/2

XP 200

Male winter-touched sprite fighter 1 (see page 72)
hp 10 (currently 3)

Treasure: Rohkar has hidden three scrolls of *lesser animate dead*^{UM} (2 HD) in this storeroom, as well as 2 more doses of greenblood oil and a small lockbox containing 25 pp, 150 gp, 180 sp, and a blue quartz “ice diamond” from Irrisen worth 100 gp that he took from Vrixx. Rohkar has also stockpiled three *oils of magic weapon* and 10 flasks of alchemist’s fire as an insurance policy against Teb Knotten, Izoze, and the cold fey.



LADY ARGENTEA MALASSENE

H17. Cellar

A half-dozen boxes and barrels take up the majority of this underground cellar. A rough blanket lies spread on the floor in the southeast corner next to a bowl of half-eaten food.

The bandits have converted this cellar into a dungeon for Lady Argentea Malassene and any future prisoners. A 10-foot-high wooden ladder provides access to the cellar.

Creature: Lady Argentea Malassene is the sole occupant of this cellar-turned-dungeon. Rohkar has confined her here until he gets further instructions from Izoze and Teb Knotten about her fate. Lady Argentea has suffered some injuries (she currently has 7 out of 20 hit points), but her spirit remains unbowed. She is arrogant and proud, as only a Taldan noble can be, but grateful for her rescue. She tries her best (not always successfully) to keep her more critical opinions and observations to herself, at least until she has reached a place of safety and comfort.

LADY ARGENTEA MALASSENE

CR 2

XP 600

Female noble scion (*Pathfinder RPG GameMastery Guide* 288)
hp 20 (currently 7)

Development: If rescued, Lady Argentea identifies a much greater threat than Rohkar’s Raiders in the Border Wood—extremely dangerous winter creatures at the center of the unseasonable weather with whom the bandits are allied. She can describe the winter-touched fey who

attacked her caravan, as well as Izoze, and though she’s never met him, she overheard her captors mention the name of their leader, Teb Knotten.

Getting Lady Argentea to safety might be a higher priority than investigating these creatures, however, at least at this point. If given supplies and cold-weather gear, Lady Argentea could likely make it back to Heldren on her own, but feel free to allow the PCs escort her back to the village. If safely returned to Heldren, Lady Argentea is profuse in her thanks, and rewards her rescuers with a purse of 500 gp. The PCs can also check in with the village council at this time and resupply themselves for an extended campaign in the pocket of winter. Lady Argentea, Ten-Penny Tacey, and even Rohkar can all attest to the dangers of facing such cold creatures without preparing ahead of time. Once the PCs have rested and recovered, however, the council once more urges them to finish the task they were given and find the source of the winter weather. Alternatively, if the PCs are confident and eager to press on, Lady Argentea could accompany them to the winter portal, becoming a companion or even a replacement PC in the event of a character’s untimely death.

Story Award: Award the PCs 600 XP for successfully rescuing Lady Argentea.

PART TWO: THE DEPTHS OF WINTER

After defeating Rohkar’s Raiders and rescuing Lady Argentea, the PCs can go in search of the source of the winter weather, as well as the cold fey and their allies, by crossing the rope bridge at the High Sentinel Lodge into the highlands of the Border Wood. There’s been enough traffic between the lodge and the winter portal at area P that the PCs can still easily follow the trail through the snow. As the PCs approach the Somir Valley and the magic portal within it, however, the temperature drops even more, and it’s likely that the PCs will need to stop more frequently to warm themselves before pressing on.

I. ANCIENT INVADERS (CR 2)

The forest stands deathly quiet here. Even the wind has grown still as snow softly falls through the stark branches overhead. Tracks, human in size but oddly misshapen, mar an otherwise unblemished trail through the trees.

Creatures: Rohkar has long taken pleasure in experimenting with the bodies of his victims, raising

REIGN OF WINTER

them as undead servants and tools that he can use to murder even more innocent people. So far, however, the bandit leader has had to rely on *scrolls of animate dead* to raise such creatures. His first attempt to create frost skeletons using a scroll suffered a mishap, however, and unknown to Rohkar, accidentally animated the skeletons of three Qadiran soldiers slain in the Border Wood hundreds of years ago during the war between Taldor and Qadira. These skeletons clawed their way from the ground and now wander the High Ridge. They are uncontrolled and a lethal danger to anyone who crosses their path.

FROST SKELETONS (3)

CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 5 each (see page 22)

TACTICS

During Combat The skeletons mindlessly attack the nearest living creatures, striking with their freezing claws rather than the broken scimitars still strapped to their waists.

Morale The frost skeletons fight until destroyed.

J. SLAIN HUNTER

The rocks and snow along this part of the ridge are stained a reddish brown, and many tracks, both animal and human, cross the area.

Recently, one of Heldren's more esteemed hunters, a man named Dryden Kepp, returned from a hunting foray in the Border Wood with a story about a giant white weasel roaming the forest. The townsfolk of Heldren scoffed at his tale (Dryden was known to nip from his hip flask on a regular basis), which only spurred Dryden to hunt down the beast so he could make a trophy of it and prove everyone wrong. Dryden managed to catch the weasel in one of his bear traps (at area L), but the creature broke free and mauled the hunter before he could make his kill. Dryden retreated up the ridge, hoping to escape the enraged beast, but the weasel eventually tracked him down and finished the job, and Dryden's mutilated corpse now lies half-buried in the snow here. A PC who succeeds at a DC 13 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the animal tracks as those of a giant weasel.

Treasure: Dryden's possessions include a variety of things that might aid the PCs. Aside from his bloody and ripped (but still usable) cold-weather outfit, he also wears a pair of homemade snowshoes, and though his shortbow is snapped in half, two *+1 animal-bane arrows* remain in his quiver. In addition, a successful DC 15 Perception check reveals his bloodstained pack lying half-covered by a fresh dusting of snow nearby. It holds 3 days' worth of trail rations, a half-full hip flask of strong applejack, and

a journal detailing Dryden's efforts in tracking the giant weasel. The journal mentions the bear traps he set at the head of Somir Valley, as well as his discovery of the strange hut nearby and the even stranger doll inside it (area M).

Story Award: If the PCs find Dryden Kepp's journal, award them 400 XP.

K. FROST FIRS (CR 3)

A cold wind blows through the forest atop the ridge. Heavy snow burdens the boughs of the evergreen trees, but someone has apparently cleared the snow from a large patch of ground to dig in the pine-needle-carpeted soil.

Creatures: This part of the forest is now home to a pair of tree-creatures called frost firs, who crossed through the winter portal from Irrisen. Akin to treants, frost firs resemble human-sized evergreen trees with grasping, branchlike arms. After arriving in the Border Wood, the frost firs searched for a fertile stretch of land to plant their seedlings, clearing away the snow to dig holes for the cones they carried with them. Frost firs are territorial creatures and fiercely protective of their young. When the PCs enter their domain, the frost firs use their freeze ability to hide among the native pine trees before making a coordinated attack.

FROST FIRS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 15 each (see page 84)

TACTICS

During Combat The frost firs target any PCs carrying open flames first, attempting to grapple and pin these foes so they can put out the fire. They work together to restrain the same opponent, if necessary. Thereafter, they pummel and Power Attack in a furious rage.

Morale The frost firs fight to the death.

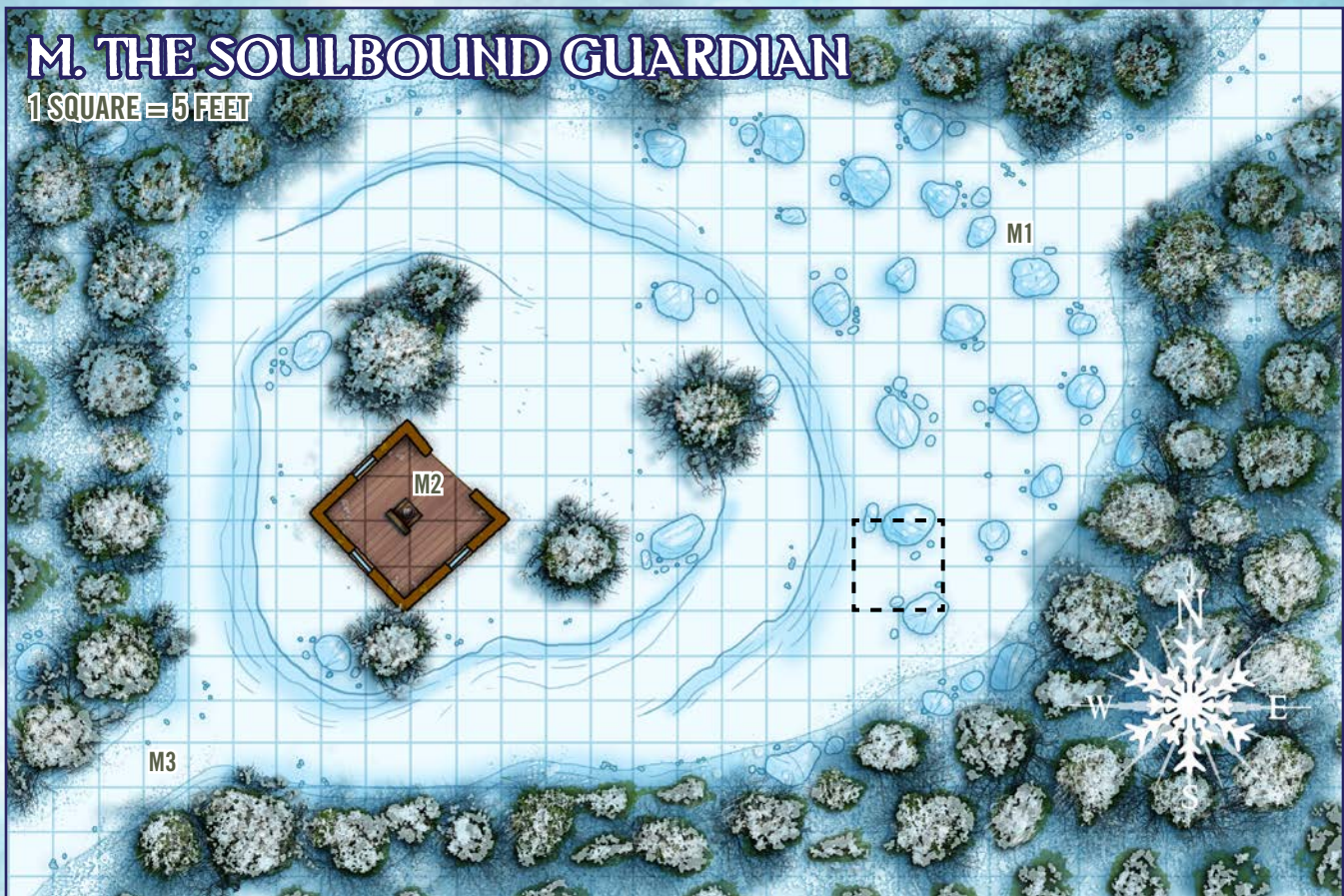
L. BEAR TRAPS (CR 3)

Bloody animal tracks mark the snow where the trail descends from the ridge above.

A successful DC 13 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the animal tracks as those of a giant weasel.

Traps: The hunter Dryden Kepp (see area J) laid several bear traps here in an attempt to catch and kill the giant weasel he had discovered in the Border Wood. Unfortunately, however, the trap couldn't hold it, and Dryden found himself hunted by the wounded weasel instead. Two more bear traps lie hidden in the snow, not yet triggered. They pose a danger to anyone passing through this area. PCs who read Dryden Kepp's journal (see area J) gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Perception checks to notice the traps.

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BEAR TRAPS (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Type mechanical; Perception DC 15; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset manual

Effect Atk +10 melee (2d6+3); sharp jaws spring shut around the creature's ankle and halve the creature's base speed (or hold the creature immobile if the trap is attached to a solid object); the creature can escape with a successful DC 20 Disable Device check, DC 22 Escape Artist check, or DC 26 Strength check

M. THE SOULBOUND GUARDIAN

One of the first tasks the White Witch Nazhena Vasilliova assigned to Teb Knotten once the winter portal opened was the construction of a wooden hut to house one of the living porcelain dolls that guard Irrisen's borders. This guardian doll would be used to watch over the approach to Somir Valley and defend Irrisen's newly established foothold in Taldor. Nazhena arranged for the construction of the doll, a sentient construct infused with the soul of a living person—in this case, that of a young girl named Thora Petska from the village of Waldsby in Irrisen.

In her few short years of life, young Thora witnessed many atrocities committed by the White Witches of

Irrisen and their minions. An audacious girl when alive, Thora made the mistake of accidentally insulting Nazhena during one of the witch's infrequent visits to Waldsby. It was a childish jest, innocently spoken, but unfortunately made within earshot of the White Witch, who took offense at the remark. Enraged, Nazhena took Thora from her family and killed the girl, using her soul to create a guardian doll. While binding a soul to a doll in this manner usually strips away most of the soul's individuality, something went wrong with the ritual in this case, and Thora retained much of her personality. A tortured construct at best, Thora serves as the eyes and ears of the winter witches in the Border Wood, though she still has the mind of a 7-year-old girl.

M1. Ice Block Maze (CR 3)

More than a dozen boulder-sized chunks of ice litter the clearing ahead where a strange hut sits perched on tree trunks atop a raised mound of snow-covered earth.

The guardian doll Thora (area M2) casts *alarm* on the entrance to this clearing every 8 hours to alert her to anyone who approaches.

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Powerful witchcraft still resonates from the guardian doll that was once Thora Petska, and manifestations of her spirit, empowered by the proximity of the winter portal, stir among the blocks of ice here, creating a haunt and an apparition called a phantom. As the PCs enter the clearing, Thora's phantom—an image of a shivering young Ulfen girl—suddenly appears amid the ice boulders. If the PCs call out to her, the girl darts away, moving deeper into the field of boulders, clearly distraught and afraid. If the PCs pursue, Thora's phantom appears again multiple times among the maze-like passages. Each time, she speaks in cryptic sentences before fleeing again, drawing the PCs deeper into the maze of ice boulders. Thora's words actually come from her past interactions with Nazhena Vasilliova, and the PCs can learn some of Thora's story by questioning the phantom. The PCs might be able to use this information to provide closure for Thora's mother, Nadya, when they meet her later in the adventure.

The phantom is not a real creature; it is a manifestation of Thora's restless spirit. Although it can answer some of the PCs' questions, the PCs cannot affect the phantom in any way—it plays out as scripted, much like a *programmed image*, until the haunt manifests. The phantom's speech, and what the PCs can learn from it, are detailed below.

"I'm sorry! Don't hurt me! I never meant to call you names!" Thora is apologizing to Nazhena Vasilliova for offending her. If the PCs succeed at a DC 15 Diplomacy check, they can ask a single question before Thora moves away again.

"Please don't keep me here. It's so cold. I miss my mother." This statement refers to Thora's captivity in Nazhena's Pale Tower, as well as her mother, Nadya Petska, whom the PCs will meet in Part Three. If the PCs succeed at a DC 18 Diplomacy check, they can ask a single question before Thora moves away again.

"I don't want your stupid doll! I want to go home! Take me back!" This was Thora's reaction to the porcelain doll that Nazhena showed her, unaware that it would eventually house her soul. If the PCs succeed at a DC 21 Diplomacy check, they can ask a single question before Thora moves away again.

"I have to get away! And you should, too, before they see you. Run!" This final message comes as Thora's eyes clear and she finally recognizes the PCs as someone other than her tormentors. She implores the PCs to flee just as they reach the center of the maze—one final warning exhorting them to stay away, lest an equally terrible fate befall them.

Haunt: Thora's despair and terror has created a haunt here, which manifests as soon as the PCs reach the area marked on the map in the center of the ice boulders, whether drawn there by Thora's phantom or on their own.

FACES OF THE FROZEN DEAD

CR 3

XP 800

NE haunt (10-ft.-by-10-ft. square)

Caster Level 3rd

Notice Perception DC 20 (to notice a chill wind stirring and a flicker of movement in the blocks of ice)

hp 6; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 day

Effect When this haunt is triggered, sorrowful images from Thora's childhood and the faces of the frozen dead manifest inside the transparent ice blocks. All creatures in the area are targeted by a *scare* spell (DC 13).

Destruction To permanently destroy this haunt, the PCs must tear down the watchful hut at area **M2**, and destroy the soul focus of the guardian doll inside, thereby putting Thora's spirit to rest.

M2. The Watchful Hut (CR 3)

A small hut stands here on four legs, each one a single tree trunk whose gnarled roots resemble the toes of a giant chicken. The hut is constructed of heavy logs with a patchwork roof of shaved bark shingles. Inside the hut's open doorway, a small figure sits on a carved wooden chair, staring across the clearing at the trail on the other side.

Creature: The soul of Thora Petska inhabits the porcelain guardian doll inside the hut, watching over the trail to the winter portal. The doll wears the same dress Thora had on when Nazhena Vasilliova took her to the Pale Tower, but she is no longer the little girl who brought laughter and joy to her family. The doll's face is that of an old crone, though it retains Thora's flaxen hair, and it still bears a strong resemblance to the girl's countenance when she was still alive—enough that the PCs can recognize the similarities between the doll and the phantom girl they encountered in area **M1**. Far more unnerving, however, are the doll's mismatched eyes—one a blue gemstone, the other a small round mirror the size of a coin, reflecting the world around her. The gem acts as the doll's soul focus, retaining all the memories the construct experiences, but the mirrored eye serves an entirely different purpose, allowing Nazhena and her apprentice, Radosek Pavril, to snoop on the doll's location with the *Irriseni mirror sight* spell (see page 73). When the PCs first encounter Thora, Radosek is using that spell to look through the guardian doll's mirror. Although the winter witch cannot do anything to the PCs at this time, this early glimpse of the PCs enables him to easily recognize them when they encounter him later in the Pale Tower (see area **Q20**).

Thora is compelled to defend this pass into Somir Valley from those she doesn't recognize as servants of the Pale Tower or Queen Elvanna. Initially, she lets the PCs approach her hut, remaining silent if they examine her, pretending to be a normal doll. When the PCs aren't directly observing her, she uses her spell-like abilities, casting *light*, *mage hand*, or *prestidigitation* to make the area

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seem haunted in the hope of frightening them away, or she speaks to further unnerve them, growing utterly silent again if they turn to face her or try to talk to her. While she defends herself if attacked, Thora otherwise allows the PCs to move beyond the hut and through the ward at area M3. She then follows after them, tirelessly pursuing the PCs wherever they go in an effort to slay them. She prefers to attack at night, when her darkvision gives her an advantage, but she doesn't hesitate to face the PCs during the day, if necessary, to prevent them from reaching the winter portal.

THORA PETSKA CR 3

XP 800

Female guardian doll (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Irrisen, Land of Winter* 58)

NE Tiny construct (cold)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +1 natural, +2 size)

hp 22 (4d10)

Fort +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

DR 5/magic; **Immune** cold, construct traits; **SR** 14

Weaknesses susceptible to mind-affecting effects, vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee doll's dagger +10 (1d2–1/19–20 plus 1d6 cold and paralysis)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +4)

At will—*ray of frost*

3/day—*alarm*, *charm person* (DC 11), *light*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*

1/day—*frost fall*^{UC} (DC 12), *levitate*

TACTICS

During Combat Thora casts *levitate* to rise into the air so she can more safely cast spells, using *charm person* to create allies to prevent others from attacking her. If forced into melee combat, she casts *frostfall* and then attacks with her doll's dagger, hoping to catch paralyzed opponents in the supernaturally chilled area of the spell.

Morale Thora fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 11

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Escape Artist +5, Linguistics +3, Perception +5, Stealth +15

Languages Common, Hallit, Skald

SQ soul focus

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Doll's Dagger (Su) The dagger wielded by a guardian doll is

treated as a masterwork weapon and deals 1d6 points of cold damage in addition to its normal damage. Those struck by the dagger must succeed at a DC 12 Fortitude save or be paralyzed by the supernatural cold of the weapon for 1d4 rounds. If the guardian doll is destroyed, its weapon becomes a useless child's toy. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Soul Focus (Su) Thora's soul is bound within the doll's gemstone eye. As long as this soul focus remains intact, it can be used to animate another doll, using the same cost as creating a new construct.

Once bound into the soul focus, the soul continues to learn. If it is put into a new doll body, the soul retains its personality and memories from its previous bodies. A soul focus has hardness 8, 12 hit points, and a break DC of 20.

Susceptible to Mind-Affecting

Effects (Ex) Like a soulbound doll, a guardian doll is susceptible to mind-affecting effects. However, because of the singular purpose with which it is imbued, its saves against such effects are made with a +1 racial bonus.

Treasure: Thora's blue gemstone eye, her soul focus, is a sapphire worth 600 gp.



THORA PETSKA

M3. The Harrowed Trail (CR 4)

The trail continues through a narrow pass, descending south and east into an icy valley. An unusual pattern of lines is scratched into the fresh snow covering the trail at the edge of the clearing.

Upon closer inspection, the pattern of lines in the snow is revealed to be a warning in Common that reads, "Turn back before the winter devours you."

Trap: The inscription also incorporates a *glyph of warding*, cast from a scroll by the atomic oracle Hommelstaub (see area P1), which triggers when anyone leaves the clearing by this route. Izoze, Teb Knotten, Thora, and all of the cold fey know the password to bypass the glyph without triggering it.

GLYPH OF WARDING

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type magic; **Perception** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger spell; **Reset** none

Effect spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast glyph], 3d8 cold damage, Reflex DC 14 half); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

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N. WOUNDED BEAST (CR 3)

A cold wind blows through the valley, bringing a spray of sleet and broken ice. The sky ahead roils with thick, gray clouds and the sun is only a dim glow somewhere in the mist.

Creature: A giant weasel hunts the forest here. A native of the Hoarwood Forest in Irrisen, the weasel has its winter coat of fur, completely white except for the tip of its tail, which is black. The weasel crossed through the winter portal, only to run afoul of one of the bear traps set by the hunter Dryden Kepp (see areas J and L). Although injured, the weasel is still a formidable foe and fearless hunter. It stalks Somir Valley searching for prey to feed its great hunger. The cold fey have managed to keep it away from the winter portal, but driven by hunger, the weasel attacks any other creatures it comes across (such as the PCs), and continues to stalk them throughout the forest until it's slain.

GIANT WEASEL CR 3

XP 800

hp 34 (currently 28; see page 82)

TACTICS

During Combat The weasel charges its first victim, seeking to bite and attach itself to its prey. It ignores all other attackers until it is removed from its victim or its chosen prey is dead.

Morale The weasel flees if reduced to 15 hit points or fewer, but its hunger might drive it to attack the PCs again at a later time.

O. AMBUSH! (CR 4)

Once the PCs enter the Somir Valley, they finally gain the direct attention of those charged with guarding the winter portal. This encounter takes place soon afterward, as a result of either Izoze describing the danger the PCs pose to Teb Knotten, or Teb learning about the PCs through the atomic oracle Hommelstaub. Either way, Teb Knotten sends his agents to the PCs' camp in the middle of the night to eliminate the PCs.

Creatures: Izoze leads this assault, but if the ice mephit has already been killed, Teb entrusts the winter-touched atomic oracle Hommelstaub (see area P1) with slaying them instead. In either case, a Small air elemental named Squald provides assistance, both in speeding Izoze to intercept the PCs, and in cloaking the assassin's approach with the wind.

IZOZE CR 3

XP 800

Female ice mephit (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 202)

hp 19

TACTICS

During Combat Izoze launches a cone of ice shards with her breath weapon on the greatest concentration of opponents,

seeking to damage and sicken them. She then casts *chill metal* on the most heavily armored opponent and fires a *magic missile* at anyone using fire-based spells or attacks against her. Thereafter, she uses hit-and-run tactics with her claws until her breath weapon recharges.

Morale Izoze knows the price for failure in her assigned task, so she fights to the death. If reduced to fewer than 10 hit points, she attempts to summon another ice mephit to help while she temporarily retreats to recover from her wounds with her fast healing.

SQUALD CR 1

XP 400

Small air elemental (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 120)

hp 13

TACTICS

During Combat Squald stirs up enough snow with his whirlwind ability to create a blinding maelstrom and snuff out the PCs' campfire. He then makes Flyby Attacks, hurtling from the darkness to strike an opponent before again moving out of range of any light source.

Morale Squald fights to the death.

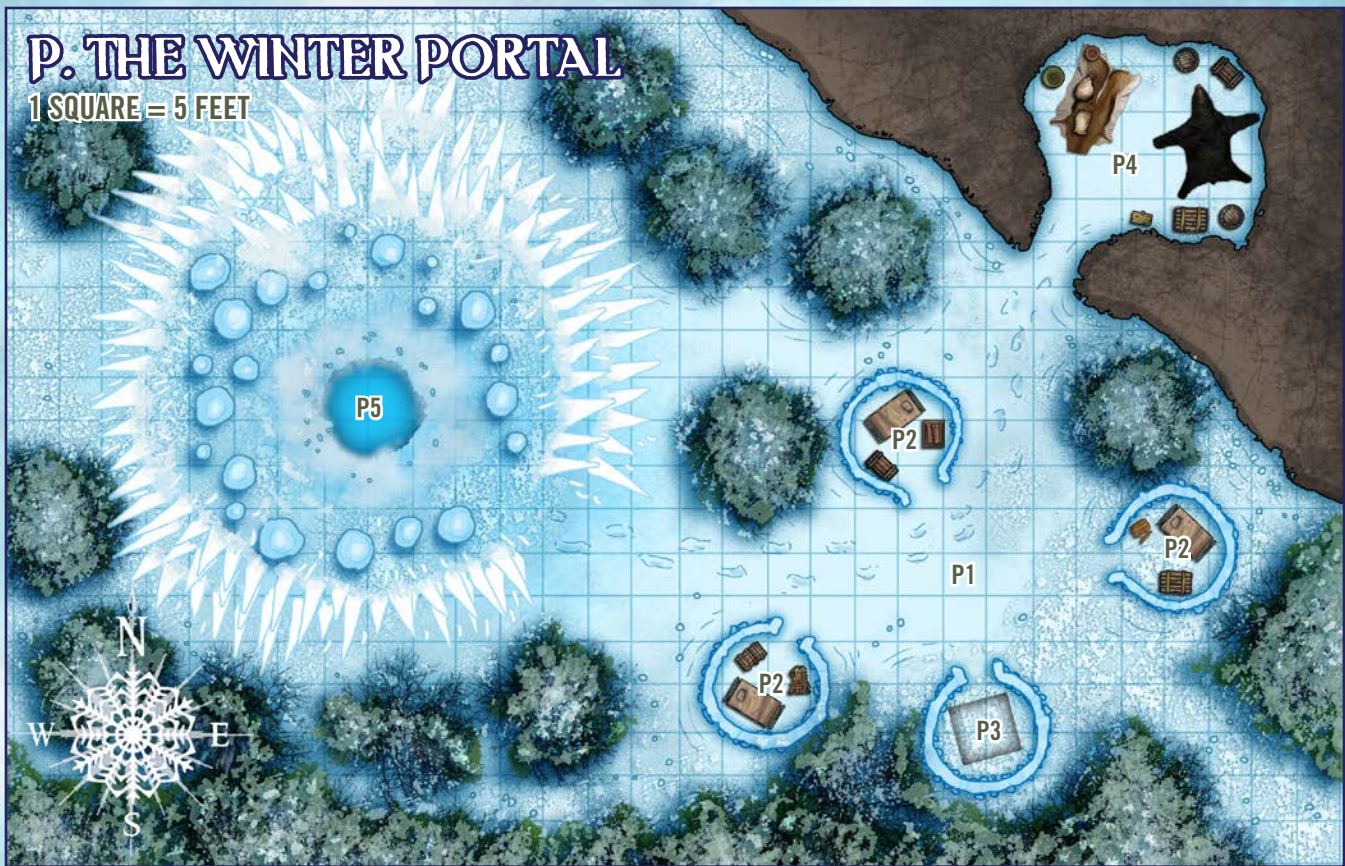
P. THE WINTER PORTAL

The first manifestation of Elvanna's ritual to spread Irrisen's endless winter over the rest of Golarion started with a single snowflake in the heat of Taldor's summer. Cold air descended into the Somir Valley, reaching freezing temperatures in mere minutes. A magic portal then erupted like a bomb, exploding into existence in a shower of ice and felled trees, linking the Border Wood with a sister site in Irrisen's Hoarwood Forest. Since then, the gateway has remained open, causing increasingly wintry weather, and various creatures have crossed through the portal in both directions. Similar developments have happened all across Golarion, with the weather itself acting as Elvanna's first invader in her bid to take over the world.

After 3 days of sustained snowfall, Irrisen's first scouts emerged from the winter portal, led by a moss troll named Teb Knotten. He works for Nazhena Vasilliova, one of Elvanna's many great-granddaughters. Nazhena charged Teb with securing a foothold in Taldor and ensuring no one crosses back into Irrisen to disrupt her efforts in shaping and worsening the weather in the Border Wood. Teb set up a camp next to the portal, which he personally guards, sending Izoze and the winter-touched sprites to deal with Rohkar's Bandits and other threats in the forest. Nazhena has since gone to Whitethrone to report on her work, leaving her apprentice, Radosek Pavril, in charge of the portal. Both Radosek and Teb have redoubled their efforts in her absence.

Because of the presence of the winter portal, the snow in this clearing reaches depths of 2 to 4 feet. Entering a square covered with heavy snow costs 4 squares of

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movement, and overland travel rates are reduced by 75%. These penalties are reduced for those wearing snowshoes. Heavy snow blows from the portal as well, obscuring all sight (including darkvision) beyond 5 feet, and granting concealment to creatures 5 feet away.

The trail leading into the clearing is buried under 3 feet of snow crusted over with frozen sleet. Heavy ice burdens the trees to either side, bowing their branches until many touch the ground, becoming one with the wintry landscape. No one has passed this way on foot since Teb Knotten's forces conquered the Border Wood's bandits and eliminated the High Sentinels, as the cold fey who venture from here fly rather than walk upon the snowy trail. Only Teb Knotten's heavy footprints mar the otherwise unblemished snow inside the encampment.

The PCs are likely to encounter the atomie oracle Hommelstaub in area P1 first, but this combat has the very real possibility of drawing the attention of other inhabitants of this area, such as the winter-touched sprites in area P3 and Teb Knotten from area P5. Taken together, these three opponents are a CR 5 encounter—likely an epic challenge for the PCs at this level, but not an insurmountable one. On the other hand, if the PCs approach this area carefully and stealthily, they might be able to catch their opponents by surprise and face these threats one at a time.

P1. Campsite (CR 2)

Four low igloos stand here in the snow. A well-packed trail of large footprints passes between them, heading both north and west.

Creature: While Teb Knotten relies on the ice mephit Izoze to scout the Border Wood, a winter-touched atomie named Hommelstaub acts as his main advisor and overseer for the camp. Hommelstaub is an oracle of the gods of cold and the north, an agent of raw winter eager to cover Golarion in ice and purge its warm-blooded population—which makes him a natural ally of Queen Elvanna and the White Witches. A native of the First World, Hommelstaub would like nothing more than to paint the canvas of Golarion in the blues and whites and grays of eternal winter. During the day, the atomie waits in the center of the campsite and attacks any intruders. If the PCs already encountered Hommelstaub at area O and defeated the atomie, then this area is empty.

HOMMELSTAUB CR 2
XP 600

Male winter-touched atomie oracle 2 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 28, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 42, and page 72)
CE Diminutive fey (cold)

REIGN OF WINTER

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 size)

hp 24 (4 HD; 2d6+2d8+8)

Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +9

DR 2/cold iron; **Immune** cold; **Resist** fire 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)

Melee sickle +8 (1d2 plus numbing cold) or wintry touch +8 (1d6+1 cold)

Ranged sling with *magic stone* +9 (1d6+1 plus numbing cold) or sling +8 (1 plus numbing cold)

Space 1 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks numbing cold (DC 13), sneak attack +1d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +10)

Constant—*speak with animals*

At will—*dancing lights*, *reduce person* (DC 15)

3/day—*invisibility* (self only)

1/day—*shrink item*

Oracle Spells Known (CL 2nd; concentration +6)

1st (5/day)—*endure elements*, *inflict light wounds* (DC 15), *magic stone*, *summon monster I*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *guidance*, *read magic*, *resistance*

Mystery winter^{POTN}

TACTICS

Before Combat If he has time to prepare, Hommelstaub uses his *scroll of resist energy* and casts *magic stone* on three pebbles to hurl with his sling.

During Combat Hommelstaub turns invisible and flies upward to hide in the falling snow, where his snow sight grants him a superior view of the camp. He then throws a thunderstone, smashing it against an armored enemy or the side of an igloo to deafen his opponents and warn Teb Knotten and his sprite allies (see Development, below). Hommelstaub hurls bottles of liquid ice to snuff out any enemy fire sources, and casts *summon monster I* to summon fiendish eagles to attack opponents while he uses his sling. If drawn into melee combat, Hommelstaub casts *reduce person* on his attackers before making sneak attacks with *inflict light wounds* or his wintry touch.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, Hommelstaub retreats back into the falling snow to drink his *potion of cure moderate wounds*. Thereafter, he fights to the death, though if Teb Knotten is dead, he might try to flee through the winter portal back to Irrisen instead.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 15, **Int** 15, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 10

Feats Extra Revelation^{APG}, Improved Initiative^B, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +8 (+4 when jumping), Bluff +8, Escape Artist +8, Fly +18, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (nature) +6, Perception +10, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +9, Stealth +20, Survival +8, Use Magic Device +8

Languages Abyssal, Common, Giant, Sylvan; *speak with animals*

SQ oracle's curse (lame), revelations (snow sight, wintry touch 7/day [1d6+1 cold])

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *scroll of remove curse*, *scroll of resist energy* (fire), liquid ice^{UE} (3), thunderstones (2); **Other Gear** sickle, sling, 64 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Snow Sight (Su) Hommelstaub can see through falling snow and sleet without taking any penalties on Perception checks as long as there is enough light for him to see normally.

Wintry Touch (Su) As a standard action 7 times per day, Hommelstaub can perform a melee touch attack that deals 1d6+1 points of cold damage.

Development: If Hommelstaub throws a thunderstone, the noise attracts the attention of



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the winter-touched sprites at area **P3** and Teb Knotten at area **P5**. These opponents move as quickly as they can through the encampment to join the battle with the intruders.

P2. Empty Igloos

A winter blanket, a pile of furs, and a small wooden chest take up most of the floor space in this cramped igloo. A small hole has been cut into the low ceiling to allow smoke to escape, but no fire has been lit.

The ceilings in these igloos are only 4 feet high. Teb Knotten and the cold fey built the igloos to house additional troops that will come through the portal from Irrisen in the days ahead, but for now, they lie empty.

P3. False Igloo (CR 3)

The interior of this igloo is bare. Several ice blocks extend from the igloo's interior walls, forming small shelves and recesses.

Creatures: The cold fey constructed this cleverly trapped igloo to house prisoners or deceive would-be allies they no longer trust (like Rohkar). Hommelstaub and the winter-touched sprites sleep on the small shelves inside, though most of them have left the camp for missions in the forest under Izoze's direction. Two winter-touched sprites still reside here, however. If encountered here, they try to draw intruder into the igloo, then flee through the hole in the ceiling, planning to use it as cover while they fire on anyone who falls into their trap (see below). If alerted by Hommelstaub's thunderstone (see area **P1**), the sprites fly out to join him in the campsite, though the heavy falling snow affects their vision. At night, Hommelstaub (area **P1**) joins the sprites here.

WINTER-TOUCHED SPRITES (2) CR 1/2

XP 200 each

hp 10 each (see page 13)

TACTICS

During Combat The sprites cast *color spray* to blind anyone entering the igloo, then try to draw their attackers into the pit trap where they can rain arrows on their victims.

Morale The sprites fight to the death.

Trap: Teb and the sprites dug a 20-foot-deep pit in the floor of the igloo, hiding it with snow-covered thatching. The walls of the pit are slick with ice, requiring a successful DC 20 Climb check to scale, which makes the pit a useful place for dumping prisoners or duping the unwary.

PIT TRAP CR 1

XP 400

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** manual

Effect 20-ft.-deep pit (2d6 falling damage); Reflex DC 20 avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

P4. Natural Cave

Two bearskin rugs cover most of the damp floor in this cave, surrounded by crates, barrels, and other supplies. The ceiling rises fifteen feet overhead, where icicles of frozen condensation hang from sharp stalactites.

Shortly after his arrival, the moss troll Teb Knotten claimed this cave for himself. Because Irrisen relies so heavily on imported food, he's had to augment the camp's supplies with whatever he could hunt or steal. The sprites have helped tremendously in this effort by raiding the farms of nearby Heldren, leading away livestock and stealing crops, which Teb stores here. Altogether, the cave holds 34 days' worth of common meals, preserved here by the cold, but quick to spoil if exposed to warmer temperatures. At night, Teb Knotten (area **P5**) may be found here.

Treasure: Teb keeps a lockbox here to fund his operations in the Border Wood (Disable Device DC 20 to open; Teb has the only key). The chest holds four *potions of feather step*^{APG} in an iron coffer, four blue quartz "ice diamonds" from Irrisen worth 100 gp each, a silver diadem worth 300 gp, a near flawless diamond worth 500 gp, a jeweled necklace worth 400 gp, a painting of Whitethrone worth 100 gp to an art collector, three sapphire rings worth 75 gp each, a decorative filigree longsword scabbard worth 125 gp, and a small scrimshaw sculpture of dancing sprites surrounding a piping satyr worth 50 gp, as well as 2,457 gp, 3,313 sp, and 1,760 cp.

P5. Portal of Endless Winter (CR 3)

A bank of quill-like icicles spear outward in a ring, seemingly grown from a heavy sheet of ice covering the ground. A second ring of giant icicle-shaped monoliths stands inside the outer ring, surrounding a swirling cylindrical vortex easily ten feet in diameter. Icy winds and driving snow blast from the vortex, creating the wintry weather in the clearing.

This magic portal is the source of the unseasonable winter weather that has fallen upon the Border Wood. It connects directly to a site in the Hoarwood Forest far to the north in the nation of Irrisen, enabling instant travel between the two locations, and acts as a mystical conduit channeling the power of Irrisen's supernatural winter to Taldor.

The swirling vortex hurls the falling snow out of the ring of icicles to pile elsewhere throughout the camp. As a result, the terrain within the ring of icicles—though

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sprinkled with a dusting of snow—imposes no movement penalties like the deeper drifts in the rest of the clearing.

Creature: During the day, the moss troll Teb Knotten spends his time here, guarding the portal against any unauthorized use. He stays in *tree shape* to surprise anyone venturing here, taking the form of a large, black, dead tree trunk next to the portal. Teb carries a small mirror that allows Radosek Pavril to scry on him via the *Irriseni mirror sight* spell (see page 73). Teb always checks his mirror twice per day, at sunrise and again just before sunset, to see whether Radosek is trying to communicate with him. If the PCs take Teb's mirror, Radosek uses it to spy on them, which might give him information he can use against them when they encounter him later in the Pale Tower (see area Q20).

If alerted by Hommelstaub's thunderstone (see area P1), Teb drinks his *potion of feather step* and moves toward the sounds of combat. Outside the area of the winter portal, however, the heavy falling snow affects Teb's vision, though the troll's scent ability can help him pinpoint foes in the snow.

TEB KNOTTEN

CR 3

XP 800

Male moss troll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 273)

hp 30

Melee *spear of manhunting* +6 (1d8+5), bite +0 (1d4+1) or

bite +5 (1d4+3), 2 claws +5 (1d4+3)

Combat Gear *potion of feather step*^{APG}; **Other Gear** *spear of manhunting* (+1 *boar spear*; see page 61), belt pouch, key to lockbox in area P4, small mirror, 48 gp

TACTICS

Before Combat As soon as Teb becomes aware of intruders, the moss troll drinks his *potion of feather step*, allowing him to move at full speed through the heavy snow in the clearing.

During Combat Once Teb resumes his normal shape, he attempts to demoralize the nearest foe with an Intimidate check. Thereafter, Teb attacks with his *spear of manhunting* and bite, focusing his attacks on anyone carrying or using fire.

Morale If lit on fire (such as by alchemist's fire or similar means), Teb immediately drops to the ground so he can roll through the snow and put himself out, ignoring everything else until his flesh stops burning. Regardless, he fights on to the death, refusing to surrender or cede control of the portal.

Development: The winter portal has a strong aura of conjuration and evocation magic. It cannot be dispelled or affected in any way, and the PCs can find no means of closing it or stopping the wintry weather from spreading through the Border Wood. A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check surmises that the effect actually emanates from somewhere on the other side. If the PCs wish to close the portal, they'll need to go through the portal. The PCs have little time to contemplate this revelation, however, for as soon as they have defeated the portal's guardians, another creature passes through the portal, arriving in the clearing.

THE BLACK RIDER

A surge of wind suddenly blasts from the swirling vortex in the ring of icicles, gusting outward in a stinging spray of snow and ice. Suddenly, a gaunt horseman with curling ram's horns and wearing coal-black armor lurches



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through the portal astride a black warhorse, surrounded by tendrils of cold, dark mist. The rider slumps in the saddle, a shard of blue ice jutting from his back. As rider and mount come to a halt in the snow, the horse suddenly dissipates into black smoke, and the horseman falls to the ground with a groan.

The horseman is the **Black Rider** (LN male unique fey), one of Baba Yaga's Three Riders who herald her return to Irrisen every 100 years. The only one of the three to escape death at the hands of Queen Elvanna, the Black Rider fled into the snowy wilderness of Irrisen. Harried by Elvanna's armies and mortally wounded, he came upon the winter portal and staggered through in the hope of finding someone to whom he could pass on his mission. The Black Rider is a unique fey creature created by Baba Yaga. Normally a CR 13 creature, he is now mortally wounded, and is destined to die here in front of the PCs. His full statistics should not be needed for this encounter, and as a result, his stat block is not presented here. More information on Baba Yaga's riders, including the Black Rider's complete stat block, may be found in *Irrisen, Land of Eternal Winter*.

The Black Rider holds two of the keys that control Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut*, and that would enable him (or someone else) to use the hut to track down the missing Witch Queen, but he knows that keys don't currently work, deactivated (like all of the hut's many keys) by Elvanna. The Rider also realizes that only his life's blood and connection to Baba Yaga can make the keys functional again. Once he sees the aftermath of the PCs' battle at the winter portal, the Rider makes a conscious choice to turn his task over to them so they can free Baba Yaga and spare Golarion from a new ice age—even if it means sacrificing himself to give them that opportunity.

The Three Riders of Baba Yaga typically bear a frightening, or at least otherworldly, facade, the better to unnerve and intimidate those they meet. This sinister appearance is an illusion, however, a product of the magic robes granted to them by Baba Yaga that functions as *disguise self*. To hopefully put the PCs at ease, the Black Rider drops the facade and appears in his true form, that of an old human man, exhausted, pale from blood loss, and close to death.

The Black Rider is dying; nothing the PCs do can heal him or save him, and he is aware of that fact. What is already done cannot be reversed. He calls to the PCs, claiming to have knowledge of great import to share with them. The Rider tells the PCs who he is and all he knows—the source

of the winter portal, the existence of the other portals appearing throughout Golarion, Elvanna's betrayal of Baba Yaga, and her plans to spread Irrisen's permanent winter over the whole world. If the PCs question him, his most likely answers follow.

Who are you? "Once, I was called Illarion Matveius. Now I am known as Black Midnight. I am Baba Yaga's Black Rider, harbinger of the Witch Queen's return."

Who did this to you? "The servants of Queen Elvanna, ruler of Irrisen and betrayer of her own mother."

Why were you attacked? "Something has happened to Baba Yaga. Every hundred years, she returns to Irrisen to place a new daughter on the throne. But Queen Elvanna has other plans, it seems. Baba Yaga has not appeared as planned, and Elvanna intends to slay everyone loyal to her mother. She hunted down those of us who would herald Baba Yaga's return and slew my associates. I am the last of the Three Riders and a threat to Elvanna's plans."

What are Elvanna's plans? "To take Baba Yaga's place, and claim all of Golarion as her personal kingdom. Irrisen is a land of endless winter, created by Baba Yaga's magic. Elvanna seeks to cover the entire world in ice and snow, using portals like this one."

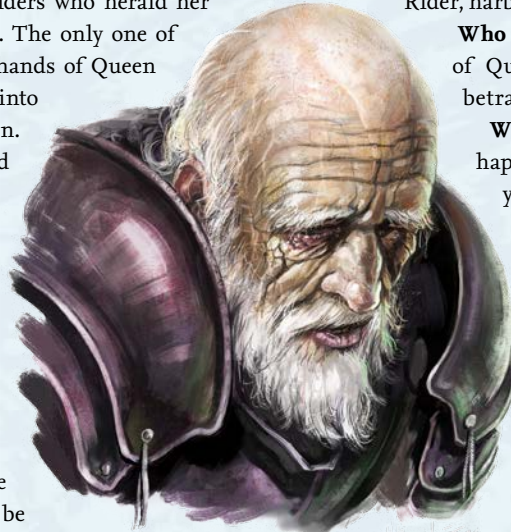
How do we close the portal? "You can find its source in the Pale Tower, on the other side, but this portal is but one of many. Through them, Elvanna will spread a new ice age across your world, consuming it for all eternity. Closing this portal might save your kingdom, but Golarion would still be doomed."

What can we do to stop this from happening? "You must find Baba Yaga. Only Baba Yaga can defeat Elvanna. Only the Queen of Witches can undo what her daughter has done."

How do we find Baba Yaga? "You must use her *Dancing Hut* to follow her. The hut is a powerful artifact that can cross great distances, even travel between worlds. If you can control the hut, it can take you to Baba Yaga."

Where is the *Dancing Hut*? "Elvanna stole the hut and put it on display in Irrisen's capital, Whitethrone, as a symbol of her power. You must go through the portal to Irrisen and find the *Dancing Hut*."

How do we control the hut? "The hut has many keys—objects attuned to the hut—that can take it almost anywhere. I managed to secure two of these keys, but Elvanna stole their power to prevent anyone from using the hut to find her mother. Once they are reactivated, placing the keys in the hut's cauldron will retrace Baba Yaga's path."



BLACK RIDER

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The PCs can ask the Black Rider more questions, but ultimately, he grows weaker as he explains the danger and what they must do. Knowing his time is running out, the Rider explains that he's no longer capable of carrying out the mission assigned to him—finding and rescuing Baba Yaga—so he must pass the task on to the PCs. He produces the two keys to the *Dancing Hut*—a lock of white hair from a frost giant's beard and a plague doctor's mask. These two items appear perfectly normal and mundane in every way, but they are the literal keys to take the *Dancing Hut* to a new destination in search of Baba Yaga. Elvanna has drained the keys of their power, but the Rider has the power to reactivate them, if the PCs will accept the mantle of responsibility. When he has said his piece, the Black Rider slits his own throat, bathing the two keys in his life's blood. This empowers the keys, but kills the Rider, and there is no way to save him through normal means. As he expires, his magic robes melt away like ice in a fire, leaving behind the body of an old man dressed in a simple black tunic.

THE MANTLE OF THE BLACK RIDER

Unknown to the PCs, the Black Rider's words also carry the power of witchcraft, transferring the mystic ties between himself and Baba Yaga. The PCs take on the mantle of the Black Rider, gaining some of his power, but they must also shoulder the burden of his responsibility to find the *Dancing Hut* and rescue Baba Yaga.

Each of the PCs gains a permanent increase of 2 points to one ability score of his or her choice. Additionally, the PCs are marked as favored servants of Baba Yaga, allowing them to bypass certain glyphs, wards, and other abjurations placed by the Witch Queen or her allies to protect locations or objects attuned to her.

In exchange for these boons, however, the PCs are compelled to go in search of Baba Yaga and ensure her return to Irrisen. This manifests as a *geas*-like effect on the PCs. If a character with the mantle of the Black Rider ceases to carry out this task for 24 hours, she takes a –2 penalty to each of her ability scores. Each day, another –2 penalty accumulates, up to a total of –8. No ability score can be reduced below 1 by this effect. The ability score penalties are removed 24 hours after the subject resumes carrying out its task. Only a *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* can end this effect, though this also removes the ability score increase and favored servant status.

You should be forgiving in exactly what is considered “carrying out the task.” As long as the PCs are moving the story forward, they should take no penalties from the *geas*. Stopping for a few days to craft magic items, going on GM-planned side adventures, or even imprisonment should not trigger the *geas*'s penalties, as long as the PCs are planning to pick up the quest again as soon as they are able. The penalties

should only manifest if the PCs are deliberately trying to avoid the quest or shirk their responsibility.

The mantle of the Black Rider is designed to push the PCs into crossing through the portal into Irrisen and to ensure their cooperation in the effort to free Baba Yaga so she can stop Elvanna and save Golarion from a never-ending ice age. If you think that the threat of the winter portal—which can only be closed in Irrisen on the other side of the portal—as well as Elvanna's plans for bringing eternal winter to the whole world are enough to convince your PCs to go through the portal in search of Baba Yaga, or if you feel your players would react negatively to the *geas*, feel free to remove the *geas*. The point is to set the PCs on the path of finding and rescuing Baba Yaga and to keep the campaign going. As long as the PCs are moving forward and the players are having fun, how you get them there is irrelevant.

PART THREE: LAND OF THE WHITE WITCHES

In order to close the winter portal and carry out the imperative of the Black Rider to find Baba Yaga and her *Dancing Hut*, the PCs must cross through the portal. They need only walk through the swirling cylinder that is the portal to find themselves instantly transported thousands of miles north to the Hoarwood Forest in the land of Irrisen.

It is significantly colder here, and subzero temperatures force characters to make Fortitude saves every 10 minutes rather than every hour spent unprotected from the elements. The PCs face dangerous exposure unless they can secure a means of keeping warm. Fortunately, the portal deposits the PCs on a forested hillside where they can see the faint and distant lights of a village miles away, but they are still far from the warmth of civilization. With a successful DC 15 Survival check, a PC realizes that to make matters worse, a snowstorm appears to be headed their way, and the distant village is the only shelter they can reach before blizzard-like conditions overtake them.

As in the Border Wood, snow covers the ground, reducing overland travel rates by half. During combat, entering a snow-covered square costs 2 squares of movement.

EVENT 1: THE HUNGRY MANTIS (CR 4)

Stumbling through deep snowdrifts, the PCs soon happen upon a band of local travelers. These are peasants from the nearby village of Waldsby, returning with a shipment of food from the Realm of the Mammoth Lords to the east.

Creature: The travelers have come under attack from a giant mantis—a monster that once made its lair in the Border Wood in Taldor, but crossed through the portal into Irrisen. Confused by the cold weather and voraciously hungry, the mantis attacked and grabbed one of the travelers, who now lies unconscious in its mandibles. The peasants are trying to drive the mantis away, but are no

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match for the giant insect. The mantis is unaccustomed to the severe cold, and is currently unable to fly.

ADVANCED GIANT MANTIS**CR 4****XP 1,200****hp 38** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 200*, 294)**TACTICS**

During Combat The mantis aggressively defends its prize, eager to feast. Once wounded, it sets down its victim and uses lunge attacks to snap at its attackers. If it successfully grabs a creature, it holds its victim in place, following through with secondary attacks from its mandibles.

Morale Cold and disoriented, the mantis fights to the death.

EVENT 2: TRAVELERS FROM WALDSBY

This event takes place immediately following the battle with the giant mantis. The leader of the peasants approaches the PCs, clearly relieved by their timely assistance, and introduces herself as Nadya Petska. A native of the nearby village of Waldsby, Nadya immediately recognizes the PCs as foreigners. She thanks them for their help, and explains

to them the peril of wandering uninvited into the White Witches' territory. Because of the approaching storm, as well as the PCs' assistance in defeating the giant mantis, Nadya offers to lead them to Waldsby where they can find shelter, food, and proper survival gear for the icy north.

Nadya's caravan consists of five dogsleds and four "guards" (N human warrior 1), though in truth they are little more than peasant hunters, able to fend off animal attacks, but not much more. A capable winter survivalist, Nadya knows the dangers of overland travel in Irrisen very well, and traveling with her is an experience in cold-weather survival. As the weather worsens, Nadya explains the necessity of setting up camp to rest and keep warm while riding out the storm. As they make camp, the PCs have an opportunity to learn more about their host while also asking questions about Irrisen. Nadya is likewise curious about the PCs' reasons for being in her country. If the PCs share their reasons for being in Irrisen, Nadya grows quiet, even more impressed with their bravery. She easily recognizes the mythical Black Rider from their description and knows full well the power of witchcraft compulsions.

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Nadya is actually the mother of the ill-fated Thora Petska, the little girl transformed into a guardian doll, whom the PCs encountered on the other side of the winter portal (at area M). Nadya is unaware of her daughter's fate, however, believing that the White Witch Nazhena Vasilliova still holds Thora at the Pale Tower. In fact, the shipment of food Nadya is now transporting to Waldsby is meant to appease Nazhena and hopefully secure her daughter's freedom. See page 38 for Nadya's reaction if the PCs inform her of her daughter's fate. Nadya is detailed fully in the "NPC Gallery" on page 56.



MIERUL ARDELAIN

EVENT 3. THE TROUBLING TROUBADOUR (CR 3)

This event occurs once the PCs have made camp with Nadya to wait out the storm.

Creature: Sometime during their evening meal, an unexpected visitor approaches the camp seeking shelter—a winter-touched forlarren named Mierul Ardelain. The product of an unholy union between a fiend and a nymph in neighboring Varisia, Mierul has a hairless body, bare goat legs, and a horned head. After her birth, Mierul found little acceptance among her mother's people. Driven into Irrisen many years ago for her unscrupulous acts, she became a traveling bard, playing a circuit through Irrisen's remote towns and villages, always stopping to pay her respects to the White Witch who governs each region. Eventually, Mierul pledged her loyalty to Queen Elvanna, accepting a sliver of ice into her heart and becoming winter-touched. She now serves the queen as a spy, and is traveling to the Pale Tower to check on Radosek, as Elvanna no longer trusts the accuracy of Nazhena's second-hand reports regarding the Black Rider. Seeing another party of travelers in the wood, Mierul drinks a *potion of undetectable alignment* and quickly seeks out Nadya's band to assess whether they've met the Black Rider or know where he might be.

Nadya is somewhat startled and nervous when Mierul arrives, uneasy about the cold fey's request to join them and yet unable to refuse without arousing the forlarren's ire or suspicion. Mierul sits well away from the fire as she joins the evening meal, doing her part to provide an evening of entertainment with songs, music, and tale-telling. The forlarren's attention is soon drawn to the PCs, however, as she senses something different about them. When Mierul attempts to engage them in conversation, Nadya covers for the PCs by claiming they're relatives visiting from another village, making a Bluff check opposed by Mierul's Sense Motive check (Nadya has a Bluff modifier of +2). The PCs can assist Nadya's Bluff check with aid another actions.

If Nadya succeeds at the Bluff check, Mierul buys the story, and pays the PCs no more mind unless they otherwise arouse her suspicion. Even if the bluff fails, Mierul masks her skepticism, pretending to believe their story. Once she finishes her meal, Mierul takes her leave and journeys on to the Pale Tower (see Development, below).

MIERUL ARDELAIN

CR 3

XP 800

Female winter-touched forlarren bard 2 (*Pathfinder RPG*)

Bestiary 2 125 and page 72)

NE Medium fey (cold)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+3 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 29 (6 HD; 4d6+2d8+6)

Fort +2, **Ref** +10, **Will** +7

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DR 5/cold iron; **Immune** cold

Weaknesses remorse, vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +6 (1d6+2 plus numbing cold) or

flame blade +5 touch (1d8+2 fire plus numbing cold)

Ranged light crossbow +6 (1d8/19–20 plus numbing cold)

Special Attacks bardic performance 7 rounds/day (countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire courage +1), numbing cold (DC 13)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +5)

3/day—*flame blade*

Bard Spells Known (CL 2nd; concentration +3)

1st (3/day)—*chord of shards*^{UM} (DC 12), *disguise self*, *ear-piercing scream*^{UM} (DC 12)

o (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 11), *prestidigitation*, *summon instrument*

TACTICS

Before Combat Mierul drinks a *potion of undetectable alignment* before approaching the party's camp.

During Combat If attacked, Mierul uses her bardic performance to inspire courage, then casts *chord of shards*. Thereafter, she casts *flame blade* or uses her natural claws backed with numbing cold to attack her enemies.

Morale Mierul is a coward at heart, not a warrior. If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, she flees into the winter storm.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 18

Feats Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Perform [sing]), Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +8, Bluff +13, Diplomacy +5, Disguise +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nature) +5, Linguistics +4, Perception +12, Perform (dance) +8, Perform (sing) +13, Perform (string) +6, Sense Motive +13, Stealth +10

Languages Common, Skald, Sylvan, Varisian

SQ bardic knowledge +1, versatile performance (sing)

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potions of undetectable alignment* (2); **Other Gear** light crossbow with 10 bolts, *ice floe elixir* (see page 60), entertainer's outfit, white hooded cloak, opal necklace (worth 500 gp), 14 gp

Development: If Mierul survives this encounter, she travels on to the Pale Tower, where Radosek grants her a guest room during her stay. If she saw through the PCs' bluff, she alerts Radosek to the strange newcomers in Waldsby. This prompts the Pale Tower's soldiers to specifically seek out the PCs when they interrogate the villagers about the Black Rider (see **Events 6** and **7**). Mierul remains at the tower for the rest of the adventure, performing in the dining hall (area **Q8**) each evening to entertain the tower's staff and guards. In this case, the PCs will likely encounter her again when they raid the tower in Part Four, whether she's aware of their true identities or not.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully hide their identities from Mierul, award them 600 XP.

EVENT 4: EYES IN THE SKY (CR 3)

This encounter happens the day following **Event 3**. After weathering the storm overnight, Nadya leads the PCs back onto the trail to Waldsby.

Creature: More servants of the White Witches soon beset the PCs, however. This time, a swarm of ravens soars through the sky, on the lookout for any sign of travelers. These birds serve the Pale Tower, coordinated by Radosek and his minions in an effort to locate the Black Rider. Anything they observe or encounter can easily be communicated back to Radosek since many of his allies can use *speak with animals*.

Nadya is well aware of the ravens' purpose, and though her caravan might normally escape their attention, she knows the PCs' southern garb will likely give them away. At her direction, the caravan guards unfurl white tarps to draw over the dogsleds and hide the caravan and the PCs until the ravens fly past. Each of the PCs must succeed at a successful DC 20 Stealth check to fool the ravens in this manner, but the tarps grant an +5 circumstance bonus on the check. In anyone fails this check, the ravens settle to the ground and begin attacking the tarps in an effort to draw out those hiding beneath it. The tarp is relatively light (hardness 0, hp 2) and the ravens deal automatic damage by swarming over it.

RAVEN SWARM

CR 3

XP 800

(*Tome of Horrors Complete* 584)

N Tiny animal (swarm)

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 size)

hp 30 (4d8+12)

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

Defensive Abilities half damage from piercing and slashing weapons, swarm traits

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee swarm (1d6 plus eye-rake)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks distraction (DC 14), eye-rake

TACTICS

During Combat The ravens swarm around as many targets as possible, scratching at opponents' eyes to maim and blind them.

Morale If reduced to 15 hit points or fewer, the raven swarm disperses.

STATISTICS

Str 2, **Dex** 15, **Con** 14, **Int** 2, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +3; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

Feats Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness

Skills Fly +10, Perception +11

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SPECIAL ABILITIES

Eye-Rake (Ex) Any living creature damaged by a raven swarm must succeed at a DC 14 Reflex save or be blinded as the swarm scratches and tears at the victim's eyes. The blindness lasts for 1d4 days or until healed with *remove blindness/deafness* or a successful DC 20 Heal check. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Development: If the PCs fend off the swarm, the remaining birds disperse and take to the air, retreating to the Pale Tower to report to Jairess Sonn (at area **Q17**). Nadya explains the dire nature of this development and urges the PCs to hurry to Waldsby, where she can hopefully hide them before the ravens summon the tower's soldiers to the village.

Story Award: If the PCs succeed in hiding from the raven swarm, award them 400 XP.

WALDSBY

Nadya finally leads the PCs to her home village of Waldsby, on the northeastern fringes of the Hoarwood Forest. Once in the village, the PCs draw plenty of attention from the locals. Nadya greets those residents concerned for her safety, but many of the villagers stare and point at the PCs before whispering concernedly and leading their children away. Others are intrigued, hoping that the newcomers have brought new wares from the south to trade, and not yet realizing the PCs aren't merchants. Nadya does her best to lead the PCs past the throng, taking them to her home—a stout, unassuming cabin on the edge of town. She introduces the PCs to her remaining children, twin boys named Orm and Mjoli, as well as an old woman named Kashka who looks after boys during Nadya's frequent travels. At this point, the PCs have a chance to rest. Nadya provides the PCs with a hot meal and warm beds, bidding them to stay put while she delivers her food shipment to the fortified storehouse on the other side of the village and makes arrangements to better outfit them for their travels in Irrisen. When she returns soon after, Nadya brings a collection of winter clothing (equivalent to a traveler's outfit for each PC) with her, urging the PCs to wear the more common peasant garb of Waldsby to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

Thereafter, the PCs can rest, recover from any injuries, and replenish their resources before following through on the Black Rider's assigned task. They are also free to explore the village and learn more about the people and culture of Irrisen. Note that this far north, very few of the villagers speak Taldane, the "Common" tongue of the Inner Sea region. Most of Irrisen's peasants speak Skald instead. If none of the PCs speak Skald, Nadya can act as a translator for them in their interactions with Waldsby's residents. Waldsby is detailed in the article beginning on page 66.

The PCs should soon realize that Waldsby (and its close proximity to the Hoarwood Forest) eerily mirrors

the village of Heldren in Taldor, down to the location of many of its buildings. Some of the village's residents even bear an uncanny resemblance to villagers the PCs knew in Heldren. This should come across as a bit otherworldly and far too unlikely to be a coincidence. In fact, the villages share a ley line stretching across Avistan, which Queen Elvanna is drawing upon to magnify the rituals she's using to power the winter portals across Golarion.

The PCs also learn that everyone in Waldsby fears Nazhena Vasillovna, the White Witch who rules this area and lives in the Pale Tower, a stronghold less than a day's ride northwest of Waldsby. The villagers actively gossip about the many soldiers from the Pale Tower who recently marched into the Hoarwood searching for someone, but they are unaware that the soldiers were seeking the Black Rider. Some of the villagers think the PCs might be the soldiers' quarry, and wonder if the soldiers will come to Waldsby looking for them.

Despite these concerns, Nadya does her best to make the PCs feel welcome, introducing them to locals and recommending equipment to purchase that will help them survive in wintry Irrisen. She even bestows her *snowshoes of northern pursuit* (see page 61) upon one of the PCs in the hope of speeding the PCs' journey, wherever it takes them.

NADYA'S DAUGHTER

In Part Two, the PCs likely encountered the guardian doll (area **M**) and may have learned that she was once a living girl named Thora Petska. In fact, Thora was actually Nadya's daughter, but Nadya believes that the girl is still being held prisoner in the Pale Tower, and has no idea what really happened to her. In time, Nadya brings up the topic of her daughter, relating the story of Thora's capture and the importance of the food shipment that she intends to turn over to the Pale Tower in an effort to win Thora's freedom. Nadya feels she may have never had that opportunity if the PCs hadn't interceded when the giant mantis attacked her caravan. At the same time, she harbors hope that the PCs might soon go to the Pale Tower and possibly free Thora.

If the PCs learned of Thora's tragic fate and share what happened to her with Nadya, the young mother is horrified. But an icy resolve soon comes over her, and she becomes even more willing to take direct action against Nazhena and the White Witches. In time, she will grieve for her lost daughter, but for now, she volunteers to help the PCs and their cause.

Story Award: If the PCs provide closure for Nadya by discovering Thora's true fate and informing her, award them 600 XP.

EVENT 5: INHOSPITABLE HOSTS (CR 4)

Many of Waldsby's residents aren't pleased with the arrival of the PCs, fearing such outsiders will draw the ire of

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Nazhena Vasillioivna and that the witch's minions will punish the village for harboring these foreigners. Emil and Katrina Goltiaeva, the owners of the village's sole tavern, the White Weasel, cling to this sentiment more fully than anyone. They keep a massive mirror behind their bar that Katrina knows Radosek sometimes uses to spy on patrons who frequent the tavern. Katrina keeps this mirror uncovered to do her part in safeguarding Waldsby from troublemakers.

Creatures: At some point during the PCs' stay in Waldsby, Katrina convinces her husband Emil to lure the PCs into the White Weasel for drinks. Katrina serves the PC who seems to be the group's leader a special concoction called *suggestive tea* (see page 61) and whispers that they should leave Irrisen immediately, hoping to use the tea's magic to convince the PCs to leave Waldsby under their own volition. If the targeted PC successfully resists this compulsion, Emil takes matters into his own hands, threatening the PCs with his crossbow instead and telling them to leave the town and never come back.

EMIL GOLTIAEVA

CR 3
XP 800

 Male barkeep (*Pathfinder GameMastery Guide* 303)

hp 23

TACTICS

During Combat Emil relies on his heavy crossbow, making sure to load his +1 *human-bane bolt* first and targeting the human PC he deems most dangerous.

Morale Emil fights until Katrina tells him to stop. If she's killed, however, he fights to the death.

KATRINA GOLTIAEVA

CR 1
XP 400

 NE female doomsayer (*Pathfinder GameMastery Guide* 298)

hp 10

TACTICS

During Combat Katrina defends herself and Emil by casting *cause fear* or *command* from her scrolls in an effort to drive the PCs from the tavern. She casts *bleed* to aid her husband's attacks, and if threatened directly, she casts *burning hands*.

Morale If reduced to 3 hit points or fewer, Katrina casts *obscuring mist* to hide herself and Emil so she can use a *scroll of cure light wounds*. If Emil is slain, Katrina breaks down and immediately surrenders, cursing the PCs for bringing ruin upon her and the entire village.

SOLDIERS FROM THE PALE TOWER

Once the PCs have had a chance to explore the village and get their bearings in Irrisen, the fears of Waldsby's less welcoming citizens are realized—a contingent of guards from the Pale Tower visits the village, arriving

THE HOUSE SPIRIT

During the PCs' stay with Nadya, a pair of distrustful eyes secretly watches over them. A small fey creature called a domovoi shares Nadya's home. This poor fey, named Hatch, once lived in the Pale Tower. When he didn't receive the respect he felt he deserved from Nazhena Vasillioivna and her minions, Hatch retaliated with relatively harmless pranks, such as tickling the witch while she slept. Needless to say, Nazhena did not take this treatment very well. She ordered her guards to beat the "filthy pest" and cast him out in the snow to die. Nadya found Hatch before the wolves could claim him and nursed the fey back to health. He's befriended her household ever since, invisibly looking after her children and tidying up their home as he used to do for the Pale Tower. He usually conducts these activities late at night, using *prestidigitation* to clean and organize things, and obsessively does the same with the PCs' gear once they move in, hiding away their possessions—including the two keys given them by the Black Rider—in various cabinets, dressers, and chests.

Initially, Hatch views the PCs as outsiders who will draw unwanted attention to his adopted family. Though Hatch has a starting attitude of unfriendly, the PCs can attempt to improve his attitude by treating Nadya and her family well. Leaving out food as an offering for the domovoi grants the PCs a +5 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy checks with Hatch.

Unknown to anyone, Hatch also carries a heavy burden concerning the fate of Nadya's daughter, Thora. He used to joke with Thora about Nazhena, never imagining the child would repeat such insults in the witch's presence. Much like Nadya, Hatch worries about the child and fears what must have become of her in the Pale Tower, but he also dreads returning there to find out. If the PCs describe Thora's fate while speaking with Nadya, the domovoi experiences extreme remorse for Thora's death, and Nadya's home goes uncleaned by the domovoi for the first time in months.

HATCH

CR 3
XP 800

Domovoi (see page 86)

hp 27

on dogsleds. The soldiers immediately head to the White Weasel to confer with Katrina and Emil Goltiaeva, if the pair still live. Although the guards are primarily searching for the Black Rider, if either Mierul Ardelain (see **Event 3**) or the raven swarm (see **Event 4**) warned Radosek of the PCs' presence in Irrisen, the soldiers seek out the PCs as well, especially if the Goltiaevas can describe the PCs to the guards.

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EVENT 6: SEARCH AND SEIZURE (CR 3)

This event occurs at some point when the PCs and Nadya are both present in her house. The Pale Tower soldiers go door-to-door in Waldsby in an effort to root out their quarry, rounding up the known leaders of the village, including Nadya, as well as any shop owners who supplied the PCs in recent days. When the guards arrive at Nadya's house, they abusively question Nadya, singling out the young mother with the full knowledge they've already taken one of her children, and use that to further goad her during the interrogation.

Creatures: Six Pale Tower guards have been sent to Nadya's house to bring her to their sergeant at the White Weasel. The PCs can either hide from the guards or defend Nadya's family and themselves. Each of the PCs must succeed at a Stealth check (opposed by the soldiers' Perception checks) to successfully hide or escape Nadya's home without being noticed.

If the domovoi Hatch (see the sidebar on page 39) learned of Thora Petska's fate while eavesdropping on the PCs, the soldiers' cruelty earns his wrath and the fey starts hurling household items at them with his telekinesis ability. If the PCs take advantage of this distraction, they can get the benefits of a surprise round against the guards.

PALE TOWER GUARDS (6)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

Human warrior 1

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +1 shield)**hp** 9 each (1d10+4)**Fort** +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.**Melee** cold iron longsword +3 (1d8+1/19–20) or dagger +2 (1d4+1/19–20)**Ranged** light crossbow +2 (1d8/19–20)

TACTICS

During Combat The guards team up to provide flanking bonuses or use aid another actions to improve one another's attacks or AC.

Morale The guards fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 12, **Con** 12, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9**Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 13**Feats** Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)**Skills** Intimidate +3, Perception +1, Profession (soldier) +4**Languages** Skald

Combat Gear *potion of endure elements*; **Other Gear** chain shirt, light steel shield, cold iron longsword, dagger, light crossbow with 10 bolts, cold-weather outfit, 15 gp

Development: The guards have been charged with bringing Nadya to Radosek for interrogation, so unless the PCs intervene, they lead her away, taking her back to their sergeant at the White Weasel. If the PCs go willingly with the guards, surrender to them, or are defeated, they are likewise taken to the White Weasel (see **Event 7**).

EVENT 7: THE GUARD SERGEANT (CR 4)

This encounter takes place after **Event 6**, either as a result of the PCs or Nadya being captured by the Pale Tower guards, or perhaps because the PCs are rushing to Nadya's rescue.

Creatures: Sergeant Volan Sertane, the leader of the Pale Tower guards sent to Waldsby, waits at the White Weasel with four more Pale Tower guards. When he first meets the PCs, Volan brazenly devalues their prowess, assuming that he can cow them as easily as the villagers he's bullied so often. Even if the PC are not prisoners and have come to rescue Nadya, Volan confidently recommends they mean to surrender and submit to the witch of the Pale Tower, intimating that far worse awaits them—and the villagers—if they refuse. Volan has little intention of taking the PCs straight to the Pale Tower, however. If they lay down their weapons, he wisely orders his guards to bind anyone he suspects as a spellcaster and commandeers the tavern to question his captives on the whereabouts of the Black Rider, using his *potion of interrogation* if he thinks they might be lying. If the PCs attack, Volan and his guards respond in kind.

SERGEANT VOLAN SERTANE

CR 2

XP 600

Male human (Ulfen) fighter 2/ranger 1

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +2 Dex, +1 shield)**hp** 25 (3d10+5)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2 (+1 vs. fear)**Defensive Abilities** bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.**Melee** mwk cold iron longsword +5 (1d8+2/19–20), light spiked shield +3 (1d4+1) or

mwk cold iron longsword +7 (1d8+3/19–20) or

dagger +5 (1d4+3/19–20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +6 (1d8/19–20)**Special Attacks** favored enemy (humans +2)

TACTICS

During Combat Volan attacks with his sword and spiked shield, targeting humans when possible to take advantage of his favored enemy bonus. Against heavily armored opponents, he switches to single attacks with his longsword

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instead, pausing only to drink a *potion of cure light wounds* to keep going.

Morale If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, Volan realizes the battle has turned against him. He takes the total defense action and uses a move action to retrieve his *attentive mirror* to warn Radosek about the danger the PCs pose before they can overwhelm him (see Development, below).

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 15, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 17

Feats Alertness, Improved Shield Bash, Iron Will, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (local) +2, Knowledge (nature) +4, Perception +6, Ride +3, Sense Motive +4, Stealth +3, Survival +4

Languages Skald

SQ track +1, wild empathy +2

Combat Gear *potions of cure light wounds* (2), *potion of endure elements*, *potion of interrogation*^{UM} (CL 4th), *screaming bolts* (2); **Other Gear** chain shirt, spiked light steel shield, dagger, mwk cold iron longsword, mwk light crossbow with 10 bolts, *attentive mirror* (see page 60), cold-weather outfit, 24 gp

PALE TOWER GUARDS (4)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

hp 9 each (see page 40)

TACTICS

During Combat The guards support Volan by making sure at least one of them defends his flank. The others attempt to surround and subdue any spellcasters.

Morale The guards fight to the death.

Development: Volan carries an *attentive mirror* (see page 60) with which to report back to Radosek in the Pale Tower. He does so once he locates the Black Rider or anything else that might warrant his master's attention, such as the presence of the PCs in Waldsby. It takes Radosek at least 10 minutes after the mirror's activation to make contact with Volan's mirror, but he maintains the connection so he can observe anyone who picks up the magic device.

If the PCs do not rescue Nadya from the Pale Tower guards, she is eventually taken to the Pale Tower. In this case, she is held in area **Q21** until Radosek decides what to do with her.

WILLING ALLIES

Following the Pale Tower guards' visit to Waldsby, the villagers become agitated. Everyone realizes that the PCs' presence (and actions, especially if they killed the soldiers) will surely bring retribution down on Waldsby as soon as

Nazhena and Radosek learn what happened. If the PCs rescued Nadya, she offers to lead them to the Pale Tower, preferring an aggressive retaliation in hopes of catching Nazhena and her minions off guard rather than cowering in fear, which is the village's typical response. Given the PCs' prowess in handling the giant mantis and the soldiers of the White Witch, Nadya is certain they can succeed. She also implores them to free her daughter, Thora—or avenge her, if Nadya has learned what became of the girl. She also suggests they consult with Hatch, the domovoi who lives in her house. Since Hatch once worked



VOLAN SERTANE

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in the Pale Tower, he can tell the PCs the best way to enter and avoid detection.

Convincing Hatch to help them is a complicated matter, however. As much as the domovoi loves Nadya and her family, he also fears Nazhena and Radosek. Standing up to soldiers isn't the same as facing the wrath of the White Witches. If the PCs want Hatch's help, they must impress him or otherwise lure the domovoi into speaking with them by succeeding at a Diplomacy check to make him friendly, if they have not already changed his attitude. Even if the PCs have already made Hatch friendly, they must still succeed at a DC 12 Diplomacy check to gain his aid. As before, a gift of warm milk or a bit of food left for the domovoi earns a +5 circumstance bonus on the check. Thereafter, Hatch can assist them in their forays into the Pale Tower (see the sidebar on page 43). In addition, if Hatch is made helpful, he gives the PCs an additional piece of information: he overheard Nazhena telling Radosek that one of the items in her treasury was cursed as a trap for thieves—so the PCs would be wise to be careful if they decide to loot the Pale Tower.

Development: If the Winter Guard captured Nadya and took her to the Pale Tower, Hatch eventually comes forward on his own, reluctantly appearing to urge the PCs to save her. He's aware of the ritual he saw Nazhena performing to create the winter portal, and he knows if the PCs want to shut it down, they'll have to go there and defeat the White Witch. He offers to help them if they agree to save Nadya, even accompanying them to the tower.

Story Award: If the PCs convince Hatch to aid them in their assault on the Pale Tower, award them 800 XP, as if they had defeated him in combat.

PART FOUR: THE PALE TOWER

Eventually, the PCs must venture to the Pale Tower to seal the winter portal to Taldor and save their loved ones back home. With most of the tower's soldiers still searching for the Black Rider, the tower is fortunately undermanned and more vulnerable to infiltration. Even so, getting inside and navigating the tower proves no easy task. Nazhena Vasillioivna's apprentice, Radosek Pavril, presides over the tower in his mistress's absence, and he commands a great number of her most loyal servants. With Nazhena away, he diligently carries on her work, both in maintaining the winter portal and in guarding against the interference of outsiders.

Reaching the Pale Tower should be the PCs' next priority. Nadya or Hatch can easily guide them there. Even the townsfolk of Waldsby can advise them of its location. Assuming the PCs have secured snowshoes, they can make the 6-mile journey in about 3 to 4 hours. Alternatively, they can use Nadya's dogsleds (or those of the Pale Tower guards who came to Waldsby) to make the trip in half the time.

EVENT 8: ON THE ROAD (CR 3)

Creature: Shortly after leaving Waldsby, the PCs attract the attention of a greater witchcrow, a large, intelligent crow with an innate talent for witchcraft. This witchcrow, named Lytil, was drawn to the area because of the potent magic involved in the winter portal. Since arriving, she's become a recurring nuisance for Nazhena and Radosek, who have repeatedly driven her away from the Pale Tower.

Lytil can sense the powerful magic in the keys to Baba Yaga's hut carried by the PCs with her *detect magic* ability and covets one for her nest. She follows the PCs at a distance until she can approach unseen with her *vanish* ability, then appears before the PCs to engage them in conversation, lulling them into a false sense of complacency as she questions them about their destination and bold approach toward the Pale Tower. Lytil's conversation is short-lived, however. Under the pretense of offering them additional information, she narrows her scrutiny with *detect magic* until she can identify the magic keys. Once she locates her prize, she attacks.

LYTIL

CR 3
XP 800

Female greater witchcrow (see page 88)

hp 32

TACTICS

During Combat Lytil casts *vanish* to disappear and circle her quarry, relying on *ventriloquism* to distract and fool opponents as she uses flyby attacks with Improved Steal combat maneuvers. If she successfully snatches her prize, she immediately retreats. Otherwise, she continues attacking with her claws, targeting ranged attackers with her hexes and casting *mirror image* to further defend herself.

Morale Lytil persists until she's reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, at which point she gives up and flees into the forest.

Development: If Lytil succeeds in stealing one of the keys to the *Dancing Hut*, the PCs should be able to easily track down the witchcrow. Her nest is reasonably close by, and a simple divination (such as *augury* or *locate object*) or successful DC 11 Survival check should be enough to find the nest and recover the key. Of course, Lytil defends what she views as "hers" once the key is in her possession.

Q. THE PALE TOWER

The Pale Tower stands upon a flat, snow-covered plain northwest of Waldsby. In clear weather, its battlements command a 6-mile view of the surrounding terrain. Frequent visitors to the tower normally signal the tower's guards with reflective mirrors to announce their approach, but all others attract the attention of a scouting raven swarm from the tower's aerie. The birds circle such interlopers before reporting back to their keeper, Jairess Sonn, who then warns Radosek and the tower's guards.

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When the PCs first sight the tower, read or paraphrase the following description.

Sharp winds whistle across this stark white plain, stinging the eyes along with the near-blinding rays of the reflected sun. A great eruption of frozen ice rises in the distance—an imposing pale tower crowned with icicles spearing into the sky. Seemingly born of the land itself, an unbroken circular wall of ice guards the tower's base, with no means of entrance visible. High above, a large gash opens in the tower's bowl-like crown, ringed in icy spikes and split by a massive plane of ice resembling an inverted crescent moon.

The tower's entire structure is made of solid ice as strong as hewn stone (hardness 8, hp 540, break DC 50), magically drawn from the ground and carved into an imposing fortress by Nazhena Vasilliovna's mother, a powerful winter witch. The slippery ice walls require a successful DC 30 Climb check to scale. An underground aquifer and hot spring supplies fresh water to the tower.

Each floor of the Pale Tower is actually a hollowed out section inside the massive icicle that forms the tower. No stairs grant access between these floors, lest they fracture the ice beyond its ability to support the tower's own weight. Instead, Nazhena's mother created teleporters using *ice crystal teleport* (CL 11th; *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 224) to move creatures from one location to another specific location elsewhere in the tower. A teleporter can transport one creature at a time. The target is encased in ice for 1 round, during which time it is paralyzed, then fades away. At the end of the round, the target is teleported to its keyed destination, and the ice immediately melts away. Activating these teleporters requires a simple command phrase or magical key. The domovoi Hatch knows most of these phrases, but Nazhena and Radosek have kept some of them secret to restrict access to certain floors. The command phrases and destinations for each teleporter are detailed in the areas where they appear.

In addition, several large mirrors hang within the tower's rooms and hallways, useful tools for Nazhena and Radosek to spy upon their minions or guests with the *Irriseni mirror sight* spell. Radosek always keeps one of these spells prepared each day to take advantage of them.

Altogether, the Pale Tower normally supports a complement of 35 guards in addition to the stronghold's servants, but Radosek has sent most of his soldiers to scour the countryside in search of the Black Rider, leaving only a token force at the tower.

Q1. Outer Gate (CR 1)

A trampled path of snow, heavily tracked by footprints and sled trails, ends abruptly at an opaque wall of ice.

STORMING THE PALE TOWER

How the PCs assault the tower is largely left up to them, though the domovoi Hatch can make the task much easier. He knows every nook in the tower, as well as most of its inhabitants. He also knows how to use the ice crystal teleporters to move between floors, and can give the PCs the command phrases for the teleporters in areas Q5, Q8, Q15, and Q17. Hatch only accompanies the PCs as far as the first floor of the tower. After their initial foray, he remains behind, securing a safe place for them to rest if they need to retreat.

If Nadya accompanies the PCs, keep in mind that she has a major role to play in the next adventure, "The Shackled Hut," guiding the PCs from Waldsby to Irrisen. If something happens to her in this adventure, you'll need introduce another NPC to serve as the PCs' guide.

It may take several forays into the Pale Tower before the PCs overcome its defenders and locate the source of the winter portal, and they may require rest and recovery before continuing their assault. The tower's ground level could be barricaded against the upper floors of the tower, making it difficult for Radosek to strike back at them. He grows increasingly paranoid, scrying on the PCs through the tower's mirrors and isolating himself in the tower's ritual chamber (area Q20) to await Nazhena's return, but she continues to be occupied in Whitethrone.

If the PCs linger in an attempt to wait out Radosek, he has enough food to last him several weeks. Patrols of the tower's guards should also threaten the PCs as contingents return to the tower from their fruitless search for the Black Rider. Use the statistics on page 40 for these guards. Likewise, more cold fey could arrive at the tower. Up to four winter-touched sprites (see area D) or three winter-touched atomies (see area Q8) could surprise the PCs.

Carvings and ancient glyphs depict only the semblance of a gateway on its surface.

The outer wall of the Pale Tower is 25 feet high, and requires a successful DC 30 Climb check to scale, though if a rope is affixed to the top of the wall, the DC drops to 10. A permanent *wall of ice* (CL 9th) 9 inches thick forms the gate to the Pale Tower, seamlessly connecting to the otherwise mundane ice walls of the tower (hardness 0, hp 27, break DC 24). Anyone smashing through the wall or passing through a breach takes 1d6+9 points of cold damage (no save). Just behind the wall stands a portcullis of inverted icicles. The tower's guards can temporarily suppress the magic wall for up to 9 rounds and raise the portcullis to allow access to the tower's courtyard, but they only do so for recognized guards or expected guests of Nazhena or Radosek.

REIGN OF WINTER

Q. THE PALE TOWER

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

GROUND FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR



AERIE

TOP FLOOR

□ = MIRROR

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Creatures: Three Pale Tower guards are currently posted on the battlements atop the gate. A successful DC 20 Bluff check is sufficient for a PC to convince them that the PCs are expected and they should open the gate. If the PCs have disguised themselves using equipment taken from the Pale Tower guards in Waldsby, they receive a +5 circumstance bonus on this check. Otherwise, they have to find their own way inside the tower's walls. Of course, the guards don't sit idly by while PCs invade the tower. They attack anyone attempting to scale or breach the walls.

PALE TOWER GUARDS (3) **CR 1/3**
XP 135 each
 hp 9 each (see page 40)

Story Award: If the PCs fool the guards into letting them in or otherwise bypass the guards at the gate, award them XP as if they had defeated the guards in combat.

Q2. Courtyard (CR 4)

A massive ice sculpture of a dragon dominates this open courtyard, standing with raised wings upon a dais of solid ice. Seven squat shacks sit along the inner wall, with several dogsleds stored outside. Between them, four ice chutes descend from the battlements of the outer wall. To the west, large double doors studded with icicles lead inside the Pale Tower itself, just beneath an overhang of sharp icicles dangling from above.

When Nazhena's mother first constructed the Pale Tower, she defeated a powerful white dragon named Auburphex who had claimed the area. The courtyard's ice sculpture commemorates their battle. When Nazhena took over the tower, she left the sculpture in place for its intimidation value, both for those visiting her home, and for anyone foolish enough to assault the stronghold. The icicles hanging over the doors, while menacing, pose no threat to creatures passing through the doors.

Creature: The primary danger in this courtyard is a nasty ice troll named Bordegga, retained by Radosek to help guard the tower in Nazhena's absence. The troll is too large to comfortably reside in the tower itself, so she's made her bed among the vacant kennels instead. Bordegga doesn't particularly care for her assignment as no amount of gold has ever filled her empty stomach. Her hunger has already driven her to eat the tower's remaining dogs, and she eagerly assaults any outsiders foolish enough to enter the courtyard uninvited.

BORDEGGA **CR 4**
XP 1,200

Female ice troll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 271)

hp 45

TACTICS

During Combat Initially, Bordegga fights with axe, tooth, and claw, focusing her attacks on anyone capable of casting spells since she fears fire magic. If injured by fire or acid, she flies into a rage, either discarding her battleaxe or hurling it (taking a -4 penalty on her attack roll) at whoever marked her with such an attack. Thereafter, she fights solely with her natural attacks.

Morale Bordegga fights to the death.

Treasure: Bordegga has stashed the payment she's received from Radosek in the kennel to the southeast, totaling 500 gp.

Development: The statue in the courtyard is a completely normal ice sculpture when the PCs first enter the courtyard. When they later encounter Radosek in area Q20, however, the winter witch retreats here to rally his troops and animates the statue with a *scroll of animate objects*, instructing it to attack the PCs (see Development on page 53).

ANIMATED ICE DRAGON **CR 5**
XP 1,600

Animated object (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 14*)

N Large construct

Init -3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** -5

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 8, flat-footed 18 (-1 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)

hp 52 (4d10+30)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** -4

Defensive Abilities hardness 0; **Immune** cold, construct traits

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (clumsy)

Melee 2 slams +9 (1d8+6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat The animated statue moves at the direction of Radosek, charging from the sky if allowed to fly. It otherwise slams its opponents, seeking to grapple and pin anyone Radosek deems especially dangerous.

Morale The statue fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 8, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 20 **Skills** Fly -11

SQ Construction Points (additional attack, additional movement [fly], ice)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Construction Points *Ice* (Ex, 1 CP): The object is made of ice.

Its hardness is reduced to 0, and it gains vulnerability to fire and immunity to cold.

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Q3. Entrance Hall (CR 3)

Steamy air fills this inner gallery, emanating in lazy wisps from a bubbling pool recessed into the floor of a raised dais surrounded by six pillars of ice. Four foggy mirrors hang from the walls near ice sculptures of helmeted pike-wielding warriors.

The bottom floor of the Pale Tower is fed by a hot spring percolating up from the icy plain on which Nazhena's mother built her home. The denizens of the tower often use it for bathing, as the surrounding ice is magically treated to resist melting from the water's ambient temperature.

Creature: A water elemental lives within the spring, acting as an additional guardian and caretaker of the tower's waterworks. It routinely sends fresh water through the hollow pillars surrounding the pool into other parts of the tower, such as the privies (area Q4) and the kitchen (area Q9). Any member of the Pale Tower staff can command the elemental, but it attacks any creatures carrying fire that approach the pool, knowing full well the danger fire poses to those living in the Pale Tower. If a battle takes place here, the conflict warns the guards in areas Q6 and Q7, who quickly arm themselves and plan an ambush.

MEDIUM WATER ELEMENTAL

CR 3

XP 800

hp 30 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 126)

TACTICS

During Combat The elemental uses its drench ability to put out open flames or dispel magical ones. If attacked, it grapples victims to pull them into the hot springs.

Morale The elemental fights to the death.

Q4. Privies

Running water flows through the open latrines of these privies, carrying wastewater out of the tower and into an underground river. The doors to the east of the privies lead to stairs that climb up to the battlements atop the outer wall.

Q5. Ice Crystal Teleporters

A glassy pattern of striated, crystalline ice covers the tiled floor in this open alcove, illuminated by a soft, blue light.

The ice crystal teleporters here on the first floor transport targets to the dining hall (area Q8) on the second floor of the tower. The command phrase is "A gathering within the hall, take one, take us all." If Hatch is accompanying the PCs, he knows the command phrase. Additionally, Sergeant Yana Dultsev in area Q7 possesses a key to activate the teleporters.

Otherwise, the PCs will need to interrogate captured guards to learn the commands, or blindly activate a teleporter with a successful DC 25 Use Magic Device check.

Q6. North Barracks (CR 2)

Nine double bunks, little more than straw mattresses and heavy blankets on raised blocks of ice, occupy most of the space in this partitioned chamber. A single wooden chest and a weapons locker furnish the rest of the room.

Creatures: These barracks usually house 18 guards. Presently, just five Pale Tower guards occupy the room, recovering from an extended foray into the countryside searching for the Black Rider. They have only recently returned, so they're fatigued, unarmed, and unarmored. It takes them 6 rounds to hastily don their armor and pick up their shields if alerted to battle elsewhere in the tower. If surprised, the guards spend the first round of battle arming themselves with weapons from the locker to the south. If unable to reach it, they retreat through the room's other exit to join Yana Dultsev in area Q7 or flee to the dining hall (area Q8) using the ice crystal teleporters. If the PCs haven't yet faced the water elemental in area Q3, the guards command it to attack the invaders, then make their escape.

PALE TOWER GUARDS (5)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 9 each (see page 40)

Weaknesses fatigued

Q7. South Barracks (CR 4)

Eight bunk beds fill this narrow room, separated by a small partition between the tower's icy walls. Several wooden chests and a weapons locker furnish the rest of the chamber.

Creatures: This room provides quarters for another 13 more guards and the three sergeants who lead them. Currently, just one sergeant, Yana Dultsev, and four of her best fighters reside here, sharing drinks after a patrol. Unlike the guards in the northern barracks (area Q6), Yana and her fellow guards have already rested and are fully equipped. If alerted to the PCs' intrusion, they prepare an ambush at each of the barracks' doors with one team fighting defensively to hold off intruders while the other circles around to take the PCs from behind.

PALE TOWER GUARDS (4)

CR 1/3

XP 135 each

hp 9 each (see page 40)

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SERGEANT YANA DULTSEV

CR 2

XP 600

hp 25 (use stats for Volan Sertane; see page 40)

TACTICS

During Combat Yana fights at the forefront of battle while the guards accompanying her clamber over beds to surround opponents or fire their crossbows.

Morale Yana and her guards fight to the death.

Treasure: As a sergeant, Yana carries a special key attuned to the ice crystal teleporters in area Q5. The key automatically activates the teleporter without the need for a command phrase when anyone bearing the key steps onto the ice crystals.

Q8. Dining Hall (CR 3)

A crescent-shaped dining table occupies this Y-shaped chamber, while two large mirrors on the north and south walls create the illusion of an even larger space. Twenty feet overhead, an immense chandelier of ice crystals hangs from the ceiling. To the east, rounded steps access a short hallway, flanked by twin ice sculptures of dryads holding ice-carved tree limbs, creating an elaborate archway. Translucent, glasslike double doors are set in the hall's north and south walls. To the west, two alcoves stand between three windows providing an amazing view of the wintry landscape outside the tower.

Nazhena, Radosek, and the rest of the tower's guards, servants, and guests take their meals in this chamber. The raised hallway to the east doubles as a stage for visiting performers and musicians. The alcoves along the western wall are ice crystal teleporters linked to area Q5. They can be activated by uttering the phrase "Spiral downward to the ground, every ounce and every pound" or by using Yana's key (see area Q7).

Creatures: Two winter-touched atomies named Jir and Lask spend most of their time here, perfecting an acrobatic routine in anticipation of the evening's festivities. They turn invisible to defend the tower if they detect intruders.

JIR AND LASK (2)

CR 1

XP 400 each

Winter-touched atomies (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 28 and page 72)

hp 9 each

TACTICS

During Combat The atomies use their *invisibility* to maneuver into position for sneak attacks. Thereafter, they cast *reduce person* on their opponents and flank with one another or Mierul (see Development, below) to continue the fight.

Morale The atomies fight to the death.

Development: If the forlorn bard Mierul Ardelain (see page 36) survived her encounter during Part Three of the adventure, she is present here as well, providing musical accompaniment to the atomies' routine. She immediately recognizes the PCs and attacks if she believes they threaten the tower. If the atomies are slain and Mierul is reduced below 10 hit points, she surrenders, playing down her friendly relationship with Radosek while trying to formulate an escape from the Pale Tower that won't involve her death at the hands of the PCs. She's willing to cut a deal, even parting with her *ice floe elixir* if they agree to let her go. Mierul's equipment is kept in her guest room (area Q10). Mierul's presence makes this a CR 5 encounter.

Q9. Kitchen (CR 3)

Several cabinets line the narrow walls of this oddly angular room. A chopping block, water barrel, and cauldron stand near the room's only door. The tantalizing smells of fresh baked bread and meaty stew fill the air.

Creature: Nazhena employs an ill-tempered spriggan named Mig Epsel as the Pale Tower's cook. Mig runs his kitchen with the occasional aid of the atomies Jir and Lask from the dining hall (area Q8), but he brooks no interruptions or disturbances from anyone else.

MIG EPSEL

CR 3

XP 800

Male spriggan (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 257)

hp 22

TACTICS

During Combat Mig casts *scare* on intruders to force them out of his kitchen and into the dining hall. If successful, he follows along so he can use his size alteration ability to become Large and continue the fight.

Morale Mig fights to death.

Treasure: Among Mig's culinary creations is a tray of baked goods—one of which is a *spiteful cookie* (see page 61) in the shape of a white dragon. He's been saving the treat for Hestrig Orlov (see area Q12) to get back at her for criticizing a rack of lamb the spriggan served 3 nights ago.

Q10. Empty Bedroom

A bed, desk, and storage locker furnish this small circular chamber. A five-foot-tall mirror hangs on the wall opposite the room's only door.

If Mierul Ardelain survived her encounter with the PCs on the road to Waldsby (see **Event 3**), Radosek has offered her the use of this room while she's a guest of the Pale Tower.

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She spends most of her time in the dining hall (area Q8), but keeps her belongings here, locking the storage locker with a key she keeps with her (Disable Device DC 25 to open).

Q11. Guest Bedroom (CR 3)

The scent of perfume fills the air of this small bedroom where several dresses styled for a Taldan noblewoman lie neatly arranged on the bed. A mirrored vanity and chair sit by the door next to a wooden chest, and a larger mirror hangs on the wall between two windows.

Creature: This bedroom is normally reserved for visitors to the Pale Tower, such as winter witches visiting from Whitethrone. Currently, a doppelganger named Gardhek is staying here, retained by Nazhena to impersonate Lady Argentea Malassene. Radosek intends to “return” the false noble to Oppara to act as a spy and delay any response to the winter portal in the Border Wood.

An uncouth creature at best, Gardhek has been trying to perfect Argentea’s mannerisms while experimenting with clothing and items stolen from her carriage. Gardhek learned what Lady Argentea looked like and was able to study some of her mannerisms through Radosek’s *Irriseni mirror sight* spell. More recently, the doppelganger has been studying Taldan etiquette to better blend into noble society. Gardhek has no prior knowledge of the PCs, but immediately attempts to mislead them into thinking it’s the real Lady Argentea, claiming the one they met at the High Sentinel Lodge was an imposter. If questioned, “Lady Argentea” claims to have lost many of her memories because of the trauma of her abduction in an attempt to cover any gaps in her knowledge of the real Argentea’s life. If the PCs see through the doppelganger’s ruse with a successful DC 23 Sense Motive check (if they met and rescued the real Argentea, they gain a +10 bonus on the check), it doesn’t hesitate to attack. Gardhek has a knack for survival and knows Radosek and Nazhena need it to carry out their plans in Taldor. If reduced to 10 hit points or fewer, it flees, running for the ice crystal teleporter in area Q15 to join Jairess Sonn in the aerie (area Q17).

GARDHEK CR 3
XP 800
 Doppelganger (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 89)
hp 26

Q12. Library (CR 4)

Floor-to-ceiling bookshelves line the walls of this sprawling chamber. An ornate wooden table, covered with open texts and lit candles, and six chairs sit in the middle of the room. A massive mirror hangs on the western wall.

Following her mother’s example, Nazhena maintains an expansive library of collected lore here. The books cover such varied topics as Golarion history, the Great Beyond, and bestiaries on dragons, fey, and magical beasts of the icy north. Each collection grants a +2 circumstance bonus on Knowledge (history), Knowledge (planes), and corresponding monster lore skill checks. The open tomes on the table all relate to Taldor, to further the education of the doppelganger Gardhek (area Q11).

Creature: The library’s current occupant is the Pale Tower guard captain, a veteran warrior named Hestrig Orlov. Though she is primarily of Ulfen descent, her lineage also includes a white dragon from the northern glaciers. The White Witches immediately recognized the value of her icy draconic bloodline, prompting her to join their service at an early age.

Recently, Hestrig has discovered that the white dragon Auburphex, slain by Nazhena’s mother and commemorated by the ice sculpture in the tower’s courtyard (area Q2), is the same dragon whose blood courses through her veins. Hestrig hasn’t yet come to grips with this realization, unsure whether she should avenge her draconic ancestor or keep the secret to herself. In the meantime, she studies the recorded history of that time, hoping to learn why the dragon opposed the White Witches. She aggressively attacks any intruders venturing here.

CAPTAIN HESTRIG ORLOV CR 4
XP 1,200
 Female human (Ulfen) fighter 2/sorcerer 3
 NE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +1; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural)
hp 38 (5 HD; 2d10+3d6+13)
Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3 (+1 vs. fear)
Defensive Abilities bravery +1; **Resist** cold 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee +1 greatsword +8 (2d6+5/19–20) or 2 claws +6 (1d4+3)
Ranged mwk throwing axe +5 (1d6+3)
Special Attacks claws (2, 1d4+3, 5 rounds/day)
Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 3rd; concentration +5)
 1st (6/day)—*enlarge person* (DC 13), *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *snowball** (DC 13)
 0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*
Bloodline draconic (white)
 * See page 73.

TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted to the PCs’ presence, Hestrig casts

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mage armor and *magic weapon* from her scroll to prepare for battle.

During Combat If she has enough room, Hestrig casts *enlarge person* during a fight, sweeping her greatsword in giant arcs with her improved reach to use Power Attack and Cleave against her opponents, alternating attacks with spells such as *snowball* or *magic missile*. If faced with a formidable foe, she changes strategy and uses her Shield of Swings feat to increase her AC. Hestrig is loathe to use her *elixir of fire breath*, as she acquired it as an insurance policy against treachery from the ice troll Bordegga (see area Q2) or the cold fey in the tower.

Morale Hestrig lacks the wisdom to flee or surrender. She fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without her spells, Hestrig's statistics are AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 11; **Melee** mwk greatsword +8 (2d6+4/19–20).

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 13, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 18

Feats Cleave, Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Power Attack, Shield of Swings^{APG}, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Perception +7, Profession (soldier) +5, Ride +5, Spellcraft +4, Use Magic Device +6

Languages Skald

SQ bloodline arcana (cold energy spells deal +1 damage per die)

Combat Gear *elixir of fire breath*, *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *scroll of magic weapon*; **Other Gear** dagger, mwk greatsword, mwk throwing axe, *cloak of resistance* +1, key to chest in area Q16, teleporter key (to area Q15), 65 gp

Treasure: Hestrig carries a key to the ice crystal teleporter in area Q15. The key automatically activates the teleporter without the need for a command phrase when anyone bearing the key steps onto the ice crystals.

Q13. Mirrored Hall (CR 5)

A long red carpet extends from the western doorway of this mirrored hall between ice sculptures of twin nymphs, ending at an open alcove to the east. Passageways continue north and south, following the contours of the tower's outer wall, where windows look out over the open courtyard below.

The eastern alcove contains an ice crystal teleporter linked to the ritual chamber (area Q20). The command

phrase is "Onward, upward, in a tick. Don't be late, just be quick." If Radosek is aware of the PCs' presence in the tower, he has shut down the teleporter so it no longer responds to the command phrase in an effort to keep anyone from reaching the ritual chamber. Some time ago, however, Radosek gave a teleporter key to Jairess Sonn (area Q17), in an attempt to lure the attractive sylph to his bedchamber while Nazhena is away. So far, Jairess has rebuffed Radosek's advances, but she still has the key, which is capable of overriding the deactivated teleporter. This key represents the only means of reaching the tower's upper chambers to face Radosek directly and shut down the portal to Taldor.

Creatures: The nymph ice sculptures are actually animated objects that guard this hall and the ice crystal teleporter in the eastern alcove. They remain inactive unless they're attacked



HESTRIG ORLOV

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or a creature fails to give the proper command phrase to operate the teleporter. The statues fight until destroyed.

ANIMATED ICE NYMPHS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

Animated object (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 14)

N Medium construct

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception –5

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (+4 natural)

hp 36 each (3d10+20)

Fort +1, **Ref** +1, **Will** –4

Defensive Abilities hardness 0; **Immune** cold, construct traits

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 slams +5 (1d6+2)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 15

SQ Construction Points (additional attack, ice)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Construction Points *Ice* (Ex, 1 CP): The object is made of ice.

Its hardness is reduced to 0, and it gains vulnerability to fire and immunity to cold.

Q14. Conservatory (CR 4)

Several tables, covered in flowering plants and decorative figurines both large and small, occupy the corners of this brightly lit large room. A large mirror hangs on the northwestern wall, while double doors lead north and south.

The angles of the ice in the walls and ceiling of this conservatory direct sunlight into the room to feed the collection of plants here.

Creature: Among the many plants in the conservatory is a mandragora that Nazhena created using demon blood. Because of its hostility, even to its creator, Nazhena chained it up here, though to her annoyance, she still occasionally suffers from its unsettling shriek. Now, she mostly shows off the mandragora to visiting colleagues, or feeds it with those servants who displease her. The mandragora has struggled mightily against the chains securing it to the eastern wall, and the ice around the chains is now severely weakened. Each round the PCs remain in this room, the mandragora pulls against the chains. With a successful DC 13 Strength check, it finally fractures the weakened ice. Once released, the mandragora ravenously attacks anyone within reach.

MANDRAGORA

CR 4

XP 1,200

hp 37 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 185)

TACTICS

During Combat The mandragora immediately shrieks, then grabs and grapples anyone within reach, using its blood drain ability to feed. After this initial surprise attack, it continues feeding unless its opponent breaks free, in which case, it pursues and continues to attack.

Morale The mandragora fights to the death.

Q15. Ice Crystal Teleporter

Tiles of ice cover the floor in this recessed alcove, beneath a large window overlooking the tower's northern exposure.

This ice crystal teleporter connects to the aerie at area Q17. It can be activated with the command phrase "Take wing, soar and fly, let me view the winter sky" or by using Hestrig Orlov's key (see area Q12).

Q16. Hestrig's Bedroom

A bed, desk, dresser, and storage chest furnish this small bedroom. A large mirror hangs on the wall opposite the room's only door, and two windows look down on the tower's courtyard.

This room serves as sleeping quarters for Hestrig Orlov, captain of the Pale Tower's guards (see area Q12). She keeps to herself when not dressing down patrol sergeants for failing to locate the Black Rider. In her calmer moments, she retires here to practice her sorcery.

Treasure: Whether because of her draconic heritage or just natural greed, Hestrig hoards her collected earnings and forced tribute in a chest by her bed, which she keeps locked at all times (Disable Device DC 25 to open). It contains an *elixir of truth*, three *potions of feather fall*, a pair of silver bracers traced with figures of dragons worth 250 gp, a jeweled scepter worth 175 gp, an agate worth 50 gp, and three blue quartz crystals worth 100 gp each, as well as 256 gp, 473 sp, and 894 cp.

Q17. Aerie (CR 4)

A triangle of crossed steel wires runs between three wooden posts in this crescent-shaped room that smells strongly from the bird droppings scattered across the floor. Along the south wall, open windows look down from a dizzying height, admitting a brisk, cold wind. Two doors exit this chamber, one next to a large mirror to the west and another standing between a pair of wooden chests to the northeast.

The witches of Irrisen have a strong affinity for ravens, often adopting them as familiars or using them as messengers and servants. As such, Nazhena maintains an aerie here to house a flock of ravens. The ceiling is 30 feet high in the aerie, which lies 60 feet above ground level. Other than flight, the

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ice crystal teleporter from area **Q15** offers the only means of accessing the aerie, depositing travelers in the alcove in the northern wall. Returning to area **Q15** requires the command phrase “Down a level, to the halls, leave this cage without walls” or Hestrig Orlov’s key (see area **Q12**).

Creatures: A young sylph cleric named Jairess Sonn looks after the tower’s ravens, which proudly serve Nazhena and Radosek as spies. Jairess’s faith in Gozreh allows her to speak with the ravens, and she directs them in scouting the surrounding area. She translates their reports to update Radosek and the tower’s guards, alerting them to unwelcome visitors in Nazhena’s domain. Jairess is actually a newcomer to the Pale Tower. Her exotic nature and attractiveness has drawn the attention of several guards, as well as Radosek himself. Radosek even crafted a special key for her so she could visit the tower’s upper levels should she wish. So far, Jairess has turned down this opportunity, but carries a key to the ice crystal teleporter in area **Q13**. If intruders enter the aerie, Jairess orders the ravens to form a swarm and attack the invaders.

During Combat Jairess directs her ravens to swarm opponents on the first round of battle while she drinks her *potion of fly* (increasing her Fly skill to +12) and rises into the air. She then casts *wind wall* to defend against ranged attacks, followed by spells such as *hold person* and *sound burst* to keep enemies from avoiding the raven swarm. If she must fight, Jairess casts *returning weapon* from her scroll on her shortspear. If she or the ravens become significantly injured, she casts *obscuring mist* and channels positive energy, excluding nearby adversaries with her Selective Channeling feat.

Morale Once she exhausts her offensive spells and healing powers, Jairess surrenders, calling

JAIRESS SONN CR 2

XP 600

Female sylph cleric of Gozreh 3

(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 258)

CN Medium outsider (native)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +2 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 20 (3d8+3)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Resist electricity 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk shortspear +3 (1d6–1) or

dagger +1 (1d4–1/19–20)

Ranged mwk shortspear +6 (1d6–1)

Special Attacks channel positive energy 5/day (DC 13, 2d6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +5)

1/day—*feather fall*

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +5)

5/day—*lightning arc* (1d6+1 electricity)

At will—*speak with animals* (6 rounds/day)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 3rd; concentration +5)

2nd—*hold person* (DC 14), *sound burst* (DC 14), *wind wall*^P

1st—*divine favor*, *doom* (DC 13), *endure elements*, *obscuring mist*^D

o (at will)—*detect magic*, *guidance*, *resistance*, *virtue*

D Domain spell; **Domains** Air, Animal

TACTICS

Before Combat Unlike many of the Pale Tower’s inhabitants, Jairess has trouble weathering the cold, so she casts *endure elements* on herself every day.



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her surviving birds back to her. If the raven swarm is slain, Jairess avenges them by fighting to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 15, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 13

Feats Selective Channeling, Weapon Focus (shortspear)

Skills Acrobatics +3, Diplomacy +6, Fly +3, Knowledge (nature) +5, Knowledge (religion) +5, Perception +3, Sense Motive +6

Languages Auran, Common, Skald

SQ air affinity

Combat Gear *potion of fly*, *scroll of returning weapon*^{UC}; **Other**

Gear leather armor, light wooden shield, dagger, mwk shortspear, teleporter key (to area **Q13**), wooden holy symbol of Gozreh, silver necklace with star-shaped ice diamond pendant (worth 500 gp), 84 gp

RAVEN SWARM

CR 3

XP 800

hp 30 (see page 37)

TACTICS

During Combat The ravens follow instructions from Jairess, protecting her with their swarming bodies and even allowing her to move among them without endangering her.

Morale The ravens fight only for as long as Jairess directs them. If she is slain, the swarm disperses.

Q18. Jairess's Bedroom

Two bookshelves, a chest, and a comfortable-looking bed heaped with thick blankets furnish this bedroom. A mobile of ice crystals carved to resemble birds hangs from the ceiling, glinting in the light from frost-covered windows.

Jairess Sonn claimed this room when she moved into the tower as caretaker for the aerie. The ice crystal figurines are a gift Radosek gave her in an attempt to win her affection. Though Jairess appreciates the gesture, she mainly keeps them for decoration and as a courtesy to avoid offending him.

Q19. Storeroom

Dozens of stacked crates fill this angular storeroom. Several miniature dollhouses stand atop high shelves.

Jairess Sonn stores grain for feeding the ravens in area **Q17** in this room. The winter-touched sprites and atomies living in the Pale Tower live in the dollhouses on the shelves. The atomies Jir and Lask (see area **Q8**) sometimes use their *speak with animals* ability to assist Jairess with instructing the raven swarm.

Treasure: Jir and Lask have squirreled away many expensive baubles they've stolen from tower guests over the years. Altogether, the dollhouses contain a jeweled +1 *silver*

dagger whose hilt resembles the head of a blue-eyed winter wolf, a jade bracelet in the shape of a Tian sovereign dragon worth 175 gp, a pair of porcelain dolls (worth 40 gp each), a silver medallion decorated with sapphires (worth 300 gp), a gold signet ring with the signet of the Jadwiga Tashanna dating back to the Witchwar 500 years ago (worth 250 gp), and three blue quartz crystals (worth 100 gp each).

Q20. Ritual Chamber (CR 5)

A translucent image of a globe hangs suspended in midair, slowly rotating in place, above a summoning circle in the blue-tiled floor of this large chamber. Lines of arcane energy glow across the globe's surface, faintly humming with power as they connect multiple endpoints in a radiant glow bright enough to illuminate the domed ceiling overhead. Many tables and shelves covered in books, maps, and large scrolls line the room's circular walls, and a large ornate mirror hangs between two open windows to the west. Twin ice sculptures of demonic fiends flank a bubbling cauldron in an archway leading into a deep alcove in the southern wall.

The domed ceiling here is 30 feet high, and this entire level is almost 100 feet above ground level. Nazhena and her apprentice Radosek conduct their greatest magic in this chamber, summoning elementals and fiendish allies while performing elaborate rituals to spread Queen Elvanna's evil across Irrisen and beyond. The spinning globe depicts Golarion, and the ley lines on its surface represent a physical manifestation of the arcane witchcraft extending Irrisen's perpetual winter through various portals into other areas of the world. The books and charts throughout the room detail the ritual and the magic of the winter portals. For details on ending the ritual and closing the winter portal to Taldor, see page 54.

The ice crystal teleporter in area **Q13** deposits travelers in the alcove in the northeast wall. This teleporter is keyed to all of the other teleporters throughout the Pale Tower. Rather than having a specific command phrase, this teleporter is activated by speaking the name of the destination room (i.e., Entrance Hall [area **Q5**], Dining Hall [area **Q8**], Mirrored Hall [area **Q13**], Conservatory [area **Q15**], or Aerie [area **Q17**]). The deep alcove to the south serves as Nazhena and Radosek's laboratory, and holds Nazhena's *cauldron of overwhelming allies* (see page 60).

Creatures: Radosek Pavril is the sole occupant of this room, having sequestered himself here as soon as he received word that the PCs had invaded the tower. He has already prepared the *cauldron of overwhelming allies* with the necessary ingredients for his *summon monster* spells, planning to use it to surprise anyone who arrives through the chamber's ice crystal teleporter. Radosek's familiar, a goat named Valstoi, watches over the laboratory alcove.

THE SNOWS OF SUMMER

She charges into the room to aid her master if any intruders appear in the ice crystal teleporter.

RADOSEK PAVRIL CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 50 (see page 58)

VALSTOI CR —

hp 20 (see page 58)

Treasure: In addition to Nazhena's *cauldron of overwhelming allies* (see page 60), the laboratory alcove contains enough active ingredients and supplies to constitute a full alchemist's lab. Many completed alchemical items are stored on the shelves in the alcove as well, including two flasks of acid, three flasks of alchemist's fire, two pinches of flash powder^{UE}, three flasks of liquid ice^{UE}, three smokesticks (each a different color), a sunrod, two tanglefoot bags, three thunderstones, 15 tindertwigs in a silver canister (worth 50 gp), and three applications of cold iron weapon blanch^{UE}.

Development: If Radosek escapes, he becomes desperate to prove himself worthy by trapping the PCs in the Pale Tower and retaking it before Nazhena learns of his failure. A powerful witch in his own right, Radosek makes a last stand in the tower courtyard (area Q2). He drinks his *potions of cure moderate wounds* and uses his *scroll of animate objects* to animate the dragon ice statue in the courtyard, sending it after the PCs and directing it to break through the tower walls to reach them, if necessary.

Q21. Empty Bedroom

This small bedroom belonged to Nazhena before she and Radosek took over the Pale Tower, but now she has claimed the bedroom that once belonged to her mother (area Q23). Radosek has tried unsuccessfully to convince Jairess Sonn (see area Q17) to relocate here. If Nadya was captured and brought to the Pale Tower, she is being held here until Radosek decides what to do with her.

Q22. Radosek's Bedroom

A large bed, reading desk, padded chair, bookshelf, and storage chest furnish this long, angular room. Two windows provide ample light, and several paintings of winter scenes hang on the wall.

Radosek sleeps in this room. Something of an art connoisseur, he collects rare paintings, and the chest holds additional paintings of nature scenes depicting every season. He keeps those that portray anything other than wintry locales hidden, but he privately marvels over their more vibrant colors when he has time to himself.

Treasure: Altogether, the masterpieces in this room are worth a total of 500 gp.

Q23. Nazhena's Bedroom

A large bed, wardrobe, reading desk, and bookshelf take up most of this circular bedroom. A carved ice statue of a striking, robed woman with an owl on her shoulder stands next to an alcove of crystalline tiles. To the south, a white curtain hangs in a doorway.

Nazhena claimed this expansive bedroom and its belongings from her mother. The only addition she made to the room's decor is the life-sized ice statue, carved in her own image. Nazhena plans to relocate the statue to Waldsby's town square, replacing the statue there, as a constant reminder that she rules the Pale Tower now. The ice crystal teleporter in the alcove is attuned to the crystalline tiles surrounding the dragon sculpture in the tower's courtyard (area Q2). Only Nazhena and Radosek know the teleporter's command phrase: "Make haste and retreat, with the ground beneath my feet."

Q24. Vault (CR 4)

Several crates, urns, decanters, and storage boxes fill this small room. A mirrored vanity and chair sit next to the east window. An ice statue of a tall, imperious woman stands in the center of the room.

The door to this chamber is locked (Disable Device DC 30 to open). Nazhena carries the only key, but the door is made of ice and can be easily broken (hardness 0, hp 9, break DC 15).

Trap: Nazhena's mother used this chamber as her personal vault to store items and lore she wished to keep from the prying eyes of her apprentice. Nazhena now uses it for the same purpose, instructing Radosek to stay away in her absence and even warding it against his intrusion. Similar to the statue in Nazhena's bedroom, the ice statue depicts Nazhena herself, but this one is actually a trap.



RADOSEK PAVRIL

REIGN OF WINTER

When anyone enters, a *magic mouth* activates on the statue, proclaiming, “The uninvited shall wither and die like the frost-covered bloom. You should never have ventured here, and you’d do well to leave before my return.” A *glyph of warding* then targets the first creature that crossed the room’s threshold with *bestow curse*.

GLYPH OF WARDING

CR 4

XP 1,200

Type magic; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*glyph of warding*); Reset noneEffect spell effect (*bestow curse*, –6 decrease to Con [minimum 1], DC 17 Will negates)

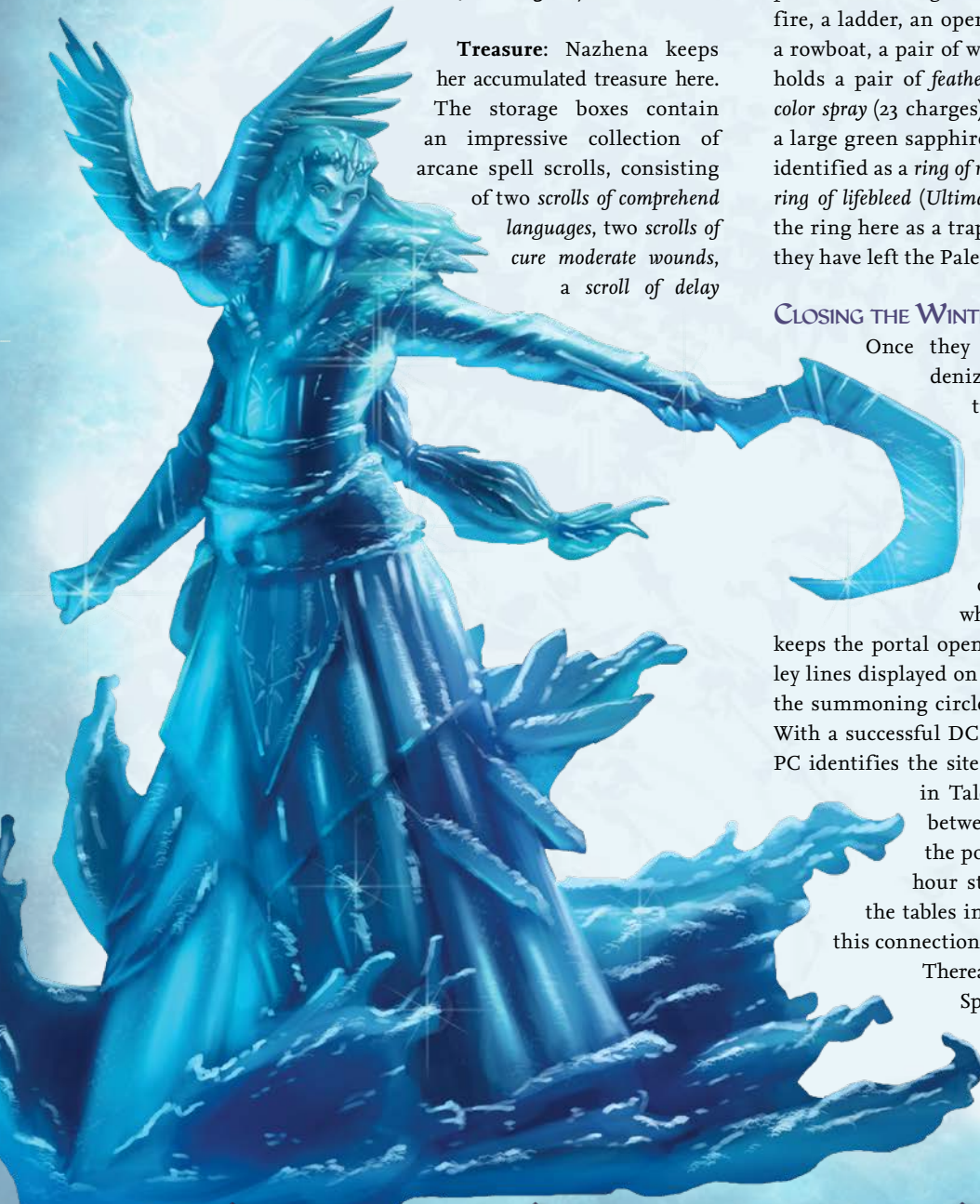
Treasure: Nazhena keeps her accumulated treasure here. The storage boxes contain an impressive collection of arcane spell scrolls, consisting of two *scrolls of comprehend languages*, two *scrolls of cure moderate wounds*, a *scroll of delay*

poison, a *scroll of dispel magic*, a *scroll of Irriseni mirror sight* (see page 73), a *scroll of remove disease*, two *scrolls of remove sickness*^{UM}, a *scroll of threefold aspect*^{APG}, and a *scroll of youthful appearance*^{UM}. The decanters hold varying draughts of potions not yet dispensed into individual vials—the equivalent of two *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of enlarge person*, three *oils of mask dweomer*^{APG}, and two *potions of reduce person*. The crates hold 50 trade bars of pure silver, each one weighing 10 pounds and worth 50 gp. A locked chest (Disable Device DC 25 to open) holds a bag, a small iron coffer, and a heavy blue robe. The bag is a *bag of holding* (type II), which contains 1,290 gp, 2,198 sp, and 2,787 cp. The robe is a *robe of useful items* (with extra patches for a bag of 100 gp, three flasks of alchemist’s fire, a ladder, an open pit, a *potion of cure serious wounds*, a rowboat, a pair of war dogs, and a window). The coffer holds a pair of *feather tokens* (bird and tree), a *wand of color spray* (23 charges), and a ring of white gold set with a large green sapphire. This ring is magical, and can be identified as a *ring of regeneration*, but it is in fact a cursed *ring of lifebleed* (*Ultimate Equipment* 349). Nazhena placed the ring here as a trap that will afflict thieves long after they have left the Pale Tower with her treasure.

CLOSING THE WINTER PORTAL

Once they have defeated Radosek and the denizens of the Pale Tower, the PCs can turn their attention to shutting down the winter portal between Irrisen and Taldor. Unfortunately, they can only do so from the ritual chamber inside the Pale Tower, which will strand the PCs on this side of the portal, in Irrisen, when it closes. Ending the ritual that keeps the portal open first requires careful study of the ley lines displayed on the projected image of Golarion in the summoning circle in the ritual chamber (area Q20). With a successful DC 15 Knowledge (geography) check, a PC identifies the site of the portal in the Border Wood in Taldor and ascertains the connection between the Pale Tower in Irrisen and the portal in Taldor. A PC who spends an hour studying the charts scattered about the tables in the ritual chamber also identifies this connection.

Thereafter, the PCs must succeed at a DC 22 Spellcraft check to fathom Nazhena’s witchcraft, which powers the portal’s magic. Witches gain a +2 circumstance bonus on this check, while witches with the winter witch archetype gain an





additional +2 circumstance bonus (for a total bonus of +4). Further study of the books and arcane paraphernalia in the ritual chamber also grants a +2 circumstance bonus on the check. Likewise, the PCs can use aid another to pool their efforts. If this check fails, they must spend a minimum of 1 hour studying the reference material in the ritual chamber before they can try again. During this time, Pale Tower guards, winter-touched fey visitors, or even Radosek (if he escaped) could interrupt their efforts.

Once the PCs fully understand the winter ritual, they can finally attempt to close down the winter portal by casting any conjuration spell and making a successful DC 15 concentration check. Alternatively, a PC can close the portal without the need for spellcasting with a successful DC 20 Use Magic Device check. If they fail at this check, the PCs can try again multiple times, but each attempt requires another hour of work. Success finally unravels the arcane ties between Irrisen and Taldor. The portal in the Border Wood disappears (as does its twin in the Hoarwood), but the remaining winter portals represented on the image of Golarion remain. No amount

of effort conducted from the Pale Tower can affect these locations—for that, the PCs must find Baba Yaga and face Queen Elvanna herself.

Story Award: If the PCs successfully shut down the winter portal in Taldor, award them 1,200 XP.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs close the winter portal, ending the threat to Heldren and Taldor, they're free to return to Waldsby, or shelter in the Pale Tower and recover. But Nazhena Vasilliovnna still looms as a powerful adversary in the PCs' future, and eventually she will return to the Pale Tower. At the same time, the Black Rider's compulsion urges the PCs onward to Whitethrone, where Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut* is imprisoned. Nadya volunteers to guide the PCs to Irrisen's capital, where they must ultimately face the true mistress of the Pale Tower, the White Witch Nazhena. Nazhena is destined to take the PCs' actions at the Pale Tower quite harshly when they encounter her in the next installment of the Reign of Winter Adventure Path, "The Shackled Hut."