

## REIGN OF WINTER



## THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

**PART ONE: GRANDMOTHER'S CAULDRON**

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Deep inside Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut*, the PCs meet the holder of Baba Yaga's fate, who gives them the first key to unlock Baba Yaga's prison and instructs them on how to find more.

**PART TWO: THE RUINS OF VASHLIO**

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The PCs venture into the ruins of an ancient empire, contained on a demiplane in the *Dancing Hut*, to find a remnant of Baba Yaga's power.

**PART THREE: THE ISLAND OF BUYAN**

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On another demiplane inside the *Dancing Hut*, the PCs travel to the mythical island of Buyan in search of Baba Yaga's death.

**PART FOUR: THE COTTAGE IN THE DARK FOREST**

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Beneath a cottage in a dark forest on yet another demiplane inside the *Dancing Hut*, the PCs face the past queens of Irrisen to recover Baba Yaga's life.

**PART FIVE: THE WITCH QUEEN'S KURGAN**

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In Baba Yaga's inner sanctum, the PCs must defeat Queen Elvanna to free Baba Yaga and save their world.

## ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"The Witch Queen's Revenge" is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

**15**

The PCs begin this adventure at 15th level.

**16**

The PCs should reach 16th level while they are on the Island of Buyan, and before they face the khala in the Guardian's Cave.

**17**

The PCs should be 17th level before entering the Witch Queen's Kurgan and confronting Queen Elvanna in the inner sanctum.

The PCs should be 17th level by the end of the adventure.

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

When Baba Yaga first created her *Dancing Hut*, she created five demiplanes within it to serve as her private sanctum. The first of these demiplanes, Grandmother's Cauldron—where Baba Yaga met her mentor, the primordial norn Vigliv, and took her first steps on the road to power—served as the foundation upon which the *Dancing Hut* itself was constructed, and linked these core demiplanes together. While the hut's various configurations change depending on the hut's physical location, these five demiplanes remain linked, accessible by Baba Yaga—and only Baba Yaga—from anywhere in the hut.

To create these unique demiplanes, Baba Yaga infused parts of her own essence into them, representing her birth, her fate, her power, and her death. Not only did this infusion of power strengthen these demiplanes, but it also had the secondary effect of safeguarding Baba Yaga's essence, for only by recovering these elements from the demiplanes could one truly overcome the Queen of Witches. Even when Baba Yaga fell victim to the trap laid by Queen Elvanna and Rasputin, her treacherous children could only imprison her inside a magical matryoshka doll—without the elements of Baba Yaga's power, which were safely ensconced inside the *Dancing Hut*, they could not kill her.

Although Queen Elvanna was aware of this fact, she had other, more pressing matters to attend to—namely, her plan to envelop all of Golarion in a new ice age. Still, she took precautions to prevent Baba Yaga's minions from freeing her. Elvanna left Baba Yaga on Earth in the possession of her half-brother Rasputin, and took the *Dancing Hut* back to Golarion with her, disabling its keys so no one could use it to mount a rescue. Elvanna then ordered the capture and execution of Baba Yaga's Three Riders, those agents most likely to attempt to free the Queen of Witches, and disbanded Irrisen's own Iron Guard, whose loyalty was to Baba Yaga over Elvanna. With the exception of the Black Rider's escape, Elvanna's precautions seemed to work perfectly, and she was confident that no one would come to rescue Baba Yaga anytime soon.

With these safeguards in place, Elvanna finally turned her attention to the ritual that would expand Irrisen's eternal winter over all Golarion, giving her the power to conquer the whole planet and to supplant her mother as Queen of Witches. There was only one place that such a ritual could be performed, however—Baba Yaga's own inner sanctum inside the *Dancing Hut*. Elvanna created a *mirror gate*, a “back door” that connected the inner sanctum with the Royal Palace in Whitethrone, and sequestered herself in the hut to enact the ritual.

Even after the Black Rider passed on his mantle to a group of heroes, who then stole the *Dancing Hut* from the Market Square in Whitethrone, Elvanna remained focused on her ritual. Using her *mirror gate*, she was able to regularly access the inner sanctum, even as the hut

traveled to Iobaria, then Triaxus, and finally, to Earth. At first, Elvanna was unconcerned; even with the *Dancing Hut* in their possession, these heroes would be unable to track Baba Yaga to Earth, and the hut's own guardians would hinder them at every step.

It wasn't until the *Dancing Hut* arrived on Earth and Rasputin was defeated that Elvanna began to worry. Her ritual was already in progress, however, and Elvanna believed she could still complete the ritual before Baba Yaga could be freed. But deep inside the *Dancing Hut*, in Grandmother's Cauldron, the primordial norn Vigliv holds the threads of both Baba Yaga's fate, and the fates of those who would rescue her. With her guidance, these heroes could recover the portions of Baba Yaga's essence from the hut, free the Queen of Witches, and defeat Queen Elvanna before she can ascend to a new level of power.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the PCs in possession of the matryoshka doll in which Baba Yaga has been trapped. Following the doll's empathic guidance, they pass through a trap door in the *Dancing Hut* that leads to a previously hidden demiplane known as Grandmother's Cauldron. There, the PCs encounter the primordial norn Vigliv and learn something of Baba Yaga's past as well as the necessary steps to open the nested layers of the matryoshka doll and free Baba Yaga for a final confrontation with Queen Elvanna. To do this, however, the PCs must recover components of Baba Yaga's very essence: her fate, her power, her death, her life, and her blood, scattered throughout the *Dancing Hut* for safekeeping.

After defeating a guardian in Grandmother's Cauldron and receiving Baba Yaga's fate from Vigliv, the PCs enter the demiplane containing the ruined fortress of Vashliq, where Baba Yaga's power lies with the remains of the powerful queen Bremagy, whom Baba Yaga raised up and then destroyed for refusing to pay her obeisance. Only after defeating both the undead horror that the queen has become and a disingenuous div out to recover the power for himself can the PCs claim Baba Yaga's power and open another layer of the doll.

Vigliv then sends the PCs to retrieve Baba Yaga's death, hidden upon the mythical island of Buyan on another demiplane within the hut. After assisting the island's native maftets against an invasion of horrific nuckelavees, the PCs find Baba Yaga's death inside a coffer, in a corpse, buried in a grave under an oak tree, and use it to open the next layer of the matryoshka doll.

The norn then sends the PCs to recover Baba Yaga's life, hidden in a cottage deep in the center of a dark forest. There they find a cavern holding the enthroned remains of Irrisen's former queens, and make the discovery that Baba Yaga has been using their life essences to power her

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## BABA YAGA'S COMMUNICATIONS

In addition to her empathic communications, Baba Yaga is faintly aware of the doll's surroundings. She has a Perception modifier +11 while in the doll, so any time Perception checks are required, attempt a check for the doll as well. If Baba Yaga's check is successful, she can provide her bearer with a hint of what she noticed through her empathic communication—a sense of danger if an ambush is about to be sprung, a sense of accomplishment if a secret door is detected, and so forth. Baba Yaga cannot explicitly describe what she has perceived, but careful PCs would do well to pay attention to the signals coming from the doll if they value their skins. If the doll is covered or inside a container of some sort, however, Baba Yaga cannot attempt these Perception checks.

After the PCs have begun to open the layers of the matryoshka doll, Baba Yaga's ability to communicate with them increases. As it does, she provides the information she gleans from her Perception checks as new means for doing so open up to her. However, if she feels like the PCs are progressing too slowly or are being thickheaded, she doesn't hesitate to introduce them to the sharp side of her tongue to spur them on. She nags them incessantly (though she also praises them, when deserved) as they proceed through the adventure, likely making her presence a mixed blessing of constant complaints balanced by the benefits she provides.

In addition, Baba Yaga can provide the PCs with hints or motivational comments if they become stumped. Communication is very taxing for her while she is trapped within the doll, however, so she reserves this for only the most important occasions, as she would rather use her opportunities to communicate with them to nag and harangue them for their perceived incompetence.

own immortality. By defeating these undead monstrosities, the PCs can recover the Old Crone's life essence and open the next matryoshka doll.

Finally, the PCs enter an ancient burial mound in search of the blood that will free Baba Yaga from the final doll. There, in Baba Yaga's inner sanctum, the PCs find Queen Elvanna readying the final stages of her ritual to plunge Golarion into eternal winter. With the help of boons provided by Baba Yaga and their own threads of fate, harvested by Vigliv, the PCs confront the Queen of Irrisen and her allies. Only when Elvanna is slain can Baba Yaga finally be freed from the imprisoning matryoshka doll and Golarion saved from its impending ice age.

## PART ONE: GRANDMOTHER'S CAULDRON

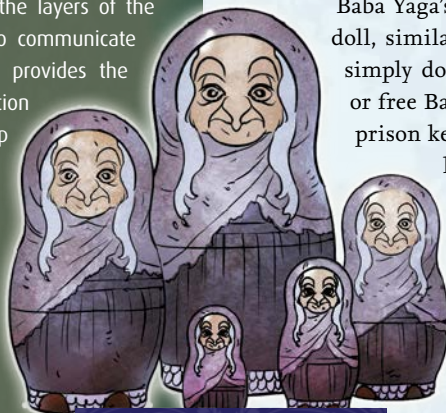
The adventure begins with the PCs returning to the *Dancing Hut* with Baba Yaga's matryoshka doll prison, recovered from the Siberian sanctuary of her estranged son, the mad monk Rasputin. The doll appears to be a typical matryoshka doll—a set of wooden dolls of decreasing size nested within one another—about a foot tall with a wide, bowling pin shape. The doll is exquisitely painted to resemble a gray-haired old crone with a stern, disapproving face wearing traditional peasant garb. It rattles when shaken, revealing it to be hollow with other dolls likely nested inside, but has no seam where it can be opened. The doll has an overwhelming aura of abjuration and necromancy and is impervious to all means of physical and magical harm.

Baba Yaga's body and soul are trapped inside the doll, similar to a *trap the soul* effect, but the PCs simply do not have the means to open the doll or free Baba Yaga at this time. The magic of her prison keeps Baba Yaga from speaking or using her powers, but her will is strong, and she is able to communicate urges and emotions to the PCs with empathic impulses. These impulses are enough to send the message that she is trapped within the doll and that the PCs must take her to her "sanctuary" inside the *Dancing Hut* to free her. Anyone who physically carries the matryoshka doll on her person or touches it receives these empathic signals

very strongly, and it is clear that these signals originate from the doll itself. Anyone standing within 3 feet of the character bearing the doll can also receive these signals, though they are much weaker and require a successful DC 20 Perception check to pick up on them. Storing the doll in an extradimensional space such as a *bag of holding* blocks the empathic signals completely.

Shortly after the PCs bring the matryoshka doll into the *Dancing Hut*, the doll urges the bearer toward the trap door in the ceiling of the domovoi gulag in the hut's Siberian configuration (area A1 in "Rasputin in Must Die!"). Although this trap door normally leads to a loft above that room, Baba Yaga's presence causes the trap door to open into a different space entirely—a demiplane known as Grandmother's Cauldron (area A below).

Once the PCs enter Grandmother's Cauldron, they again find themselves in a new configuration of the *Dancing Hut*. However, the hut has not gone anywhere; it still stands outside the Akuvskaya Monastery in Siberia, on Earth, and remains there for the duration of this adventure. Unlike the hut's other layouts, this configuration is not tied to the hut's physical location—the demiplanes forming the



MATRYOSHKA DOLLS

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“rooms” of Baba Yaga’s sanctuary exist independently of the hut’s normal location-based layouts, and Baba Yaga (or those in possession of her matryoshka doll prison) can access Grandmother’s Cauldron from any of the hut’s different configurations.

### A. GRANDMOTHER’S CAULDRON

Read or paraphrase the following as the PCs pass through the trap door in the *Dancing Hut*.

The trap door opens out of a large, flat-topped gneiss boulder at the bottom of a grotto surrounded by sheer rock cliffs broken by myriad ledges and fissures. The sound of falling water echoes through the grotto and a fine, chill mist fills the air with sparkling droplets. Most of the grotto’s walls are in shade, though bright sunlight shines down from somewhere above, refracting through the mist to create rainbows and glowing jewels of radiance. The shadow of a huge, gnarled tree is just visible through the fog toward the sound of the waterfall.

Grandmother’s Cauldron is a canyon-like grotto filled with light from above made diffuse by the constant mist rising from the waterfall. This light is the equivalent of sunlight, but the source of the light cannot be discerned through the mist. Unless otherwise noted, the mist provides concealment for creatures 5 feet away, and total concealment for creatures 30 feet away or more. This mist can be temporarily cleared by *gust of wind* or similar effects, but it immediately reforms once the spell expires.

The grotto is essentially of infinite height. Whether climbing or flying, it’s impossible to reach the top of the cliffs, though no matter how long or far one has ascended, the floor of the grotto is never more than 100 feet below. The walls of the grotto are of the same ancient gneiss as the boulder at area **A1**, formed from geologic processes billions of years ago. While it is normal rock in all respects, attempts to pass through it or otherwise burrow in order to escape the grotto always fail after only a few feet. The floor of the grotto is covered with a layer of soil, ranging from inches to dozens of feet deep depending on where one digs, atop the same impenetrable gneiss.

It is perpetually winter in the grotto, but the chill mist from the frigid waterfall combines with the steam rising from hot springs to create an overall comfortable temperature within the grotto. Despite that, a light dusting of snow covers the ground, with small drifts on ledges and in corners, but not enough to hinder movement. Vegetation fills the grotto, primarily lichens on the rocks and ferns growing in crevices and ledges, but also scores, if not hundreds, of small rowan trees (identifiable with a successful DC 10 Knowledge [nature] check), all seeded from the ancient, giant rowan standing at area **A2**. These trees grow on the floor of the grotto and in the thin soil of the cliff ledges, ranging

from young saplings to mature trees with trunks over 2 feet in diameter and crowns over 30 feet high.

Throughout the grotto can be found various petroglyphs and crude pictographs depicting sticklike humanoid figures and stylistically drawn animals. A giant tree by a pool, sometimes depicted with a woman’s face, appears prominently among them. These are signs of the Stone Age peoples who once frequented the grotto and worshiped an ancient fertility and earth goddess here.

Grandmother’s Cauldron is actually a demiplane created by Baba Yaga “inside” her *Dancing Hut*, but the grotto originally existed as an actual locale in the Scythian steppes of southern Russia. The grotto and its spring were originally sacred to the early inhabitants of the steppe thousands of years ago, and as a result, the grotto bears the marks of usage by Stone Age humans of ancient Earth as a ceremonial and sacrificial site. It was largely forgotten until a young Baba Yaga fell into it almost 2,000 years ago and met her primordial mentor. The nascent Witch Queen ended up claiming the grotto as her own demesne, and when she constructed her *Dancing Hut*, Baba Yaga chose Grandmother’s Cauldron to serve as its core and built the rest of the hut around it. As a result, Grandmother’s Cauldron is the center of Baba Yaga’s power and provides the means for the PCs to free her from her current imprisonment.

Several side canyons exit off the main “room” of the grotto, creating a twisting maze of ravines and gorges, and the high cliff walls of the grotto contain numerous ledges and platforms. Some of these side canyons and ledges exit into other areas within the hut, though it almost impossible to find these exits without guidance (such as from the doll entrapping Baba Yaga). In addition, a *dimensional lock* effect (CL 20th) blocks all extradimensional travel within Grandmother’s Cauldron itself.

The only exits from Grandmother’s Cauldron are the trap door at area **A1** and those portals to other demiplanes described in the following locations. Unless otherwise detailed, these portals are the only way to access these other demiplanes forming Baba Yaga’s sanctuary—even magic such as *plane shift* cannot cross these planar boundaries.

### A1. Entrance

A wooden trap door opens in the surface of a large, flat boulder here. Beneath the door, a wooden ladder leads down into the domovoi gulag in the *Dancing Hut*’s Siberian configuration. This connection only exists when Baba Yaga wills it, so when the PCs carried the matryoshka doll through the trap door, they entered Grandmother’s Cauldron. Baba Yaga can use this trap door to access any of the hut’s myriad other configurations, regardless of its physical location, but since Baba Yaga is present within the Cauldron and has no reason change it at this time, the trap door leads back to the hut in Siberia for the duration of this adventure.

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## A. GRANDMOTHER'S CAULDRON



### A4. CANYON OF THE DRAKES



### A5. CAVE DWELLERS



### A6. GUARDED LEDGE



### A9. ANCIENT STAIRS



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### A2. The Mother Tree (CR 19)

A picturesque waterfall tumbles from the cliff above into a roiling pool that bubbles like a giant witch's cauldron. The waterfall gives off a frigid mist, but hot steam rises from the bubbling waters of the pool, combining with the mist to make a comfortable, if somewhat damp, locale. Colorful lichens grow on the rocks around the pool, and lush ferns grow from every fissure and seam in the rock. Numerous trees, ranging from shrublike saplings to fully grown specimens crowd the soil around the pool's edge. Just visible through the mist, a magnificent rowan tree with an immense trunk stands on a low ledge overlooking the pool. The lowest of its thin branches hang all the way down to dip into the surface of the pool, and its leaves constantly drip with condensation from the ever-present mist. Massive knots that almost resemble contorted faces look out from the tree's gnarled surface, and its fissured bark bears the scars of ancient lines carved into the tree that lost whatever symbolic meaning they may have had ages ago.

This rowan tree, called the Mother Tree, is 80 feet tall and over 30,000 years old, though it largely stopped growing thousands of years ago. Its extreme longevity is the result of its link to the primordial norn Vigliv, who was granted immortality by an ancient goddess as long as she remains in the grotto. The massive tree sits upon a ledge that stands 4 feet above the level of the roiling waters below.

**Creature:** A primordial norn named Vigliv inhabits the Mother Tree. Although bound to the mighty rowan, Vigliv is not actually a part of the tree. She is free to travel about Grandmother's Cauldron as she pleases, though she usually spends most of her time inside the tree's trunk using *tree stride* or jumping to one of the saplings that live throughout the grotto. Vigliv is fully detailed in the NPC Gallery on page 60.

When the PCs first arrive at the pool, Vigliv watches them from within her tree with some curiosity. When she sees the matryoshka doll in their possession, she immediately realizes that Baba Yaga is imprisoned inside and reveals herself, her head, arms, and upper torso suddenly emerging from the trunk of the tree, as if she has suddenly grown from the tree like a new limb. Vigliv initially addresses the PCs in Russian, since she knows that the *Dancing Hut* currently rests in Russia. However, she quickly uses her *tongues* ability if she realizes that the PCs don't speak that language. Once she has established communications with the PCs, Vigliv relates the following.

"You have come far, wanderers, but the threads of fate have finally led you here to Grandmother's Cauldron, the root of Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut*. Here was Baba Yaga's past made, and here will her future be decided. Know then that I am Vigliv, ally and mentor to Baba Yaga, for I am norn, and hold the golden thread of her fate in my hands.

"Baba Yaga has been trapped within the doll you hold by one of her own blood, her own power turned against her to do so. But to free Baba Yaga from her prison and gain mastery over her betrayer, you must pay heed to the wisdom of the universe and homage to its fate. Here, in Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut*, lie the very fundamental essences of Baba Yaga's being. Should her treacherous daughter recover these, she would gain great power over her mother, possibly enough to destroy Baba Yaga once and for all.

"Therefore, you must seek out these elements of Baba Yaga's nature first. You must first take the fate of Baba Yaga into your hands, then find her power, her death, and her life. Lastly, you will need the blood of Baba Yaga to finally free the Old Crone. Only in this way can you defeat the daughter who betrayed her, and in so doing, save your own world. I can guide your steps in their quest. Your search begins now."

As Vigliv finishes her speech, the water beyond the ledge suddenly explodes in fury as the catoblepas in area A3 emerges to attack, causing Vigliv to retreat back into her tree.

#### VIGLIV

CR 19

XP 204,800

hp 270 (see page 60)

**Development:** Vigliv reemerges once the catoblepas is defeated (see area A3), and reappears several times throughout the adventure to guide the PCs in their efforts to free Baba Yaga. Each time the PCs open one of the matryoshka dolls, Vigliv emerges from her tree to speak with the PCs. These appearances are described at the beginning of each part of the adventure. Although the adventure presents a set order of locations to visit and tasks the PCs must complete to open the matryoshka dolls, there is no reason these cannot be modified to create a more free-form adventure based on the PCs' choices. If you decide to modify the adventure in this way, however, be aware that you may need to adjust the CR of certain encounters, as the PCs might venture into areas designed for higher-level PCs. In addition, you should endeavor to keep Part Five as the last mission, so the climactic battle with Queen Elvanna takes place at the end of the adventure.

### A3. Sacred Pool (CR 13)

Natural hot springs feed the grotto's pool, but the icy waters of the waterfall help create a comfortable 90-degree temperature in the water. The pool's bottom is smooth rock and ranges from 3 feet deep near the shore to over 50 feet deep at the center of the pool. The water becomes dangerously hot below 40 feet (1d6 points of fire damage per round), and it is frigid directly beneath the waterfall (no cold damage but 1d6 points of nonlethal bludgeoning damage per round from the force of the water). The water has a bit of a mineral taste but is otherwise fresh and pure,

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draining through several small streams that flow down the canyon floor or disappear into subterranean drains. This circulation keeps the occupant of the pool from tainting the waters with its foul effluvia.

**Creature:** Baba Yaga introduced a catoblepas to the pool many years ago to serve as a guardian for the norn Vigliv and her tree. As a result, the catoblepas does not disturb the norn or attempt to damage any of the trees. It subsists on the prolific growths of ferns and lichens that surround the pool. The catoblepas has the hold breath special quality (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 298) and dwells on a ledge concealed behind the waterfall, spending most of its time basking in the sauna-like depths of the pool. When the PCs first enter Grandmother's Cauldron, the catoblepas is napping below the surface and does not attack until the PCs have met Vigliv as described in area **A2** above. Once the catoblepas appears, it unleashes its breath weapon upon the PCs before trundling forth from the water to attack.

## ADVANCED CATOBLEPAS

**CR 13**
**XP 25,600**
**hp 189** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 52, 292)

**Development:** When the catoblepas is defeated, Vigliv again emerges from the bole of the Mother Tree with a long, lustrous, golden thread in her hands. She states, "This

thread represents Baba Yaga's fate; the first part of your quest is done. Twine the thread around the doll and soak them both in the poison blood of the beast. Then bathe the doll in the pool and the bars of her prison will weaken."

Vigliv's golden thread is impervious to harm; it cannot be cut or broken. If the PCs attempt to keep the thread instead of using it on the doll, it disappears from their hands back into Vigliv's keeping. In this case, convincing Vigliv to part with the thread again requires a successful DC 32 Diplomacy check, though the PCs may make multiple attempts.

If the PCs follow Vigliv's instructions, the PC soaking the doll in the catoblepas's tainted blood must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude save or suffer the effects of the catoblepas's poison as if affected by the creature's breath weapon. Once the matryoshka doll is dipped in the pool, the blood washes away and the golden thread of Baba Yaga's fate is absorbed into the doll. A sudden crack appears in the wood where the cord was absorbed, and the doll splits open to reveal a second, slightly smaller doll within, this one painted as a stout Russian matron holding a pullet under one arm.

The new doll is just as impervious as the previous one, but Baba Yaga's prison has been weakened. She is still not capable of verbal communication, but she can now communicate with the bearer of the doll and anyone within 30 feet with full empathy, conveying complex feelings. In addition, she grants a boon to the PCs. Each PC gains a permanent +1 bonus to his or her natural armor that stacks with any existing natural armor bonus.

Once the PCs open the first matryoshka doll, Vigliv speaks again. This interaction is described at the beginning of Part Two.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 51,200 XP for opening the matryoshka doll's first layer.

## A4. Canyon of the Drakes (CR 14)

A side canyon exits the grotto to the northwest, but attempting to explore this area without Baba Yaga's guidance merely results in wandering among the cliffs and chasms of the

rift before eventually returning to the sacred pool at area **A3**. If the PCs are searching for Baba Yaga's power (see Part Two), her empathic urges lead the PCs down the canyon and up the cliff face along a series of narrow, icy ledges, requiring only a successful DC 10 Climb check to scale, but


**CATOBLEPAS**

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successful DC 15 Acrobatics checks are needed to balance on the ledges and avoid a fall of 40 feet that deals 4d6 points of damage. Once the PCs have reached the ledge marked **A4a**, read or paraphrase the following.

The cliff face rises in a series of natural ledges rimed with ice and dusted with small drifts of snow. The mouth of a low cave is just visible atop the highest ledge.

These ledges follow the cliff face until reaching the cave mouth 70 feet above the floor of the canyon. Ledge **A4a** is 40 feet above the ground, ledge **A4b** is 50 feet high, ledge **A4c** is 40 feet, ledge **A4d** is 45 feet, ledge **A4e** is 50 feet, ledge **A4f** is 55 feet, ledge **A4g** is 60 feet, and ledge **A4h** is 70 feet. The cave mouth is on ledge **A4h**. These ledges are wide enough that they do not require Acrobatics checks to balance upon, but unless the PCs are flying, they will have to climb along the icy rock faces from ledge to ledge (Climb DC 28) or attempt Acrobatics checks to jump between them.

**Creatures:** A rampage of six rift drakes inhabits these ledges, three on ledge **A4d** and three on ledge **A4g**. They are not immediately visible to PCs climbing along the ledges, though flying PCs can attempt Perception checks (opposed by the drakes' Stealth checks) to notice the drakes. Otherwise, the drakes attack as soon as anyone comes into view, launching balls of clinging corrosion, then using their speed surge ability to make pouncing dive attacks against the PCs. It has been some time since the drakes have felt the thrill of battle, and they fight to the death.

**RIFT DRAKES (6)** **CR 9**  
**XP 6,400 each**  
**hp 126 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 106*)

**Treasure:** Ledge **A4f** holds the remains of a meal taken by the drakes some time in the past. Only the rib cage and left arm of an elf skeleton remain, but a *+2 arrow catching light steel shield* is still strapped to the skeleton's arm.

**Development:** The cave on ledge **A4h** leads to the demiplane of Vashliq. See Part Two for details of this location.

### A5. Cave Dwellers (CR 15)

If the PCs venture into this side canyon to the northeast without following Baba Yaga's telepathic guidance, then they wander aimlessly among the twisting canyons before arriving back at area **A3**. After the PCs have recovered Baba Yaga's power and opened the second layer of the matryoshka doll (see Part Three), however, Baba Yaga's fragmented telepathic messages lead them here. Following her telepathic directions takes the PCs to the base of a broken cliff, where a successful DC 5 Climb check is sufficient to climb the broken and gradual slope. After ascending 50 feet, the PCs reach a crude path carved into

the face of the cliff. To the left, the path winds endlessly without ever quite reaching the lip of the grotto; to the right, it follows several twists in the canyon wall, ascending another 50 feet. Baba Yaga's guidance points the PCs to the right. If the PCs follow her directions, read or paraphrase the following.

The canyon widens ahead, and the cliffside path climbs to pass between two spurs of rock above, opening onto a wide ledge with a high-ceilinged cave extending back into the cliff face. A large bonfire burns upon the ledge. The ribs and skulls of gigantic animals litter the ledge around it and are perched like totems in crevices and upon crags.

The path leading to the ledge is 100 feet above the canyon floor and rises an additional 20 feet to meet the ledge itself, 120 feet above the floor. The two rock pinnacles that flank the path stand an additional 35 feet high with flat tops that allow them to be used as lookout posts. Detritus and filth clutter the ledge and cave floor, and those areas are considered difficult terrain for any creature smaller than Large. Due to their steepness and the slickness of the filth coating them, the cliff faces here require successful DC 25 Climb checks to ascend. The rock pinnacles are not smeared with discarded garbage and require only successful DC 15 Climb checks to scale.

A deep pool of crystalline water sits at the back of the cave, formed from rivulets seeping through the rock of the cave's rear wall. A narrow trickle exits the pool and travels across the cave floor before emptying over the cliff's edge in a small waterfall to the canyon floor below. The pool is only 2 feet deep at the edge but slopes steeply to 12 feet deep in the center, its rocky floor mostly bare. Unlike everything else within the cave that has been soiled by the gugs, the water of the pool remains clear and pure. The water is also breathtakingly cold, but there is no danger of hypothermia unless a creature remains in the water for more than 10 minutes.

**Creatures:** The ledge and cave are home to a camp of four gugs led by a gug savant. One of the gugs is perched atop the eastern rock pinnacle as a lookout. If caught unawares, the rest are dancing a barbaric circuit around their bonfire, flailing bloody haunches of meat from recently slaughtered mountain goats, while the gug savant looks on from the cave entrance. If the lookout spots the PCs' approach, however, the gugs hide behind the pinnacles or crouch behind boulders at the cliff's edge, gaining cover and total concealment, and the gug savant casts *spike stones* on the path leading up to the ledge. When the PCs reach the pinnacles at the top of the path, two gugs attempt to knock the foremost PCs off the ledge with *Awesome Blow* while the other two gugs scramble down the cliffs to the path behind the PCs in order to attack them from the rear. The gug savant remains on the ledge to



# REIGN OF WINTER

cast *unholy blight* on PCs caught in the *spike stones*. If the PCs reach the ledge, the gug savant casts *invisibility* and waits for them to enter the cave, at which point it casts *transmute rock to mud* to collapse the cavern's ceiling on the PCs. If the gug savant is slain, the other gugs attempt to flee if reduced to fewer than 60 hit points. Otherwise, or if cornered, the gugs fight to the death.

## GUGS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 127 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 151)

## GUG SAVANT

CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 127 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 151)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 10th, concentration +14)

1/day—*invisibility*, *spike stones* (DC 18), *transmute rock to mud* (DC 19), *unholy blight* (DC 18)

**Treasure:** Piled about the cave among the gugs' filth are rough gold nuggets worth a total of 1,300 gp. Behind a hide screen separating the gug savant's quarters in an alcove to the east from the rest of the cave is a badly flawed diamond the size of a human fist (worth 15,000 gp) and a large white bear pelt (though dirty, the pelt is in good shape and is worth 1,500 gp if cleaned). Finally, a large mortar and pestle, covered in dust, sit in an alcove just south of the pool in the rear of the cave. These are *Baba Yaga's mortar and pestle* (see page 62). If she is with the PCs, Baba Yaga sends the PCs a brief telepathic message to take these items and gives rudimentary instructions as to their use, including their command words.

**Development:** The entrance to the island of Buyan is through the pool at the back of the cave; Baba Yaga telepathically instructs the PCs to bathe themselves in the pool when they discover it. A creature who completely submerges itself in the water is instantly transported to the demiplane containing the island of Buyan. See Part Three for details on this area.

## A6. Guarded Ledge (CR 16)

Once again, without Baba Yaga's guidance, PCs venturing into this area end up back at area **A3** after fruitless wandering. However, once the PCs have recovered Baba Yaga's death and opened the third matryoshka doll (see Part Four), her limited ability to speak guides the PCs through this canyon, primarily through trial and error by saying "warmer" or "colder" as they make their way through the canyon. Along the way, Baba Yaga relays the following information: "She's going to have it guarded. No one's supposed to get to the source of my life. She wants it all for herself. But it's mine! She can't have it!" Following the old witch's hints, the PCs eventually find a path that

makes its way up the north face of one of the grotto's side canyons in a series of switchbacks before reaching a ledge 500 feet above the canyon floor.

At the base of the cliff, Queen Elvanna has left a *stone of alarm* on the path. Unless the PCs somehow detect the stone or avoid it (such as by flying up the cliff face), they suddenly hear a piercing screech that echoes all through the canyon as soon as they set foot on the path. "Now you've done it," Baba Yaga warns. "They know you're coming now." If the PCs follow the switchback trail up the cliff, it eventually reaches a ledge 500 feet above the canyon floor. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs reach the ledge.

The trail ends at a wide section of ledge. Sparse scrub trees and bracken grow among the snow and ice that has gathered in natural fissures and crevices.

**Creatures:** Queen Elvanna is aware that Baba Yaga has recruited help and is attempting to free herself by recovering the various components that make up her essence. As a result, she has left two advanced ice devils on this ledge to prevent anyone from reaching Baba Yaga's life. If they were warned by the *stone of alarm* on the path leading to the ledge, the devils have prepared for the PCs' arrival by each attempting to summon two bone devils. If successful, the bone devils wait, invisible, on the path leading up to the ledge. The ice devils create a *wall of ice* to block access to the ledge itself, and conceal both themselves and the cave entrance (area **A7**) behind a *persistent image* of the bare ledge. The ice devils let the bone devils engage the PCs first, watching the battle to take note of the PCs' tactics. Once two or more of the bone devils are slain, or if the PCs breach the *wall of ice* or disbelieve or dispel the illusion, the ice devils join the fray. If the devils were not warned, then they are simply standing guard on the ledge and attack any trespassers. Either way, the ice devils fight to the death.

## ADVANCED ICE DEVILS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 189 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 77*)

## A7. Worm's Gullet

Nearly hidden among the bracken at the back of the ledge is a small cave opening, no larger than a human can crawl through. A rime of frost covers the rock around it and the surrounding ground. Periodically, a cold gust of wind issues forth from the cave as if the cliff face were breathing, leaving a cloud of frost in the air that quickly dissipates.

Magically contained within the cave is a frost worm whose gullet forms a portal to a demiplane within the hut called the Dark Forest. As the PCs approach the cave, Baba

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

Yaga tells them, "You have to go into the cave. The secret is the worm's mouth, so you can't kill it. You have to walk down its gullet to get to my life, but watch out, it bites!" After revealing this clue, she giggles and goes quiet.

Anyone crawling into the cave mouth finds that the frost worm's mouth sits directly against it, and is automatically subjected to the worm's bite (automatic hit dealing 4d10+15 points of damage plus 4d6 points of cold damage), then swallowed. Anyone willingly swallowed by the worm is immediately transported to the demiplane containing the Dark Forest and Baba Yaga's cottage (she, of course, has other ways to enter, but this entrance keeps all but the most obstinate intruders out). See Part Four for details on this area.

If the worm is attacked, it immediately breathes its breath weapon out onto the ledge, then begins to trill (see page 126 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* for details on these attacks). If this happens, Baba Yaga immediately berates the PCs, cautioning them that killing the worm will destroy their only means of reaching her life. If the PCs willingly subject themselves to the frost worm's bite attack without resistance, it swallows them as described above but does not attack further. Due to the nature of its magical containment, the frost worm cannot actually be killed, though it keeps attacking any creatures that attack it unless they willingly allow themselves to be swallowed.

## A8. The Infinite Spiral

Beyond the waterfall, small streams of water flow from the pool and drain into crevices at the base of the cliff face. To the left, the canyon walls move closer together, bending along a curved path that narrows as it extends deeper into the canyon.

If the PCs visit this area without Baba Yaga's guidance, the canyon walls curve together in an ever-narrowing spiral that eventually becomes so confining that it's not passable. Incorporeal creatures could conceivably follow the spiral path forever as it continues to infinitely narrow without ever quite closing off entirely. This is a magical effect inherent to Grandmother's Cauldron and cannot be dispelled or otherwise bypassed.

Once the PCs have claimed Baba Yaga's life and opened the fourth matryoshka doll (see Part Five), Baba Yaga guides them into the spiraling canyon with a combination of acerbic sniping and fretful urging. However, if the PCs have the samovar from area L11 in their possession, the spiral path leads to an otherwise inaccessible box canyon (area A9).

## A9. Ancient Stairs (CR 17)

The canyon walls continue to narrow as they curve ahead, but just as it seems they must close together and come to an end,

the path suddenly opens up into a box canyon on a warm spring night beneath unfamiliar stars glinting down from a cloudless and moonless sky. A wide pool glistens at the far end of the box canyon, its waters dark and still. The cliff wall beyond the pool has been crudely carved into a narrow stair that climbs out of the water straight up the bluff in a series of uneven steps. At the top of the stair, a dark opening with a great stone lintel leads into the cliff face.

As soon as the PCs enter the box canyon, the spiraling path disappears, leaving a blank rock wall behind them. This box canyon resides on its own demiplane, and regardless of how much time passes, it remains a warm spring night. The canyon's cliffs tower high overhead, but regardless of how high one climbs or flies, the floor of the canyon is always 300 feet below. The pool plunges precipitously to a depth of almost 60 feet at the rear wall of the canyon and its waters, fed by a hot spring, are comfortably warm. The carved stone stair begins just below the surface of the water and climbs 200 feet to the opening in the cliff. No skill checks are required to ascend the stair. The stars overhead provide dim light on the canyon floor.

**Creature:** A unique being known as the Infernal Crocodile lurks beneath the dark waters of the pool. The Infernal Crocodile is an ancient foe of Baba Yaga that once guarded a gateway to Hell. In an epic battle, Baba Yaga defeated the creature and imprisoned it here to defend the entrance to her inner sanctum. The Infernal Crocodile is an immense sarcopterygian over 40 feet long, with red batlike wings, black scales, glowing red eyes, and a crest of red fur around its head and running down the center of its back. The Infernal Crocodile is no ally of Baba Yaga; for centuries, it has been trapped here, an unwilling guardian unable to escape, and it takes out its frustrations on any intruders who make it this far. It hides beneath the waters of the pool until intruders approach within 15 feet of the water's edge or attempt to reach the stairs, at which point it bursts from the water to attack.

### THE INFERNAL CROCODILE

CR 17

#### XP 102,400

Advanced awakened half-fiend dire crocodile (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 51*, 171)

NE Gargantuan outsider (augmented animal, native)

**Init** +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +35

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 32, touch 8, flat-footed 30 (+2 **Dex**, +24 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 275 (22d8+176)

**Fort** +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +13

**DR** 10/magic; **Immune** poison; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 28

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (good), swim 30 ft.; sprint

# REIGN OF WINTER

**Melee** bite +27 (3d6+14/19–20 plus grab), 2 claws +27 (2d6+14), tail slap +21 (4d8+7)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

**Special Attacks** death roll (3d6+14 plus trip), smite good 1/day (+6 attack and AC, +22 damage), swallow whole (3d6+14 damage, AC 22, 27 hp)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 22th; concentration +28)

3/day—*darkness*, quickened *poison* (DC 20), *unholy aura*  
1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 23), *contagion* (DC 20), *desecrate*,  
*destruction* (DC 23), *horrid wilting* (DC 24), *summon*  
*monster IX* (fiends only), *unhallow*, *unholy blight* (DC 20)

## TACTICS

**During Combat** The Infernal Crocodile casts *unholy aura* on itself on the first round of combat, then lunges from the pool to attack the closest opponent. It seeks the most dangerous-looking good foe, particularly one wearing a holy symbol of a good deity, and makes a full attack with its smite good ability. It continues making full attacks if possible, combined with quickened *poison* spells. If surrounded, the Infernal Crocodile takes flight and casts *blasphemy* or *horrid wilting* on its foes before returning to melee combat. It saves its *destruction* spell-like ability for use against a single particularly dangerous opponent.

**Morale** When reduced to 125 hit points or fewer, the Infernal Crocodile casts *summon monster IX* to summon 1d3 barbed devils to aid it in battle. Thereafter, the Infernal Crocodile fights to the death.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 39, **Dex** 14, **Con** 27, **Int** 13, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 23

**Base Atk** +16; **CMB** +34 (+38 grapple); **CMD** 46 (50 vs. trip)

**Feats** Critical Focus, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*poison*), Run, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth), Staggering Critical, Weapon Focus (bite), Weapon Focus (claw)

**Skills** Acrobatics +27 (+23 when jumping), Climb +39, Fly +25, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +35, Stealth +21 (+29 in water), Survival +15, Swim +22; **Racial**

**Modifiers** +8 Stealth in water

**Languages** Infernal, Russian

**SQ** hold breath

**Development:** Once the Infernal Crocodile has been defeated, the PCs may climb or fly up to the opening in the cliff face. Anyone who steps through the cave entrance is immediately transported to the demiplane containing the Witch Queen's Kurgan, which holds Baba Yaga's inner sanctum. See Part Five for details of this area.

## PART TWO: THE RUINS OF VASHLIQ

Once the PCs have used the golden thread of Baba Yaga's fate to open the first matryoshka doll, Vigliv once more addresses the PCs.

"You have taken Baba Yaga's fate into your hands. The first test is past, but many remain. You must now reclaim a symbol of her power. Know that the demon lord Kostchtchie and the witch queens of Irrisen were not Baba Yaga's first attempts to elevate some mortal to supreme power to rule in her name over lesser peoples. There was another before, a great warrior called Bremagyr, whom Baba Yaga made a queen over a vast empire on her own world. Yet when the Queen of Witches sought the obeisance due her from this petty empress, Bremagyr forgot from whence her power came and refused to do honor unto Baba Yaga. Where Baba Yaga had raised her from warrior to queen in a year, she laid Bremagyr and all her empire low in a night. Never again has the sun risen or set over the crumbled empire of Bremagyr, as a lesson to all who would come after and seek Baba Yaga's power but refuse her obedience.

INFERNAL CROCODILE

KOP

## THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

"Bremagyr is now a shadow of the queen she once was, cursed to forever haunt her iron fortress of Vashliq, which was cast down by Baba Yaga and brought inside her *Dancing Hut*. Yet some vestige of Baba Yaga's power still lies within Bremagyr, and only with the destruction of the dead queen will you be able to obtain that power and continue on your quest. Now go. Follow Baba Yaga's guidance. Find the Canyon of the Drakes and enter the lost fortress of Vashliq. When you have reclaimed Baba Yaga's power, bring it back to this sacred pool to unlock the next secret of the doll that imprisons her."

With these words, Vigliv disappears back into her tree. With her empathic urges, Baba Yaga can guide the PCs to the Canyon of the Drakes (area A4).

### THE BROKEN PLAIN AND THE RUINED FORTRESS

The cave mouth in area A4 leads to the remains of Bremagyr's empire: a broken plain slowly crumbling into the void, and her ruined fortress of Vashliq, now a separate demiplane inside Baba Yaga's hut. PCs entering the cave emerge in the tent of the sepid div Mametqul (area B).

### B. MAMETQUL'S TENT (CR 16)

Stepping into the darkened cave deposits the PCs inside the dim interior of a large tent. There is no sign of the cold, frost-shrouded canyon or the cave entrance they just came through, just the blank silk wall of the tent behind them.

This large, opulent tent is made of heavy silk, its walls and roof supported by a dozen sturdy teak poles. Despite two silver braziers giving off warmth and smoke from a pungent incense, the tent's interior is still uncomfortably cold, and its walls whip and snap against gusts of icy wind. The tent is luxuriously outfitted with cushioned beds, camp chairs and tables, and amenities such as fine cabinetwork around the walls, rich wall hangings, and a large silver hookah.

**Creatures:** This richly adorned tent is the abode of a sepid div named Mametqul, who is decked out in the rich finery and jeweled rings of genie nobility. He is attended by six surly human women dressed in coarse robes and veils who speak little and scowl suspiciously at the PCs. These women are actually two shira divs and four pairaka divs who have changed shape. In the demiplane of Vashliq, Baba Yaga's magic allows all of the divs to change their shape into Small or Medium animals or humanoids (as the pairakas can do normally). In their human guises, the female divs do not interact with the PCs other than to provide refreshment as ordered by Mametqul, allowing the sepid to do all the talking.

Mametqul greets the PCs personably when they arrive and welcomes them to his humble camp. He makes no attempt to hide his true nature as a div, matter-of-factly

stating that Baba Yaga has servants from all across the Great Beyond, and introduces the disguised divs as simply "my servants." None of these statements are lies, should the PCs make any attempts to detect falsehoods. Mametqul offers the PCs cups of extremely strong coffee and bids them take seats as he takes a few puffs of strongly spiced tobacco from his hookah. If the PCs accept the div's hospitality, or at least refrain from attacking outright, Mametqul walks over to the tent entrance where he pushes the flap aside, revealing that the tent sits on the edge of a cliff. Beyond the cliff edge lies nothing but a vast, dark expanse of roiling chaos. Far out in the void, a shadowy vortex slowly swirls, intermittently illuminated from within by sudden flashes and streaks of color. Bits of the rocky cliff edge crumble in the howling winds and are dragged out into the vortex where they disappear, as if the maelstrom were slowly eating the land bit by bit. In the distance to the west, the ruins of a large fortress cling to the edge of the cliff, as if it were also slowly being consumed by the vortex.

Looking out upon this vista, Mametqul relates the following to the PCs.

"Queen Bremagyr established her empire with Baba Yaga's help over a thousand years ago. We stand now in what is left of her capital of Vashliq. The final battle of her conquest was fought on this very cliff above a vast fertile plain of fields and sprawling towns below. This was the breadbasket of her empire, and the fortress of iron and stone that she built was its crown jewel.

"Baba Yaga gave Bremagyr her empire and demanded only her fealty in return, but Bremagyr became drunk on the power of her newly won realm and believed it was by her might that it had been established. Bremagyr spurned Baba Yaga and threatened to turn the might of her empire against her if she ever returned. Instead, Baba Yaga called upon the might of the cosmos, struck Queen Bremagyr down, and wrested her capital from its very foundations to be placed here in this void within her hut. Baba Yaga captured Bremagyr's soul and imprisoned her here in her fortress, to watch as her empire slowly decays into nothing, just as her power has.

"My role here is simple. I watch Vashliq's destruction and observe Queen Bremagyr as she howls her rage at the void. When the time comes, my retinue and I shall depart and report on the soul-rending anguish that has occurred here—a fitting punishment that brought the queen to this end. Now, however, it seems that Baba Yaga needs to reclaim the power that she invested here to imprison Bremagyr's soul and realm. For you to recover it, you must venture into the fortress of Vashliq, where Bremagyr still waits in her throne room. Bremagyr's crown holds the power of Baba Yaga that you seek. Destroy Bremagyr, recover her crown, and bring it back here, and I will show you the way back to Grandmother's Cauldron."

# REIGN OF WINTER

Much of the information that Mametqul relates is true. Baba Yaga did, in fact, summon the div here to serve as an observer of Bremagyr's suffering. With Baba Yaga's recent disappearance and her vulnerability exposed, however, Mametqul has decided to strike out on his own. He wants to recover the power of Baba Yaga for himself—whether to sell to Elvanna or to another buyer—but he does not wish to face Bremagyr himself. He has no problem letting the PCs take the risks in recovering the crown, however, and intends to ambush them when they return with the crown. Mametqul responds to any further questions with an enigmatic shrug of his shoulders.

If the PCs attack Mametqul or any of the disguised div women, the divs assume their true forms and attack, fighting to the death. See page 25 for the divs' tactics.

## MAMETQUL CR 14

**XP 38,400**

Sepid div (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 89*)

**hp 202**

## PAIRAKA DIVS (4) CR 7

**XP 3,200 each**

**hp 76 each** (*Pathfinder RPG*

*Bestiary 3 88*)

## SHIRA DIVS (2) CR 12

**XP 19,200 each**

**hp 150 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 90*)

**Treasure:** Mametqul's attire and accoutrements are worth a total of 7,000 gp. The pairakas and shiras wear jewelry worth an additional 1,000 gp each. The silk pavilion is an ordinary field tent, though of extremely high quality. The tent and its furnishings are worth a total of 8,000 gp, though when packed up they weigh 2,200 pounds and fill two large wagons.

**Development:** Mametqul and his div servants wait here for the PCs to return with Bremagyr's crown, at which point he ambushes them to claim the crown for himself. See Return to Mametqul's Tent on page 25 for what transpires when the PCs return.

## C. THE BROKEN PLAIN (CR 15)

The desolate cliff edge is devoid of all save the crumbling foundations of buildings that once stood here but have now fallen into fissures or succumbed to the howling winds that scream across the plain. To the north is the great void with its slowly swirling vortex of annihilation, and to the south and west stands a range of jagged volcanic peaks. A broken fortress

stands at the base of the mountains where they reach the edge of the cliff.

Although the cliff appears to be outside, the entire place is actually a finite demiplane within Baba Yaga's hut. Anyone walking or flying along the cliff edge to the east or toward the mountains to the south finds that they never reach them (not even by teleportation magic). Nor can one cross the mountains to the west. Likewise, attempts to fly over the edge of the cliff or into the void can go no farther than the vortex a mile away. Anyone foolish enough to enter the vortex itself is utterly destroyed, as if touching a *sphere of annihilation*. The vortex has no effect on the matryoshka doll containing Baba Yaga, however, which simply reappears in the possession of another PC or bearer of the mantle of the Black Rider.

The temperature in the demiplane of Vashliq is consistent at 20° F, requiring a Fortitude check each hour to avoid nonlethal cold damage, and the wind is strong (–2 penalty on ranged attack rolls, –2 penalty on Fly checks) with severe gusts every 1d6+2 rounds (–4 on penalty ranged attack rolls, –4 penalty on Fly checks, Small creatures are checked, Tiny creatures are blown away). The fortress of Vashliq stands 1,800 feet from Mametqul's tent along the edge of the cliff, and the entire distance is covered with dense rubble (requiring 2 squares of movement to enter a square, Acrobatics DCs increase by 5, and Stealth DCs increase by 2). The light on the plain is perpetually dim.

**Creatures:** The plain between Mametqul's tent and the fortress is haunted by devourers riding nightwings on the frigid winds in the darkness. PCs traveling overland encounter one devoured riding a nightwing during their trip unless the pair uses stealth and remain concealed from them. Flying PCs attract the attention of three of these patrols, though these should be divided into three separate encounters of one devoured and one nightwing each. PCs using magic to (such as *teleport*) to travel instantly to the fortress avoid these patrols entirely. The patrols attack as soon as they spot the PCs, and fight until destroyed.

## DEVOURER CR 11

**XP 12,800**

**hp 133** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 82*)

## NIGHTWING CR 14

**XP 38,400**

**hp 195** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 203*)



MAMETQUL

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

**Story Award:** If the PCs avoid all of the devourer and nightwing patrols by teleporting to the fortress, award them 51,200 XP, as if they had defeated one pair.

## D. FORTRESS OF IRON AND STONE (CR 13)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs reach the fortress of Vashliq.

A great fortress with walls of rusting, pitted iron and massive stone blocks, stained and scarred by time and the perpetual winds, clings to the edge of the ever-eroding cliff as if awaiting only the right moment to collapse and crumble away into the distant vortex. An ancient lava flow has descended from the volcanic peaks behind the fortress to consume much of the rear portion of the citadel, leaving only its imposing gatehouse, its curtain wall, and a portion of its central keep unburied by the volcanic rock. Although half-buried by the ancient eruption and battered by the erosion of this dark place, the fortress still seems strong and grim.

The iron and stone walls of the fortress of Vashliq are 60 feet tall and still strong. They require a successful DC 30 Climb check to scale in the high winds. Unless otherwise noted, all interior areas within the fortress are dark.

**Creatures:** Attempts to climb or fly over the walls attract a patrol of four baykoks that hover over the citadel and swoop in to attack. They attempt to capture at least one prisoner for questioning, carrying any captives back to a holding cell within the fortress (area D10).

**BAYKOKS (4)** **CR 9**  
**XP 6,400 each**  
**hp 97 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 35*)

### D1. Gatehouse

A massive, 10-foot-thick riveted iron plate (hardness 10, hp 3,600) closes off the fortress's main gate, put in place by Baba Yaga to seal the gate shut and trap the fortress's occupants inside. With a successful DC 20 Perception check, however, a PC can notice that the murder holes in the ceiling 60 feet above are open and large enough for a Medium creature to fit through. The rivets on the iron plate can serve as handholds, requiring only successful DC 15 Climb checks to reach the murder holes. These murder holes lead to the upper gatehouse (area D2). This area is sheltered from both the wind and baykok patrols.

### D2. Upper Gatehouse (CR 11)

Murder holes in this guard chamber look down into the fortress's gateway, now blocked by a massive iron plate. Arrow slits provide a view of the plain outside and the fortress's inner bailey. Two spiral staircases descend to the northwest,

and iron doors open out onto the parapets on either side of the gatehouse.

The upper gatehouse is 60 feet above the ground, level with the top of Vashliq's walls. The spiral stairs lead down to the inner bailey (area D3) behind the iron plate sealing the gate.

**Creature:** A retriever currently makes its lair in this chamber, placed here by Baba Yaga to prevent Vashliq's inhabitants from leaving the fortress. It is able to squeeze through the doors out onto the parapets, where it occasionally hunts baykoks. The retriever attacks any creature entering this chamber, whether through a door or murder hole, and pursues intruders out onto the parapets or into the inner bailey. It does not leave the bounds of the fortress, however.

**RETRIEVER** **CR 11**  
**XP 12,800**  
**hp 137** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 234*)

**Treasure:** Slumped near one of the southeastern arrow slits is an ancient skeleton wearing tattered and rusted chainmail armor. Its bony fingers still clutch a +2 *flaming heavy crossbow*.

**Development:** Exiting the gatehouse onto the surrounding parapets attracts the attention of the baykok patrol over the fortress, if it has not yet been encountered (see area D). The baykoks never enter the upper gatehouse, and once the retriever has been defeated, this room makes a good area to rest and recover as long as the PCs do not draw attention to themselves

### D3. Inner Bailey (CR 16+)

The inner bailey of the fortress has flooded completely between the curtain wall and the keep, forming an internal moat. A single causeway, broken in several places, crosses this murky expanse from the gatehouse to the keep's gate, which stands slightly ajar. Piled in the center of the causeway is a mound of corpses, their death wounds still visible upon their shattered and broken forms. Bodies continually drift away from this mound in the moat's waters, floating away to the north and east, but more corpses float in from the west to join the conglomeration so that the pile never seems to grow or shrink.

The water in the bailey is ice cold and 10 feet deep with a slight current pulling to the north and east (DC 12 Swim check required) but is otherwise unoccupied. The loose corpses are the fortress's defenders, felled by Baba Yaga when they attempted to battle the Witch Queen. Now their cursed corpses never decay, but continually float through the flooded bailey.

# REIGN OF WINTER

**Creatures:** The corpse pile in the center of the causeway is actually a massive undead amalgam of corpses called a warsworn. The warsworn waits until someone attempts to cross over it to reach the far side of the causeway (this can be easily accomplished with a full-round action, but attempting to do so as a move action requires a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check to avoid slipping and falling into the moat). As soon as someone moves past the corpse pile, the warsworn rises up like a living siege tower of undead flesh to isolate that character and attack anyone on the causeway. Once the warsworn reveals itself, it no longer bridges the 20-foot-wide gap in the causeway, necessitating other means to cross the gap.

In addition, any PCs attempting to fly within the bailey attract the attention of a second patrol of baykoks that immediately swoops in to attack. The baykoks do not assist the warsworn, focusing their attacks instead on flying PCs or those that attack them. Like the patrol at area **D**, these baykoks attempt to take at least one prisoner back to area **D10** for questioning.

## WARSWORN

**CR 16**
**XP 76,800**
*Pathfinder Adventure Path #35 88*

NE Gargantuan undead

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +27

**Aura** frightful presence (60 ft., DC 26)

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### DEFENSE

**AC** 29, touch 9, flat-footed 26 (+3 Dex, +20 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 243 (18d8+162)

**Fort** +15, **Ref** +11, **Will** +17

**Defensive Abilities** channel resistance +4

**DR** 10/bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** undead traits

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### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** 4 slams +21 (2d6+12 plus energy drain)

**Ranged** 1 scrap ball +12 (2d6+12/19-20)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

**Special Attacks** energy drain (1 level, DC 26), haunt armor, haunt weapons, trample (2d6+18; DC 31)

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### STATISTICS

**Str** 34, **Dex** 17, **Con** —, **Int** 9, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +29; **CMD** 42 (can't be tripped)

**SQ** absorb

**Feats** Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Greater Overrun, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Step Up, Strike Back

**Skills** Climb +33, Fly +0, Perception +27, Stealth +0, Swim +30

**Languages** Common (cannot speak)

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### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Absorb (Su)** A warsworn can consume any creature with -1 or fewer hit points that is dying by moving into the same space. Doing so immediately kills the creature and heals the warsworn

by an amount equal to the creature's Constitution score. This ability cannot heal a warsworn beyond its maximum number of hit points. Nonliving creatures or completely dead corpses cannot be absorbed. Absorbed corpses cannot be resurrected by any effect short of a *miracle* or *wish* spell until the warsworn that consumed them is destroyed.

**Haunt Armor (Sp)** Three times per day, a warsworn can violently take control of a suit of heavy armor or its wearer. This limited form of possession manifests much like the violent thrust effect of the spell *telekinesis*. A warsworn can only target a suit of heavy armor with this effect or a creature wearing a suit of heavy armor. Creatures affected by *protection from evil* are immune to this effect. The effect is CL 18th.

**Haunt Weapons (Sp)** Three times per day, a warsworn can animate a number of unattended weapons as per the spell *animate objects*. A warsworn can animate a number of Medium or smaller weapons equal to its Charisma bonus (typically 7) for up to 10 minutes. (Most weapons sized for Medium creatures are considered Tiny or Small animated objects.) These weapons must be within 50 feet of the warsworn and are all animated at once. This effect only affects weapons and no other type of object. Each weapon animated by this effect appears to be wielded by ghostly hands. Aside from being able to be individually destroyed or dispelled as per normal animated objects, any object animated by this effect can also be damaged by channel energy as if it were an undead creature. Creatures affected by *protection from evil* are immune to this effect. The effect is CL 18th.

## BAYKOKS (4)

**CR 9**
**XP 6,400 each**
**hp** 97 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 35*)

**Treasure:** The vast majority of the equipment on the corpses that make up the warsworn is no longer usable, but an *absorbing shield* can be recovered from the remains.

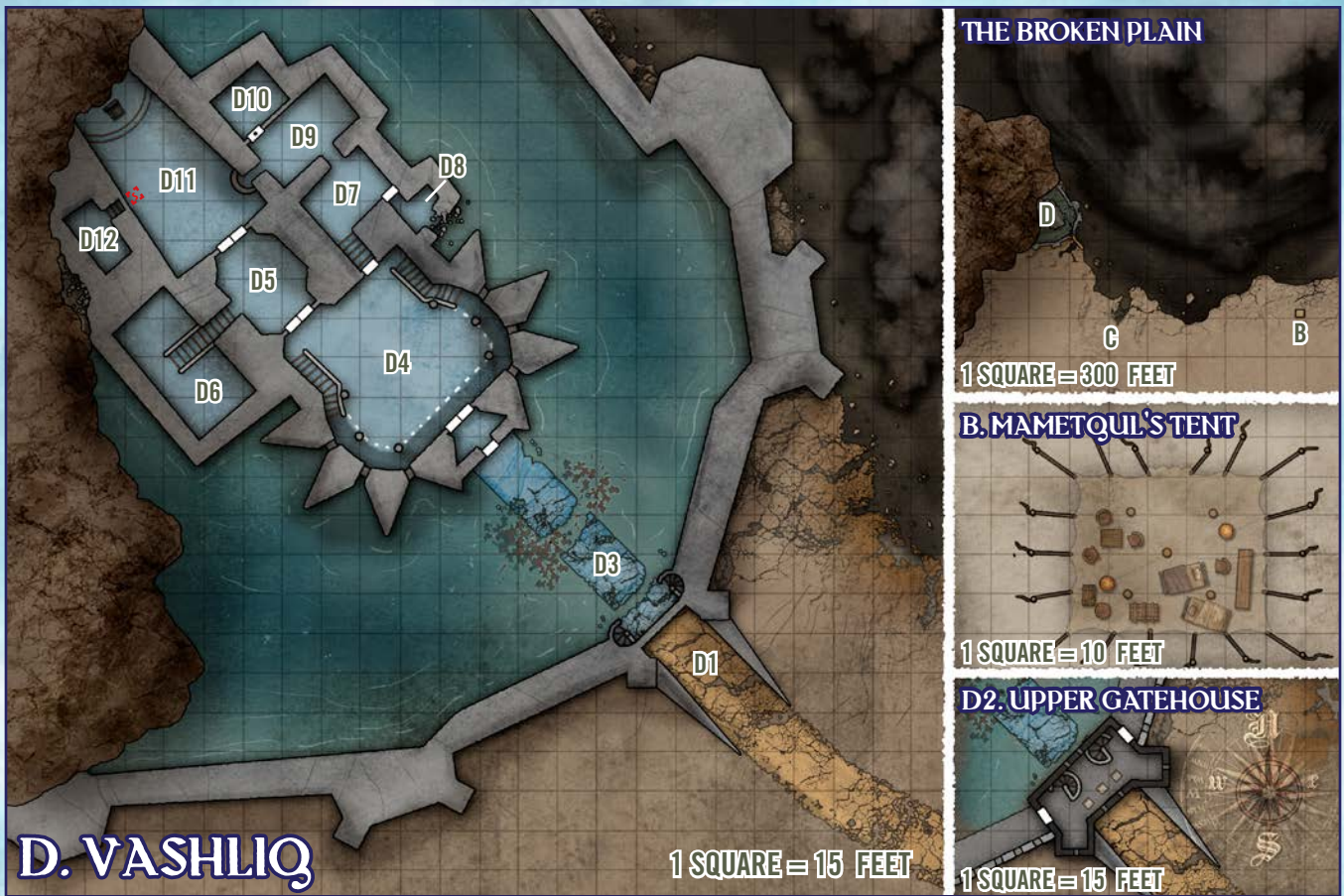
**Development:** Any creature investigating the moat to the north likely draws the attention of the omox demons in area **D8**.

## D4. Entry Hall (CR 15)

The main doors of the keep open into a grand entry hall. Pillars follow the lines of the curving walls, supporting a gallery lined with arrow slits looking outward. A massive rosette window once formed the hall's ceiling, but it has long since shattered, leaving nothing more than its iron framework and jagged shards of glass upon the floor. At the far end of the hall, two doors exit the chamber.

The ceiling is 60 feet high in this chamber. The gallery stands 30 feet above the hall's floor, accessible by two

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE



staircases. The floor is considered difficult terrain due to the glass fragments everywhere. Anyone knocked prone in this room takes 1d6 points of slashing damage from the jagged shards each round she remains prone.

**Creatures:** A troop of 10 baykoks, part of the cursed remnants of Queen Bremagyr's personal guard, inhabits this chamber. They perch on the gallery above the entrance, unseen by those below. As soon as the PCs come into view, the baykoks launch themselves into the air in a swarming mass to rain arrows down upon the interlopers. The baykoks fight until destroyed.

**BAYKOKS (10)** **CR 9**  
**XP 6,400 each**  
**hp 97 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 35*)

## D5. Vestibule (CR 14)

Coffered arches support the high ceiling of this chamber. Small iron mesh cages, alive with flitting black shapes and glowing red eyes, hang suspended by hooks from the arches' stone groins. Empty alcoves on either side of the room apparently once displayed painted iconographic figures, but the plaster has been chipped away until only distorted figures that seem to have

sprung from the depths of Hell remain. Double doors exit the room to the northwest and southeast, and a steep flight of stairs descends to the southwest. The smell of sulfur and refuse are strong in this chamber.

The ceiling is 20 feet high in this chamber.

**Creatures:** This chamber has been taken over by a pit hag named Nuragla. A horned, haglike figure whose crimson skin is little more than blistered flesh pulled taut over the bones beneath, Nuragla has come to Vashliq in search of the lost souls of Queen Bremagyr's subjects who were slain in the catastrophe brought about by Baba Yaga. Nuragla has managed to locate a few hellwasp swarms in the fortress, which she believes formed from the consciousness of some of Bremagyr's more malevolent followers. Unfortunately, the pit hag has also discovered many lemures oozing among the crevices of the lava flow that engulfed the fortress. These loathsome devils have a tendency to accidentally release her hellwasp swarms, so Nuragla is currently in the process of shoveling them down the side stairs with her pitchfork. There are a total of three cages (hardness 4, hp 20, break DC 16) hanging from the ceiling, each of which contains a hellwasp swarm condensed into the space. In addition, 12 lemures crawl across the floor of the chamber.



# REIGN OF WINTER

When the PCs enter the room, Nuragla immediately casts *fog cloud* to conceal herself as the lumbering lemures instinctively move to attack the intruders. Nuragla then casts *waves of fatigue* to weaken the PCs and quickened *open/close* to open the cages containing the hellwasp swarms. The freed hellwasp swarms go mad, attacking anything in the room (though they avoid the hag's *fog cloud*). Nuragla continues casting quickened *open/close* along with her other attacks until all the hellwasp swarms are released. The hellwasps and lemures fight to the death.

## HELLWASP SWARMS (3) CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 90 each (*Pathfinder RPG*

*Bestiary* 3 146)

## LEMURES (12) CR 1

XP 400 each

hp 13 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 79)

## NURAGLA CR 13

XP 25,600

Pit hag (*Tome of Horrors*

*Complete* 477)

LE Medium

outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)

**Init** +9; **Senses**

darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +29

**Aura** aura of affliction (30 ft., DC 23, 18 rounds)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 28, touch 16, flat-footed 22 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural)

**hp** 171 (18d10+72)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +16, **Will** +17

**DR** 10/cold iron and magic;

**Immune** fire, poison; **SR** 24

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft.

**Melee** +2 *unholy trident* +25/+20/+15/+10 (2d6+7), claw +18 (1d8+2) or

2 claws +23 (1d8+5)

**Special Attacks** rend (2 claws or trident and claw, 1d8+7), skewer

**Sorcerer Spells Known** (CL 11th; concentration +15)

5th (4/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 20), *waves of fatigue*

4th (7/day)—*crushing despair* (DC 18), *enervation*, *wall of fire*

3rd (7/day)—*fireball* (DC 18), *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *ray of exhaustion* (DC 18), *vampiric touch*

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *fog cloud*, *glitterdust* (DC 16), *scorching ray*, *web* (DC 16)

1st (7/day)—*burning hands* (DC 16), *grease*, *magic missile*, *ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16), *true strike*

0 (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 15), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *open/close*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 15)

### TACTICS

**During Combat** When all of the hellwasps have been unleashed, Nuragla tries to further weaken the PCs with spells such as *crushing despair*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, and *wall of fire* before attacking with her *unholy trident*. If possible, she tries to throw weakened opponents down the stairs and into area **D6** (see that area for details).

**Morale** Nuragla tries to flee if reduced to fewer than 80 hit points (see Development, below).

### STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 20, **Con** 19, **Int** 17, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 19

**Base Atk** +18; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 39

**Feats** Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge,

Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (evocation), Spell Focus (necromancy)

**Skills** Bluff +25, Diplomacy +25, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (planes) +24, Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +24, Stealth +26

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Infernal

**Gear** +2 *unholy trident*, gold bracelets and anklets worth 500 gp total

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Aura of Affliction (Su)** Three times per day for up to 18 rounds, a pit hag can emit an aura in a 30-foot radius as a free action.

Creatures within or coming within the area must succeed at a DC 23 Fortitude save or contract devil chills.

**Devil Chills:** Aura—affliction; *save* Fort DC 23; *onset* immediate; *frequency* 1 day; *effect* 1d4 Str damage; *cure* 3 consecutive saves.

**Skewer (Ex)** Pit hags are masters at combat using the trident. In the hands of a pit hag, a trident deals damage as if it was one size category larger (usually 2d6). In addition, if the pit hag hits with a trident

and a claw attack in 1 round, she can rend as if she had hit with two claw attacks.

**Spells** A pit hag casts spells as an 11th-level sorcerer.



NURAGLA

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

**Development:** If Nuragla escapes, she has no way to leave Vashliq. In this case, she might lurk near Mametqul's tent (area **B**) to wait for the PCs' return, perhaps ambushing them after they're weakened from battling the divs.

## D6. Ooze Cellar (CR 14)

The floor of this cellar is 30 feet below the level of the adjoining vestibule (area **D5**). The stairway into the cellar is extremely steep and worn smooth from many centuries of use. Without using a rope or other stabilizing aid, walking the stairs requires a successful DC 15 Acrobatics check to avoid falling. Anyone pushed down the stairs (such as by the pit hag in area **D5**) takes 3d6 point of damage. A successful DC 25 Acrobatics check allows a character to stop herself before reaching the bottom of the stairs.

**Creature:** A dangerous creature called a dark matter entropic ooze lurks at the bottom of the stairs. Pitch black in color, the ooze resembles a black pudding, but it is imbued with negative energy. The ooze has been contentedly feeding on the lemures that the pit hag has been shoveling down to it, but as soon as it detects any living creatures with its soulsight ability, it hungrily attacks, seeking to devour their souls. The entropic ooze pursues living creatures anywhere in Vashliq.

### DARK MATTER ENTROPIC OOZE

CR 14

XP 38,400

*Tome of Horrors Complete* 457

N Huge ooze

**Init** -3; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft., soulsight 120 ft.; Perception -5

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 13, touch 5, flat-footed 13 (-3 Dex, +8 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 290 (20d8+200)

**Fort** +16, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

**Defensive Abilities** negative energy affinity; **Immune** ooze traits; **Resist** positive energy 20

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

**Melee** slam +23 (2d8+15 plus energy drain)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

**Special Attacks** devour soul, energy drain (3 levels, DC 22)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 31, **Dex** 4, **Con** 30, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 10

**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +27; **CMD** 34 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Ability Focus (energy drain)<sup>8</sup>

**Skills** Climb +18

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Devour Soul (Su)** A living creature slain by an entropic ooze has its soul devoured by the ooze. Such a creature cannot be returned to life until the entropic ooze that contains its soul is slain.

**Soulsight (Su)** An entropic ooze can automatically detect the location of any living creature with a soul within 120 feet. It also senses the strength of the creature's life force automatically, as if it had cast *deathwatch*.

## D7. Guardroom

This featureless room houses the eight baykoks that fly patrols above the fortress (see areas **D** and **D3**). If only one of these patrols was encountered, then there are four baykoks here. If both patrols were encountered and destroyed, the room is empty.

**Treasure:** A PC who succeeds at a DC 23 Perception check notices a loose flagstone in the floor that conceals a hidden stash. Within, wrapped in rotted burlap, are seven gold ingots stamped with the symbol of Vashliq, a sword and crown (worth 200 gp each), and a single large amethyst worth 500 gp.

## D8. Garderobe (CR 15)

A wide window looks out from this chamber over the fortress's flooded moat ten feet below. The air is heavy with the pungent smell of filth.

**Creatures:** Three omox demons make their home in this smelly garderobe, occasionally feeding upon the corpses as they float by in the moat. The demons attack any who enter, as well as any creatures they detect in the moat outside (area **D3**).

### OMOX DEMONS (3)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 162 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 79)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The omoxes throw slime at intruders, then cast *acid fog* or *stinking cloud* over their opponents before attempting to grapple and smother them.

**Morale** If reduced to 80 hit points or fewer, an omox flees into the moat outside, though it returns later to attack wounded foes as they cross the causeway in area **D3** to leave the fortress.

**Treasure:** Buried in the filth in the demons' lair is a *staff of heaven and earth* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 197) with 6 charges, which can be found with a successful DC 17 Perception check.

## D9. Guard Barracks (CR 14)

Rows of bunks line the walls of this chamber, and the splinters of a large table and benches occupy the center of the room. An iron door stands in the rusty iron wall to the northwest, next to a symbol of a crown and sword engraved into the wall. To the southwest, an archway leads to a small balcony overlooking a large chamber beyond.

This chamber served as the barracks for Queen Bremagyr's personal guard. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check locates a key hidden in the broken

# REIGN OF WINTER

remains of one of the bunks; the key opens the locked iron door to area **D10**. The balcony overlooks Queen Bremagyr's throne room (area **D11**) 10 feet below.

**Creatures:** Six baykoks, the last of Bremagyr's personal guard, still occupy this room. They do not leave this room unless summoned by Bremagyr in area **D11**. During battle, the baykoks attempt to take prisoners if possible and lock them in area **D10**. The baykoks fight until destroyed.

## BAYKOKS (6)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 97 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 35)

## D10. Holding Cell

A locked iron door (hardness 10, hp 90, break DC 28, Disable Device DC 30) blocks entry to this bare, windowless room; the key is hidden in area **D9**.

**Development:** Any PCs captured by the baykoks are stripped of their equipment (which is stored in area **D12**) and locked in here to await questioning by Bremagyr. The queen, accompanied by three baykoks, arrives in 1d4 hours to do so. Unless a captured PC wishes to fight Bremagyr and her guards alone, that character takes 8d6 points of damage from the tortures inflicted by Bremagyr during the questioning. Obsessed with the long-ago fall of her empire, the queen's questions all concern the far outdated subjects of Baba Yaga's maneuvers and troop dispositions. Bremagyr is unable to grasp that Baba Yaga has been laid low and is trapped within a doll, assuming such tales are merely false information meant to mislead her. The queen continues this questioning each day until the PC is freed, escapes, or dies under questioning.

## D11. Fallen Throne Room (CR 17)

This long hall extends deep into the fortress, ending in a mass of long-cooled lava that overwhelmed the rear of the chamber. Partially buried in the volcanic rock is a large iron throne atop a dais of polished, red-veined marble, both covered in a thick rime of ice. A small balcony high on the northeast wall overlooks the length of the hall.

This chamber was the throne room of Queen Bremagyr, whose remains still sit on her iron throne (see Creature below). The balcony to the northeast is 10 feet above the floor of the chamber and has a low balustrade that does not provide cover. On the southwest side of the chamber, a secret door beneath a flagstone can be detected with a Successful DC 28 Perception check. The flagstone weighs 400 pounds, but if lifted, reveals a stone stairway underneath that leads to Bremagyr's secret treasury (area **D12**).

**Creature:** Queen Bremagyr, now a skeletal figure, wearing an elaborate crown of gold, her hollow eyes surveying what is left of her domain, is seated on the throne, frozen to the cold iron beneath a thick layer of ice. Even as her kingdom fell around her due to Baba Yaga's retribution, Bremagyr never left her iron throne. The Witch Queen's magic struck her where she sat and froze her to her throne, even as the volcanic eruption began to bury her fortress. The powerful magic of the Old Crone stopped the lava flow in its tracks and caused the slain queen to rise as an undead winterwight bent on vengeance and obsessed with fighting off what she believes are Baba Yaga's continued assaults upon her empire.

Although Bremagyr is buried under a layer of ice, this doesn't inhibit her from rising—the ice simply breaks

QUEEN BREMAGYR

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

apart as she stands—but it always refreezes once she is seated again. As soon as the PCs enter the chamber, Bremagyr rises in a shower of cracking ice and calls for her personal guards (the baykoks in area **D9**) with an eerie howl. If they haven't already been destroyed, the baykoks join their undead queen in 1 round. Whether or not her guards respond, Bremagyr immediately charges into battle, slashing with her claws to inflict her blightfire on as many opponents as possible. Consumed by the need to defend her already-lost kingdom, Bremagyr fights until destroyed.

## QUEEN BREMAGYR

CR 17

XP 102,400

Female winterwight (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 283)

hp 270

**Treasure:** Queen Bremagyr wears a string of rare blue pearls (worth 2,000 gp) around her neck. Her golden crown is frozen to her head and cannot be removed until she is destroyed. However, close examination reveals that it is not the true crown of Queen Bremagyr, only a replica made of gold-plated copper worth only 150 gp.

## D12. Secret Treasury

This hidden cellar vault is the secret treasury of Vashliq, and though much of the wealth it once held was depleted as the kingdom prepared to fend off the expected invasion of Baba Yaga, it does still contain some riches. Eight wooden crates lined around the walls hold a total of 80 gold ingots stamped with the sword and crown of Vashliq (worth 200 gp each). A mahogany coffer lined with velvet (worth 70 gp) contains a *potion of displacement*, a *potion of fly*, a *potion of good hope*, a *potion of haste*, a *potion of heroism*, and a *potion of nondetection* (though all are currently frozen and must be thawed before they can be used). A platinum casket (worth 2,000 gp) contains a *ring of mind shielding*, a *tome of leadership and influence* (+3) wrapped in silk (50 gp), an emerald and topaz necklace (worth 5,200 gp), and an engraved red gem on a gold chain that appears to be a *periapt of wound closure* but is actually a *periapt of foul rotting*. In addition, a suit of +1 *spell resistance half-plate* (SR 19) hangs on an armor stand in one corner. Finally, seemingly carelessly tossed in one corner is a burlap sack containing a gold crown that is a masterpiece of craftsmanship and set with the finest gemstones. The crown has an overwhelming aura of evocation and is worth 15,000 gp. This is the true crown of Bremagyr, which holds a remnant of Baba Yaga's power that can be used to help free her from her prison.

**Development:** The first PC to touch Bremagyr's true crown receives a sudden empathic jolt from the matryoshka doll containing Baba Yaga and sees a vision of the severed head of the sepid div, Mametqul, wearing

Bremagyr's crown and set within an ornate wooden wall cabinet. Baba Yaga sends this vision to the PCs both to warn them of Mametqul's treachery and to show them the means of returning to Grandmother's Cauldron.

## RETURN TO MAMETQUL'S TENT

Once they have recovered Bremagyr's crown, the PCs can return to Mametqul's tent (area **B**). The sepid div greets them warmly at the entrance to the tent, but he has no intention of allowing them to leave alive with the crown and matryoshka doll. As soon as the PCs enter the tent, the two shira divs immediately assume their true forms and attack the first PC to enter the tent, attempting to consume his essence. Mametqul rains debris on the rest of the party by moving into their midst, and the pairakas gang up on any spellcasters while Mametqul tackles those not already engaged by the shiras. The divs fight to the death to keep the PCs from returning to Grandmother's Cauldron.

**Development:** When the battle is over, the PCs can find the ornate wall cabinet seen in the vision within the tent. By setting the crown atop Mametqul's severed head and placing the head in the cabinet, the back of the cabinet opens as a portal back to Grandmother's Cauldron next to the sacred pool (area **A3**). The PCs can pack the tent to take with them before stepping through the portal, along with Mametqul's head and Bremagyr's crown though the cabinet must be left behind. Once the PCs emerge on the other side, the portal closes.

Once beside the sacred pool, Baba Yaga empathically urges the PCs to submerge the head, the crown, and the matryoshka doll in the bubbling waters of the pool. If the PCs follow Baba Yaga's urgings, the doll splits open once again with a crack, revealing another smaller doll within. As before, this new doll remains impervious, but Baba Yaga can now communicate with the PCs through limited telepathy, though the communication is fragmented, as her mental voice cuts in and out almost like a weak radio transmission. In addition, Baba Yaga grants a second boon to the PCs. Each PC can choose to gain either DR 5/— or spell resistance equal to 12 + his character level.

When the PCs open the second layer of the doll, Vigliv appears once again from the bole of the tree at area **A2**. This appearance is described at the beginning of Part Three.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 51,200 XP for opening the matryoshka doll's second layer.

## PART THREE: THE ISLAND OF BUYAN

After the PCs use the crown of Bremagyr to remove the second layer of Baba Yaga's prison, Vigliv emerges once again from the bole of the Mother Tree and speaks.

"Your bravery has won through, even against the treachery of those who would steal your prize. But your quest is not yet done.

# REIGN OF WINTER

You have recovered Baba Yaga's fate and her power, but now you must seek out her death. As she rose in power from a mere mortal, Baba Yaga used great magic to ensure that death would not be able to swiftly find her through misfortune or betrayal.

"Baba Yaga placed her death in an athame, a witch's knife, which she then hid in a chest within a corpse, which she buried under an oak tree on the mystical island of Buyan. Even if Baba Yaga was slain, her death would still need to be recovered and released back into her body in order for her to truly die. And so Baba Yaga plucked the island from the ocean and stored it in one of the many hidden realms of her hut so that none could stumble across it, and her death, without first facing her power.

"Now, to free Baba Yaga from her prison, you must go to Buyan, find her death, and bring it back here to her cauldron. She is gaining greater awareness as you free her and will be able to guide you to some extent; heed her counsel. Now go; the death of Baba Yaga awaits you."

After completing this explanation, Vigliv once again withdraws into her tree. Baba Yaga is able to make limited telepathic contact, however, and gives the bearer of her matryoshka doll this message: "North and east across the stream... climb the cliff to find the path..." Following these instructions leads the PCs to area **A5**.

## ISLAND IN AN ENDLESS SEA

The pool in area **A5** leads to another demiplane inside Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut* that houses the island of Buyan. Anyone who completely immerses herself in the icy cold water of the pool surfaces in a warm, salty tidal pool on a sunny stretch of beach.

A brilliant sun shines down from a cloudless azure sky, as flawless as a painting from a storybook. Ahead, the waves of a cerulean blue sea break against a sandy shore that stretches into the distance in either direction. The cry of gulls and the roll of the surf is all that breaks the silence of this empty seascape.

If they explore their new surroundings, the PCs soon discover that they are on a small, sandy islet no more than a quarter mile in diameter. All around them stretches an apparently endless blue sea. Like the demiplane of Vashliq, this one appears infinite, but aimless travel across the ocean only results in ending back at this islet after 1d6 hours. Likewise, regardless of how high one attempts to fly, the surface of the sea is always 100 feet below. In addition, this entire demiplane is warded with a *dimensional lock* effect (CL 20th) that blocks all extradimensional travel within the demiplane. Attempting to submerge in the tidal pool to travel back to Grandmother's Cauldron fails to work—it is a one-way portal. The islet is otherwise completely safe; the PCs may camp here with no danger of hostile encounters.

## JOURNEY TO THE ISLAND OF BUYAN (CR 12)

Once on the nameless islet, Baba Yaga telepathically urges the PCs to head west toward the island of Buyan. How they travel is up to them—they can make use of *Baba Yaga's mortar and pestle*, found in area **A5**, to travel over the waves, or use some other means of their own devising. Regardless of their means of travel, it takes 1d8 hours to reach the island of Buyan.

**Creature:** If the PCs fly or travel in *Baba Yaga's mortar and pestle*, there are no encounters on the trip. If they choose to swim, use *water walk*, or travel by ship or some other water conveyance, they are attacked by a sea serpent a couple of hours after setting out. The sea serpent attempts to capsize their vessel and swallow any creatures falling into the water, but it retreats once it reaches 90 hit points or fewer.

### SEA SERPENT

**CR 12**
**XP 19,200**
**hp 187** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 244)

## THE ISLAND OF BUYAN

Although time otherwise passes normally on the demiplane, regardless of how the PCs travel to the island of Buyan or what time they start their journey, they always arrive at the island at sunset. When the party first comes in sight of the island of Buyan, read or paraphrase the following.

The sun sets ahead in the distance, outlining the dark mass of an island rising from the gently rolling sea. Surrounded by sheer cliffs hundreds of feet high, the island is thickly forested. To the south, the rise slopes down to a wide, flat beach, but the island ends at a precipitous cliff to the north. Atop this cliff sits a golden city, overlooking the sea from the precipice. The light of the dying day reflects off its walls and turrets with a gleam that extends out over the waves like a beacon. A stretch of smooth beach lies at the base of this cliff, interspersed with great rocks that emerge from the sea.

The island of Buyan is 2 miles long and just over a mile wide. The climate is temperate with warm, windy days and calm, cooler nights. The forest that grows upon the island is a combination of old-growth oaks as well as younger pines and beeches. Rocky, broken cliffs ranging in height from 10 feet to 400 feet surround two-thirds of the island, with the highest cliffs at its northernmost extremity (Climb DC 25). Other than the inhabitants of the keyed areas, the island has no occupants other than small animals such as foxes, badgers, tortoises, assorted rodents, and a plethora of sea birds. The demiplane's magic keeps the island self-sustaining, providing sufficient food and water for the island's inhabitants.

The island of Buyan incorporates both event-based encounters and keyed encounter locations. The events

## THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE



begin when the PCs arrive on the island and occur at prescribed times while the PCs are on the island. The encounter locations can be explored at the PCs' convenience, but you should familiarize yourself with them beforehand, as many of the event encounters occur at these locations.

### EVENT 1: ARRIVAL ON BUYAN (CR 15)

This event occurs when the PCs first reach the island, regardless of where they make landfall.

**Creatures:** The maftet inhabitants of Buyan's Golden City (area E) fly regular patrols over the island, and their lookouts have spotted the PCs' approach. A reinforced patrol of six maftets is sent to deter the intruders. The maftets swoop by the PCs to land 20 yards in front of them, but they do not attack unless attacked first. The leader of the patrol hails the PCs (first in Sphinx, then in Aklo; the maftets don't speak Common), asking their business on the island. The maftets are threatening, having orders to defend their island from outsiders, but they make no overtly hostile moves at this point, at least until they

have discovered the nature of these outsiders. Assuming the PCs can communicate with the maftets, the leonine creatures can confirm that this is the island of Buyan, but they know nothing of its existence on a demiplane inside Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut*. Likewise, they have no knowledge of Baba Yaga or her death. The maftets have little else to say, and while they are willing to converse with the PCs for a short time, the message should be clear—outsiders are not welcome, and it would be best for the PCs to leave the island immediately or face the wrath of the maftet clan.

Although the situation is likely tense, before it can descend into violence, another intruder appears. Allow the PCs and the maftets to attempt DC 37 Perception checks to spot a lone popobala sweeping in low over the dark ocean waves from behind the PCs. A success means the creature is spotted before it attacks; otherwise, it stays hidden until it is 30 feet away, when it activates its frightful presence ability as part of a Flyby Attack against one of the PCs. The popobala attempts to dominate the most formidable-looking PC to fight the other PCs while it focuses its attacks on the maftets. The maftets fight defensively against the

# REIGN OF WINTER

## THE ISLAND OF BUYAN



## E. THE GOLDEN CITY



## G. SACRIFICIAL ROCK



## J. HIDDEN CAVE



popobala and do not assist the PCs, being more concerned for their own survival. If the PCs attack the popobala, it turns back to attack them instead. If reduced to 30 hit points or fewer, the popobala flees back over the sea. The maftets fight to the death against the popobala, but if more than half of them are slain, at least one tries to retreat back to the Golden City (area E) to warn its people.

**MAFTETS (6)** **CR 6**

**XP 2,400 each**

**hp 68 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 188*)

**POPOBALA** **CR 15**

**XP 51,200**

**hp 225** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3 221*)

**Development:** After the battle is over, any surviving maftets grudgingly thank the PCs for any assistance they gave against the popobala. If all of the maftets were slain, a second maftet patrol arrives soon after. If asked, the maftet leader simply states that the popobala was an agent of their enemies. If the PCs wish to find out more information about these enemies, or about the island or their own quest, the leader offers to escort them to the

maftets' city (area E). There the PCs can speak with the maftets' queen, who can surely answer the PCs' questions (see Event 2).

### EVENT 2: MEETING THE QUEEN

If the PCs agree to travel to the Golden City (area E) to meet the maftet queen, the maftets escort them to the village's central plaza (area E4), where the entire clan gathers round while the PCs await the appearance of the queen. Rajet, the captain of the guard, demands that the PCs lay down their weapons before they are allowed into the queen's presence. If the PCs do so, an honor guard of 12 maftet warriors escorts them into the northeast wing of the royal palace (area E5f) to meet the queen.

If the PCs refuse to lay down their arms, tensions once again rise as dozens of armed maftets surround them, preparing for a fight, until a woman's voice from the palace calls out to stop them. The black-furred, purple-skinned Queen Esmyra stands on the palace veranda (area E5g) wearing a circlet and the heavy gold necklace of her office. She says in Sphinx to her captain, "Rajet, would you have us go to war yet again even in this, our time of desperation?" She then turns to the PCs and says, "Be welcome here. You may keep your weapons if you will agree to hear me out."

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

The queen turns and reenters the palace, leaving her guards to escort the PCs to her chambers.

Once the PCs reach Queen Esmyra's chambers, the maftet queen offers them comfortable seating, and maftet servants bring them cups of honeyed nectar. When the PCs are comfortable, Queen Esmyra addresses them.

"We have lived in our beautiful Golden City on this island since before the time of our grandsires' grandsires. Always we have been masters of our realm, living in peace, hunting, and gliding upon the thermals—until two days ago. Then strange creatures from the depths of the sea emerged upon our island's shores. They demanded that we swear loyalty to their rule. We fought them, but individually they are more powerful than my people, and several of my warriors were killed. These enemies have demanded that I be chained to the old sacrificial rock below the city tomorrow at dawn or they will invade our island and kill all of my people. The creature you fought earlier is merely one of the horrors that our enemies can command. We cannot stand against them, so tomorrow I go to my fate to save my people. But with your arrival, perhaps the tide can be turned, and the fate of myself and my people can be rewritten."

Queen Esmyra would like the PCs' aid in fighting the sea creatures. The queen does not know what they are, but she can describe the maftets' enemies as "skinless monstrosities with the torso of a man or woman atop the body of a horse, who bring sickness with them." A successful DC 19 Knowledge (nature) check can identify the creatures as nuckelavees, though Esmyra does not know them by that name.

Esmyra is willing to offer the PCs much of her clan's wealth—10,000 gp in gems, jewelry, and assorted art objects—in exchange for their help. If the PCs mention their quest to find Baba Yaga's death, Esmyra states that her clan has legends of a tree on the island that hides the death of a powerful witch. If the PCs help defeat the sea invaders, she will lead the PCs to the tree. Queen Esmyra knows nothing more of Baba Yaga, however—the island of Buyan is the only home she knows, and she is unaware that the island exists on a demiplane inside the *Dancing Hut*.

## QUEEN ESMYRA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Female advanced maftet aristocrat 6 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 188, 290)

NG Medium monstrous humanoid

**Init** +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +15

### DEFENSE

**AC** 24, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +5 natural)

**hp** 141 (14 HD; 8d10+6d8+70)

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor)

**Melee** +1 scimitar +17/+12/+7 (1d6+6/15-20), +1 scimitar +17/+12/+7 (1d6+6/15-20)

**Special Attacks** paired weapons, raptor dive

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 8th; concentration +11)

Constant—*mage armor*



QUEEN ESMYRA



# REIGN OF WINTER

3/day—*magic weapon*

1/day—*cat's grace, protection from evil*

## TACTICS

**Before Combat** Queen Esmyra casts *magic weapon* on both of her scimitars before battle.

**During Combat** Queen Esmyra prefers to let her warriors fight for her, but she is more than capable of defending herself, particularly if her people are threatened. She focuses her attacks on a single opponent, hoping to bring that foe down as quickly as possible before facing another enemy.

**Morale** If reduced to fewer than 70 hit points, Queen Esmyra offers to surrender. If any of her people are in danger, however, she fights to the death to protect them.

## STATISTICS

**Str** 20, **Dex** 21, **Con** 20, **Int** 14, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 16

**Base Atk** +12; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 32

**Feats** Combat Reflexes<sup>B</sup>, Double Slice, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Persuasive, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

**Skills** Bluff +16, Diplomacy +24, Fly +12, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (local) +13, Knowledge (nobility) +13, Perception +15, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +20

**Languages** Aklo, Sphinx, Sylvan

**SQ** runic tattoos

**Gear** mwk scimitars (2), two gold bracelets (worth 50 gp each), gold circlet (worth 100 gp), gold necklace of office (worth 1,000 gp)

**Development:** If the PCs agree to help the maftets, Queen Esmyra tells them that she will go down to the sacrificial rock the next morning as planned—a perfect time for the PCs to ambush the attackers. In the meantime, the PCs can camp in the Golden City's plaza (area E4) to rest and prepare. Regardless of whether the PCs help the maftets, Event 3 occurs the following morning.

## EVENT 3: ROYAL SACRIFICE (CR 14)

This event occurs in the early morning of the day after the PCs arrive on the island. In the predawn darkness, Queen Esmyra and an honor guard of 12 maftet warriors descend to the sacrificial rock below the Golden City (area G). The warriors chain the unarmed queen to the rock and fly 100 yards away to await her fate. The PCs can set up as they see fit if they wish to interrupt the sacrifice and help the maftets fight their enemies.

**Creatures:** As the first light of dawn falls upon the sacrificial rock where the queen stands defiantly, four advanced nuckelavees emerge from the surf and climb the stairs to the top of the rock. Unless stopped, the nuckelavees hack off the queen's arms and drag her bleeding body to drown and devour beneath the waves, leaving her dismembered arms still chained to the rock.

If the PCs intervene, the nuckelavees attack, using their breath weapons as often as possible, combined with Spring Attacks. The nuckelavees retreat if half of their number are killed, promising swift vengeance upon all inhabitants of the island.

## ADVANCED NUCKELAVEES (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

hp 126 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 203, 290)

**Treasure:** Each nuckelavee wears gold and coral ornaments worth 400 gp in total.

**Development:** If the PCs defeat the nuckelavees and prevent Queen Esmyra's sacrifice, the maftets hail them as heroes. The queen gives the PCs rooms in the palace barracks (area E5b) and invites them to her war councils to prepare for the impending invasion. Regardless of whether the nuckelavees are successful in claiming Queen Esmyra as a sacrifice, they begin their invasion of the island the following night (see Event 4).

**Story Award:** If the PCs save Queen Esmyra, award them 38,400 XP.

## EVENT 4: FIRST FORAY (CR 15)

This event occurs the day after the attempted sacrifice of Queen Esmyra. There is no sign of the nuckelavees for the entire day. If the PCs are allied with the maftets, they sit in on the queen's war council and can make whatever plans they wish for the defense of the Golden City and the maftet clan.

**Creatures:** The nuckelavees wait until nightfall to begin their invasion. A large force of nuckelavees invades the island from the southeast beach (area H) under the cover of the nuckelavees' *obscuring mist* spells. The nuckelavees emerge from the mist and seek cover in the island's central forest. Once in the trees, the nuckelavees make their way toward the Golden City, using the darkness and tree cover to ward off attacks by flying maftets.

The maftets follow the PCs' lead in the defense of the island, but they do not fight with the PCs. While the maftets deal with the majority of the rank-and-file attackers, the PCs must face the nuckelavees' most elite warriors. These nuckelavees are unique to the demiplane of Buyan; instead of a flayed human torso growing out of a horse's back, a Buyan nuckelavee has the upper body of a skinless rusalka with long, seaweed-like tresses, and possesses additional abilities, including the capability to summon water elementals.

Where the PCs encounter the nuckelavees—whether on the beach when the nuckelavees first emerge from the sea, in the depths of the forest, or in the Golden City itself among the screaming noncombatant maftets sheltering in the buildings there—depends on the plans the PCs made for

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

the defense. Regardless of where the encounter takes place, the PCs face a squad of four Buyan nuckelavees. If, in your judgment, the PCs made adequate defensive preparations, this is the only squad they must defeat. Alternatively, if the PCs did not sufficiently prepare, they could encounter two or even three of these squads in succession.

## BUYAN NUCKELAVEES (4)

**CR 11**

### XP 12,800 each

Variant nuckelavee (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 203)

NE Large fey (aquatic)

**Init** +7; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +22

**Aura** frightful presence (30 ft., DC 21)

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 25, touch 17, flat-footed 17 (+7 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 152 each (16d6+96)

**Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +13

**DR** 10/cold iron; **Immune** disease, fire, poison

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft., swim 50 ft.

**Melee** mwk longsword +14/+9 (1d8+9/19-20), bite +11 (1d8+3), 2 hooves +11 (1d6+3 plus disease), tresses +11 (2d6+3 plus staggering touch)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (15 ft. with tresses)

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (30-ft. cone, 10d6 damage plus disease, Reflex DC 24 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), trample (1d6+9, DC 24)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 9th; concentration +12)

3/day—*control water*, *diminish plants*, *obscuring mist*

1/day—*summon nature's ally VI* (water elementals only)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The nuckelavees use their breath weapons, then use Spring Attack and Vital Strike to attack with their tresses, keeping mobile and away from counterattacks until their breath weapons recharge.

**Morale** The nuckelavees fight to the death.

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 24, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 17

**Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 33 (37 vs. trip)

**Feats** Acrobatic Steps, Dodge, Mobility, Multiattack, Nimble Moves, Spring Attack, Vital Strike, Wind Stance

**Skills** Acrobatics +26 (+34 when jumping), Escape Artist +26, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (nature) +20, Perception +22, Stealth +22, Swim +33

**Languages** Aklo, Sylvan

**SQ** amphibious, undersized weapons

**Gear** mwk longsword

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Disease (Su)** *Mortasheen*: Contact or injury—bite; *save* Fort DC 24; *onset* immediate; *frequency* 1/day; *effect* 1d4 Con damage and fatigue; *cure* 2 consecutive saves. Animals take a -2 penalty on their saves.

**Staggering Touch (Su)** A creature that takes damage from a Buyan nuckelavee's tresses must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or be staggered for 1 round by overwhelming feelings of desire and shame. This is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Tresses (Su)** A Buyan nuckelavee's long, seaweed-like hair is strong and capable of making powerful primary natural attacks.

**Treasure:** Each Buyan nuckelavee wears gold and coral ornaments worth 1,000 gp in total.

**Development:** The outcome of the maftets' battle with the nuckelavee invasion force matches the outcome of the PCs' fights. If the PCs are victorious, the maftets are assumed to have defeated the others and sent any survivors fleeing back to the sea. Maftet casualties are anywhere from 10% to 30%, depending on how well the PCs prepared and how successful they were in fighting off the invasion. The actual number of maftets killed has no bearing on the outcome of the invasion, but it should serve to drive home the desperation of the situation to the PCs. Regardless of how successful the nuckelavees' first foray was, Queen Esmyra is convinced that they have not been defeated, only temporarily repulsed, and cautions her people and the PCs to be ready for more attacks.

## EVENT 5: NIGHT LANDING (CR 15)

**Creatures:** The second wave of the invasion occurs the same night as the first attack at around 3:00 A.M. Under the cover of darkness and an *obscuring mist* that the nuckelavees have conjured over the still sea, four hezrous approach the north beach (area F) in *gaseous form*. Baba Yaga brought these hezrous to the demiplane long ago, and they have since allied with the nuckelavees. With the magic of the demiplane preventing them from using their *greater teleport* ability, the hezrous begin flying up the 380-foot-high cliff to the overlook (area E3), gaining a +10 bonus on their Stealth checks from the *obscuring mist*. When they reach the top, the hezrous return to their normal forms and set about destroying the Golden City. The maftets are largely unable to harm the demons and leave the battle primarily up to the PCs. The hezrous fight to the death.

## HEZROUS (4)

**CR 11**

### XP 12,800 each

**hp** 145 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 62)

## EVENT 6: DAWN CHARGE (CR 17)

**Creatures:** The nuckelavees begin their final attack at dawn the following day. The main body of the nuckelavee army emerges from the sea on the southern beach (area H) and charge up the slope toward the Golden City (area E). The nuckelavees are spread out, and each one tries to reach

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the city individually. The maftets launch themselves from the city to once again repel the invaders.

Meanwhile, nuckelavees on the sea floor enact ancient, powerful rituals to raise a 40-foot-wide, 400-foot-high column of water from the surface of the sea just off the coast from the Golden City, forming a bridge of water to the city's cistern (area E2). Nuckelavee raiders are then able to swim up the column and ride across the bridge to attack the palace (area E5), which is defended only by Queen Esmyra and three of her warriors. Six Buyan nuckelavees, accompanied by two elder water elementals, lead the attack on the palace. Fortunately, lookouts spy the water spout rising and summon the PCs back to the city, so that they are present when the attack begins on the palace.

The nuckelavees and elementals fight to the death.

## BUYAN NUCKELAVEES (6)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 152 each (see page 31)

## ELDER WATER ELEMENTALS (2)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 152 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 127)

**Treasure:** Each Buyan nuckelavee wears gold and coral ornaments worth 1,000 gp in total.

**Development:** If the PCs defeat the nuckelavees attacking the palace, the rest of the invasion force on the island retreat back to the sea and end their attacks upon Buyan. If Queen Esmyra survives, the PCs are heralded as saviors of the Golden City and the maftets begin crafting statues of the PCs to place among the heroes depicted in the city's plaza (area E4). In addition, Esmyra offers to personally lead them to the tree marking the "witch's grave" (area I), where they can look for Baba Yaga's death.

If Queen Esmyra is killed, the maftets thank the PCs for their help, but the loss of their queen overshadows their joy at victory. As the maftets begin the painful process of electing another queen to rule their shattered clan, one of Esmyra's warriors agrees to show them to the hidden grave.

Either way, if the PCs are victorious, the maftets honor their agreement with them and give them clan treasures worth a total of 10,000 gp as a reward.

If the PCs are unable to defeat the nuckelavees, the horrendous fey creatures overrun the island and enthrone their own queen in the Golden City. Buyan is the only home the maftets have; they have no other place to go, and the few surviving maftets are enslaved by their conquerors. In this case, a wounded maftet warrior who escaped the city might be able to guide the PCs to the witch's grave, but they must contend with patrols of the conquering nuckelavees roaming the island.

**Story Award:** If the PCs defeat the nuckelavees and Queen Esmyra survives, award them 76,800 XP. If the PCs defeat the nuckelavees but the queen dies, award them only 19,200 XP.

## ISLAND OF BUYAN LOCATIONS

The island of Buyan contains the following locations, which the PCs can explore in their own time, though keep in mind that the events detailed above occur whether or not the PCs are present at a given location.



BUYAN NUCKELAVEE

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

## E. THE GOLDEN CITY

A small settlement sits atop the island's northernmost precipice. Little more than two sprawling stone structures connected by a retaining wall, the town's buildings stand upon the very verge of the cliff. The walls have been plastered with lime mixed with mica so that they sparkle like gold in the sunlight and glint like silver under the moon. Although somewhat crudely constructed, the buildings have an air of great age, displaying skilled artistry and style. All around are statues and painted frescoes showing noble winged beings in war and in peace.

This settlement has no other name than Buyan, like the island, but it is more commonly called the Golden City—even though it is no larger than a village. An extended clan of maftets, composed of a dozen prides, inhabits the “city.” Ruled by a queen, the maftets have lived on the island for as long as their racial memory recalls (even before Baba Yaga took Buyan and sequestered it in her hut). The current settlement was built upon the foundations of one much older, but the maftets know nothing of the original builders, and almost all vestiges of the Golden City's previous inhabitants have been erased.

### BUYAN, THE GOLDEN CITY

N village

**Corruption** -1; **Crime** -6; **Economy** -1; **Law** +2; **Lore** +1; **Society** +1

**Qualities** insular, superstitious

**Danger** +0

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

**Government** autocracy

**Population** 197 (197 maftets)

#### Notable NPCs

**Queen Esmyra** (NG female advanced maftet aristocrat 6)

**Captain of the Guard Rajet** (LN male maftet fighter 3)

**Clan Shaman Jafira** (N female maftet adept 2)

#### MARKETPLACE

**Base Value** 500 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 1st

**Minor Items** +1 scimitar, *potion of protection from chaos*, *ring of swarming stabs*<sup>UE</sup>, *scroll of remove sickness*<sup>UM</sup>; **Medium**

**Items** *duelist's vambraces*<sup>UE</sup>; **Major Items** —

### E1. Terrace (CR 10)

This wide platform, constructed of great stone blocks, provides a view of the seas north of the island. A gilded door opens into a large building to the south, next to a gate leading to a gravel path that winds around the structure to the south.

This elevated platform catches the sea breezes and thermals rising up the cliff, making takeoffs and landings particularly easy (+10 circumstance bonus on Fly checks made in this area). The maftets teach their young to fly

from this platform. The terrace stands 8 feet above the surrounding ground, its northern edge looking directly over the 400-foot-high cliff.

**Creatures:** Four maftets always stand watch here, keeping a lookout for dangers from the northern horizon. Twice per day, a patrol of four more maftets leaves from here to fly around the island, returning 3 hours later. Any maftets here challenge the PCs and sound the alarm unless the PCs have been welcomed into the settlement.

#### MAFTETS (4)

CR 6

**XP 2,400 each**

**hp** 68 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 188)

### E2. Cistern

This cistern stands at the very edge of the cliff. Open topped to collect rainwater, the cistern is level with the roof of the palace (area E5), where it is accessible by a stairwell. The cistern extends 30 feet down into the cliff. From the west, a narrow, stepped channel descends into the cistern, so that as the water level drops, the stairs provide access down into the cistern. Currently, the cistern is nearly full from recent rains and the steps remain submerged.

### E3. Overlook (CR 10)

Steps descend to a small shelf overlooking the rocky beach below. A squat stone well sits on the ledge, filled to the top with large, jagged rocks.

This ledge is 20 feet below the level of the city, 380 feet above the beach. The well is only 5 feet deep but is filled with rocks that can be rained down on anyone attempting to climb the cliffs.

**Creatures:** Four maftets always maintain a watch here to keep an eye on the beach below. They drop rocks on anyone attempting to climb the cliffs. The rocks have a range increment of 20 feet and deal 2d6 points of damage with a successful ranged touch attack. If a rock falls more than 150 feet, it deals double damage; if less than 30 feet, it deals half damage.

#### MAFTETS (4)

CR 6

**XP 2,400 each**

**hp** 68 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 188)

**Ranged** dropped rock +11 ranged touch (2d6)

### E4. Plaza

This open expanse is floored with smooth, flat stones harvested from the shale of the cliffs and lies between the buildings of the settlement and the sheer drop to the beach below. The remains

# REIGN OF WINTER

of past bonfires mark one end of the plaza, and many small, squat statues line its perimeter.

This courtyard serves as a gathering place for the maftet clan, a market square, and a training ground for its warriors. The statues depict the torsos and heads of heroes and leaders of the maftet clan stretching back many generations. During the day, 2d6+2 maftets can usually be found here drilling and training at arms, while three other maftets watch over a group of 23 cubs—those old enough to leave the nursery but not to take part in the work of the clan. The cubs are noncombatants. At night, the plaza is usually empty.

## E5. Royal Palace (CR varies)

This large building is opulently decorated with geometric lines and angles painted in vibrant reds and brilliant greens on the plastered walls. Poles set into the roof support colorful awnings that allow the inhabitants to lounge in the shade and catch the ocean breezes.

This large structure is the palace of the maftet queen, Esmyra, and also houses her servants and the clan's warriors. While all of the adult maftets are trained to fight, only the warriors reside in the palace. They are exempted from the normal duties of the clan, spending their time instead patrolling and drilling in the plaza (area E4). The palace contains guard chambers near the southern and eastern entrances (area E5a), barracks for the warriors (area E5b), servants' quarters (area E5c), a dining area (area E5d), and a kitchen (area E5e). Queen Esmyra's private chambers (area E5f) occupy the entire northeast wing of the palace. To the southeast, an open-air veranda (area E5g) overlooks the plaza, with a throne for the queen where she can receive audiences.

**Creatures:** A pair of maftet warriors stands outside each of the palace's outer doors, and 12 more are always on guard duty inside the palace, six in each guardroom (area E5a). At any given time, 2d6+6 warriors are either asleep in their barracks (area E5b) or attending to personal matters elsewhere in the palace.

**MAFTETS (18+)** **CR 6**  
**XP 2,400 each**  
**hp 68 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 188)

**Treasure:** The maftets don't keep much in the way of coinage, but they do craft jewelry from gold and copper, and several examples of fine textiles, statuary, and pottery are on display within the palace, including a copper and gold mask (worth 900 gp) and a jeweled golden statue of an obscure maftet deity (worth 1,200 gp). The rest of

the palace's furnishings and decorations are worth an additional 7,500 gp in total if the entire palace is looted, though the maftets would obviously view such activities with great hostility.

Queen Esmyra's personal wealth, kept in her private chambers, consists of 300 pp, 300 gp, two black pearls worth 250 gp each, three sapphires worth 500 gp each, and a fine painting of Esmyra's mother, Queen Bassaba, worth 750 gp. In addition, the queen keeps 12 *potions of cure moderate wounds* and four *potions of lesser restoration* that she gladly shares with the PCs if they agree to help defend the island and the city (see Event 2).

## E6. Common Quarters

The remainder of the maftet clan resides in this sprawling set of chambers. Though not as splendid as the palace to the north, this large structure is nevertheless well constructed, with glittering walls and a terraced roof shaded by sturdy awnings. Personal property only extends to the maftets' personal clothing and equipment, so living, sleeping, eating, and common areas are spread throughout the building and shared in kind, usually along pride lines, though the clan's youngest cubs are raised communally in a nursery to the southwest. Although the maftets share decidedly close quarters, they are very social creatures, and much prefer the company of their kin's warm bodies to solitude. At any given time, 1d20+20 adult maftets are present in the building, with the rest out attending to the needs of the tribe. At night, this number rises to close to 100, most of whom are sleeping.

**Treasure:** While less fine than the trappings of the palace, the contents of these chambers would yield 3,500 gp worth of valuables to looters, though such actions would be met with just as much hostility.

## F. NORTH BEACH

This beach lies directly below the Golden City at the base of the 400-foot-high cliff. Other than piles of broken rubble that have fallen from the cliff over the centuries and large rocks and sea stacks rising from the surf, this beach is largely deserted save for the crabs that swarm upon it for food early in the morning. The maftets hunt these in the predawn darkness as a supplement to their diet. The seaweed and driftwood that washes up each day is likewise harvested for use by the maftets.

## G. SACRIFICIAL ROCK (CR 12)

Among the black rocks that protrude from the surf along the beach, an especially large one rises as a great stone shelf, relentlessly pounded by the waves. In the middle of the platform stands a rock pillar with a hollow at its base forming a sheltered spot amid the foam and spray. Rusted manacles

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

with thick chains, fashioned for something much larger than a human, hang from the back wall of this hollow. Two pillar-like statues of gray limestone flank this hollow, depicting four vaguely humanoid faces under a single stone cap or hat, their sides covered with weathered engravings. To the northeast, crudely formed, wave-worn stairs descend into the sea. Another pair of statues brackets either side of this stair, though ages of erosion have left them almost formless pillars.

This ancient sacrificial rock predates the maftets' habitation of the island, and is one of the few traces left behind by the same unknown mysterious race that built the Golden City on the cliff above. The maftets largely avoid the rock out of superstitious dread. The rock shelf rises 10 feet above the surf. The platform can be reached with flight, by wading or swimming out to the sea stairs with a successful DC 15 Swim check, or by scaling the shelf's landward side with a successful DC 30 Climb check.

**Creature:** A sea serpent still habitually patrols this area looking for the sacrifices that ended long ago. It attacks anyone who sets foot the rock shelf. If the PCs defeated the sea serpent on their way to the island, it is not encountered a second time.

## SEA SERPENT

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 187 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 244)

**Development:** Queen Esmyra is scheduled to sacrifice herself to the nuckelavees at this spot on the morning following the PCs' arrival. See Event 3 for details of this encounter. In this case, the sea serpent does not appear.

## H. SOUTH BEACH

This wide beach wraps around the southern tip of the island where the waves and currents are much gentler. The island gradually slopes upward from the beach to the north. In more peaceful times, the maftets frequently visit the picturesque strand for recreation and relaxation.

## I. WITCH'S GRAVE (CR 16 AND 16)

A gnarled old oak stands in the middle of the forest, slumped over a small depression in the earth, that upon closer inspection, seems to form the sunken outline of an old grave.

This tree stands near the center of the island and marks the location of the grave containing Baba Yaga's death. From a distance, the tree is indistinguishable from the rest of the trees in the forest, and is virtually impossible to find without guidance, such as from the maftets of the Golden City. If the PCs did not ally themselves with the maftets, Baba Yaga can guide them to the tree, though it has been many years since

she has been to the place, and her memory is not perfect. In this case, you might want to add some additional random encounters in the forest before Baba Yaga finally guides the PCs to the right location.

**Creature:** The tree is in fact a venerable quickwood left here by Baba Yaga to watch over the grave containing her death. Its unnatural appearance is not noticeable until the PCs approach within 30 feet of the tree, well within reach of the quickwood's roots. As soon as interlopers recognize it for what it is, the quickwood lashes out with its roots to try to pull unsuspecting creatures closer to bite. Bound here by Baba Yaga, the quickwood does not leave its position next to the grave, and fights to the death.

Once the PCs defeat the quickwood, they can dig up the old grave, revealing a large figure buried in the earth 8 feet down. The figure is almost 10 feet tall, wrapped in a burial cloth, and appears to be made of stuffed human skin stitched together with cloth, rags, leather, and human hair, its body pierced with large pins and needles. This is Baba Yaga's witch-doll, a golem that is the final guardian of her hidden death. Once unearthed, the witch-doll lunges out of the grave and attempts to establish its witch-doll link with the closest PC. The witch-doll fights until it is destroyed.

## VENERABLE QUICKWOOD

CR 16

XP 76,800

Advanced quickwood (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 228)

N Gargantuan plant

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, oaksight; Perception +29

**Aura** fear aura (variable distance, DC 27, 1 round)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 28, touch 6, flat-footed 28 (+22 natural, -4 size)

**hp** 252 (24d8+144)

**Fort** +20, **Ref** +8, **Will** +14

**Defensive Abilities** spell absorption; **Immune** electricity, fire, plant traits; **SR** 27

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 10 ft.

**Melee** bite +26 (2d8+12/19-20), 3 roots +24 (2d6+6 plus pull)

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (60 ft. with root)

**Special Attacks** pull (root, 10 ft.)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 35, **Dex** 10, **Con** 23, **Int** 12, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +18; **CMB** +34; **CMD** 44 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (root), Iron Will, Lunge, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Stealth), Stand Still

**Skills** Knowledge (local) +17, Knowledge (nature) +17, Perception +29, Stealth +21 (+25 in forests)

**Languages** Sylvan

# REIGN OF WINTER

## BABA YAGA'S WITCH-DOLL

CR 16

XP 76,800

Variant advanced witch-doll golem (*Tome of Horrors Complete* 343)

N Large construct

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

### DEFENSE

**AC** 29, touch 9, flat-footed 29 (+20 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 145 (21d10+30)

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7

**Defensive Abilities** target magic defense; **DR** 10/adamantine;

**Immune** construct traits, magic

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** needle +28/+23/+18/+13 (2d6+12/19-20) or 2 slams +28 (2d10+8)

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

**Special Attacks** find target, linked attack, target focus, witch-doll link

### STATISTICS

**Str** 26, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +21; **CMB** +30; **CMD** 40

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Find Target (Sp)** A witch-doll golem can unerringly find its linked target, as though guided by *discern location* (CL 15th).

**Immunity to Magic (Ex)** A witch-doll golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells function differently against the creature, as noted below.

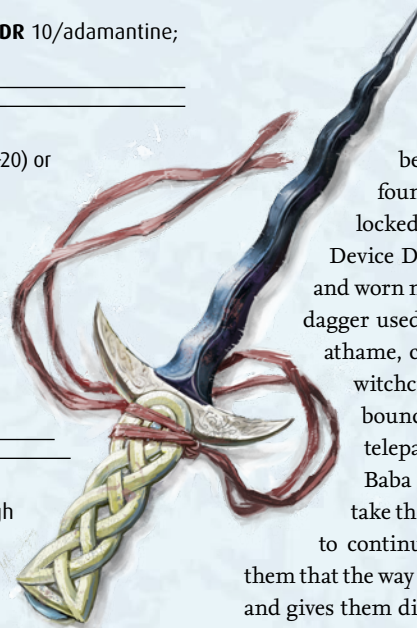
- A *confusion* spell slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw.
- A *mending* spell heals 2d6 hit points."

**Linked Attack (Su)** When a witch-doll golem successfully establishes a witch-doll link, any damage taken by the witch-doll golem from any source other than the linked target deals half its damage to the golem and half its damage to the linked target as long as the golem and the linked target are within 60 feet of each other. Only the linked target can successfully attack a witch-doll golem and not take "linked damage." Attacks that don't damage a witch-doll golem (because of its immunities or its damage reduction) likewise deal no damage to the linked target. Attacks that damage the linked target do not damage the witch-doll golem (the link it establishes is one way). Healing (or repair in the case of the witch-doll golem) is not passed through the link. A witch-doll golem cannot attack itself in order to damage its linked target.

**Target Focus (Su)** A witch-doll golem deals an extra 2d10 points of damage with its slam attacks against its linked target.

**Target Magic Defense (Ex)** A witch-doll golem gains a +8 bonus on all saving throws against any spell or spell-like ability or effect cast by its linked target (provided the effect gets past the golem's immunity to magic).

**Witch-Doll Link (Su)** With a successful melee attack, a witch-doll golem can establish an invisible link between itself and a chosen target. The target must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save to resist the link. A witch-doll link is broken if the witch-doll golem is destroyed or the linked target dies. A witch-doll golem can only have one witch-doll link at any given time. The save DC is Constitution-based and includes a +2 racial bonus.



BABA YAGA'S ATHAME

**Development:** After the witch-doll has been defeated, a small iron coffer can be found within the golem's chest. The coffer is locked (hardness 10, hp 30, break DC 28, Disable Device DC 30). Secured within the coffer is an old and worn masterwork cold iron athame, a ceremonial dagger used by witches. This is Baba Yaga's personal athame, crafted when she first began to delve into witchcraft, and it holds her death magically bound within it, as the matryoshka doll telepathically informs the PCs once it is found. Baba Yaga further tells the PCs that they must take the athame back to Grandmother's Cauldron to continue to release her from the doll. She tells them that the way to leave the island is through a hidden cave and gives them directions to a cave on the island's southern beach (area J), though she does warn them that she left a guardian in place, if she remembers correctly, and that they may need to gather their strength before they

face it. Baba Yaga has no further information for the PCs and she doesn't respond to further queries, the effort to speak to the PCs this much having exhausted her.

## J. HIDDEN CAVE

The PCs can only locate this small cave by if Baba Yaga guides them to it (see Development, above).

A cliff of broken slate slabs rises from the sands of the southern beach, crawling with many varieties of ivy and numerous ferns. Hidden at the base of the cliff, barely visible in the shadows, is a narrow cave opening leading into the cliff itself.

The tunnels beneath the cliff are a part of a natural fissure in the rock that ranges in height from 7 to 15 feet. Medium creatures must squeeze to navigate these narrow passages, and larger creatures must succeed at DC 30 Escape Artist checks or use some form of magic to fit inside. A constant dripping of water seeping from the cliff above slicks the walls and floors of the tunnels.

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## J1. Dead End (CR 14)

The tunnel dead-ends here in a large formation of beautiful, faceted crystals.

**Creatures:** An advanced carnivorous crystal lurks among the crystalline formations at the end of the passage, and it attacks as soon as a living creature comes within reach. In addition, a second carnivorous crystal clings to the ceiling 15 feet above. It quickly crawls along the ceiling to drop down behind the PCs, trapping them between the two oozes.

### ADVANCED CARNIVOROUS CRYSTALS (2) CR 12

**XP 19,200 each**

**hp** 168 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 45, 290)

**Treasure:** The crystals growing at the end of the tunnel are valuable; if carefully removed, they are worth a total of 5,000 gp.

## J2. Witch's Mask

A wooden mask carved from tree bark hangs suspended from a rocky outcrop where the tunnel makes a sharp turn. Dry and cracked from age, with dried strands of moss dangling from the top like stringy hair, the mask displays a crude and somehow sinister woman's visage.

With a successful DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check, a PC can recognize the mask as a type used in some witchcraft rituals. Baba Yaga left the mask here long ago to mark this cave as her own and deter intruders. She does not respond to queries about it, preferring to let her secrets remain her own. The mask appears to be completely mundane and nonmagical, but if anyone dons the mask, for a fleeting moment she feels as if the mask is her true face and her real face just a mask, but this unexplainable feeling passes after a moment and leaves no ill effects. The mask has no other effects or value.

## J3. Guardian's Cave (CR 17)

A large cavern suddenly opens beneath the cliff. The ceiling is lost in darkness, though the tips of stalactites can be seen descending from the gloom, several of them ending in jagged stumps and displaying large gouges from great teeth or claws. Stalagmites once lined the floor, but most have likewise been sheared off and reduced to little more than rubble. A dark pool lies at the rear of the cavern, and a small stream runs across the floor from the pool to empty into a deep sinkhole near the south wall. White shards of broken bones litter the cave floor among the rubble and debris.

The ceiling of this cavern is more than 50 feet above. The stream is only a few inches deep but is considered difficult terrain. The sinkhole is 120 feet deep and drains away into an underground river at the bottom, which is littered with broken bones. See Development below for a description of the pool.

**Creature:** Long ago, Baba Yaga left a guardian in this cave to prevent anyone from using the pool to reach Grandmother's Cauldron. This guardian is a khala, a serpentine dragon with three heads and a whiplike tail. Over the years, the creature has grown too large to leave the cave and has remained here ever since, a true terror to anyone who dares enter Baba Yaga's cave. Despite the *ring of sustenance* that it wears to keep from starving, the three-headed monstrosity is still desperate for the taste of fresh blood and warm flesh between its teeth and immediately attacks with its breath weapons followed by its bites. The khala fights until killed.

### KHALA CR 17

**XP 102,400**

*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Irrisen, Land of Eternal Winter* 59

CE Large dragon (cold)

**Init** +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +30

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 31, touch 15, flat-footed 25 (+6 Dex, +16 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 261 (18d12+144)

**Fort** +19, **Ref** +17, **Will** +16

**Immune** cold, disease, magic paralysis and sleep; **Resist** acid 10, electricity 10

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 90 ft. (good)

**Melee** 3 bites +26 (2d10+9/19-20 plus disease), tail +26 (2d8+9 plus grab)

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

**Special Attacks** breath weapon (60-ft. line, 16d6 cold damage plus encased in ice, Reflex DC 27 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), constrict (2d6+8), rend (2 bites, 2d10+13)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th; concentration +23)

3/day—empowered *ice storm*, *fire shield* (chill shield only), *incendiary cloud* (DC 25, deals cold damage), *suggestion* (DC 19)

1/day—*control weather*, *polar ray*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 28, **Dex** 22, **Con** 27, **Int** 22, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +18; **CMB** +28 (+32 grapple); **CMD** 38 (can't be tripped)

**Feats** Alertness, Critical Focus, Empower Spell-Like Ability (*ice storm*), Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Staggering Critical, Stunning Critical

**Skills** Appraise +27, Bluff +28, Diplomacy +28, Fly +29, Intimidate +28, Knowledge (geography) +27, Knowledge (local) +27, Knowledge (nature) +27, Perception +30, Sense Motive +30, Stealth +23, Survival +26



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**Languages** Abyssal, Draconic, Giant, Hallit, Russian, Skald

**SQ** tenacious grapple

**Gear** ring of sustenance

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## SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Breath Weapon (Su)** Every 1d4 rounds, the khala can fire a jet of frigid liquid up to 60 feet in a straight line from one of its three mouths, dealing 16d6 points of cold damage to the target (Reflex DC 27 for half). Even if this save is successful, the target must succeed at a DC 27 Fortitude save or be encased in ice. A trapped creature must succeed at a DC 25 Strength check or a DC 26 Escape Artist check to break free. Attempting to break free of the ice is a full-round action.

**Disease (Su)** *Chillbane Fever*: bite—injury; save Fort DC 27; onset 1 day; frequency 1/day; effect 1d4 Con damage and target is sickened and fatigued; cure 2 consecutive saves.

**Tenacious Grapple (Ex)** A khala does not gain the grappled condition if it grapples a foe with its tail.

**Development:** Once the PCs have slain the khala, Baba Yaga telepathically contacts them again, instructing them to stab the athame containing her death (see area **I**) into the body of the guardian beast, which causes the athame's cold iron blade to turn to solid gold.

The way back to Grandmother's Cauldron is through the pool in the rear of the cavern, as Baba Yaga now advises the PCs. Although the water in the pool is dark, cold, and filthy with the detritus of the khala that has lived here for many centuries, it functions identically to the pool in area **A5**. A creature who completely submerges itself in the water is instantly transported back to Grandmother's Cauldron, emerging from the pool in area **A5**. From there, the PCs can return to the sacred pool in the grotto (area **A3**) with the gold athame containing Baba Yaga's death.

## BACK TO GRANDMOTHER'S CAULDRON

When the PCs have recovered the athame containing Baba Yaga's death and turned it to gold by stabbing the khala, they can return to Grandmother's Cauldron via the pool in area **J3**. Upon returning to area **A3**, Baba Yaga telepathically instructs the PCs to embed the golden athame in the matryoshka doll and soak it in the pool. The athame sinks easily into the doll, though it cannot be used to cut open the doll. If the PCs follow Baba Yaga's instructions, the doll splits open once again (this time along the crack made by the athame), revealing yet another smaller doll inside, just as impervious as the previous ones. Baba Yaga can now speak with the PCs through the doll, though her voice comes through only in a halting, childlike manner. In addition, Baba Yaga grants a third boon to the PCs. Each PC receives the benefit of a *breath of life* spell (CL 20th) the next time he takes enough hit point damage to otherwise kill him. This benefit only works once per PC.

When the PCs open the third layer of the doll, Vigliv appears once again from the bole of the tree at area **A2**. This appearance is described at the beginning of Part Four.

**Treasure:** Once the third layer of the matryoshka doll is removed, the athame's gold blade becomes cold iron, but the athame is now a +3 *cold iron heartseeker dagger* (*Ultimate Equipment* 143). With Baba Yaga's death returned to her, she has no more use for the athame, so the PCs can keep the dagger for themselves.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 76,800 XP for opening the matryoshka doll's third layer.

## PART FOUR: THE COTTAGE IN THE DARK FOREST

Once the PCs have used the gold athame to open the third layer of Baba Yaga's matryoshka doll prison, Vigliv reappears to address the PCs again.

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"The death of Baba Yaga is no small thing, and you have succeeded in finding it where none have before. Now that you have secured her death, however, you must also locate and obtain her life. Although Baba Yaga hid her mortality away so death could not find her, to be more than a walking corpse, she must still have life. To this end, she ensured that a wellspring of life would flow in an ever-renewing fountain for her purposes. Guarding and protecting this source of life she tasked to her daughters, the Queens of Irrisen. After one hundred years of rule, these queens rejoin Baba Yaga and take up the responsibility of ensuring that her wellspring of life never runs dry. Now you must face the queens of old to reclaim Baba Yaga's life and escape with your own as well."

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Vigliv again retreats back into her tree, but Baba Yaga speaks to the PCs for the first time. Due to the strain of verbal communication from within her prison, she is able to convey only simple ideas and emotions, sounding much like a petulant child. "It's mine and I want it! Get it back from them—they can't have it! I'll tell you if you're getting close. Go now!" Baba Yaga then begins giving simple directions to the PCs to guide them to area **A6**.

## THE COTTAGE IN THE DARK FOREST

The gullet of the frost worm in area **A7** transports anyone swallowed by the worm to another demiplane inside the *Dancing Hut*, this time a dark forest containing a quaint wooden cottage. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive.

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The virgin trees of an old growth forest tower high into the air, their dense canopy almost completely blocking the sunlight from reaching the forest floor. Very little undergrowth grows in the gloom of the forest floor, just a carpet of old leaves, black with mold, and pine needles dried to a white brittleness. The tree

## THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE



trunks are a dozen feet in diameter or more but have plenty of room between them, making the forest a spacious, if dimly lit, place. A soft, crisp breeze blows through the air.

A faint trail, just visible through the carpet of leaves, wends between the trees until it reaches a quaint cottage set back between the trees. The cottage is neatly built of timber with a thatched roof that is in good repair. No light shines from the cottage's windows, but a small plume of smoke rises from the hut's stout stone chimney, giving off the scent of wood smoke and the pleasant aroma of baking.

As with the other demiplanes inside the *Dancing Hut*, the forest is not infinite but wandering in any direction eventually leads the PCs back to the doorstep of the cottage. Regardless of how high one climbs or flies, however, the treetops cannot be reached, and the forest floor remains 100 feet below. The forest is always lit by the waning golden rays of evening filtering down through the canopy, regardless of how much time actually passes. Although the occasional cries of birds and the sounds of small, scurrying animals can be heard in the forest, none are ever actually visible.

Baba Yaga's *Dancing Hut* is nearly limitless in scope and size, but sometimes the Old Crone craves a place that is

a bit more quaint and comfortable in which to relax and bide her time. To this end, she constructed this forest demiplane to house a replica of a cottage she once occupied in the forests of Russia centuries ago, and from which countless tales of her were inspired. Beneath the hut, in secret frozen caverns, Baba Yaga hid the source of her long life—the undead remains of her most powerful daughters, the past queens of Irrisen.

**Creature:** The cottage is haunted by a dybbuk, the undead spirit of a woman named Yarova lost in Baba Yaga's woods long ago who ultimately took her own life in despair. Although Yarova frequently inhabits one of the caverns beneath the cottage (area L5), the dybbuk occasionally possesses various objects in the cottage to toy with visitors, including the PCs. See the individual encounter locations for details of Yarova's activities.

### K1. FRONT PORCH

A short stair next to a woodpile climbs up to a veranda surrounding the front and one side of the cottage, its railing and roof decorated with intricate gingerbread woodwork, as are the shutters on either side of the cottage's windows. The windows themselves are composed of rows of triangular panes

# REIGN OF WINTER

of thick, opaque glass set into lead frames. Two comfortable-looking wooden rocking chairs sit on either side of the cottage's front door, which is itself a triumph of woodwork, complete with scrollwork along its arched top and carved images of birds and small animals happily playing.

The porch is as mundane and charming as it seems. The PCs cannot see the interior of the cottage through the windows, but the glass is easily broken. If the PCs break the windows or otherwise damage the house, however, Baba Yaga shrilly screeches at them to "stop breaking my things!" She then pouts and refuses to speak to the PCs anymore except in regard to the broom (see **Treasure**, below) and the entrance to her caverns in area **K5**.

Anyone who succeeds at a DC 17 Perception check notices the remnants of a line of old breadcrumbs that trails up the steps and around the porch up to the front door. Many of the crumbs have been picked at and removed by birds and other animals, but enough remain for an observant PC to take notice.

**Treasure:** An old straw broom called a besom leans against the railing in the corner of the porch to the left of the front door. Topped with a small skull with long white hair, the old broom is actually *Baba Yaga's Besom* (see page 62). Baba Yaga's voice identifies it as such, and instructs the PCs to take it, telling them, "It's important, very important."

## K2. FRONT ROOM (CR 14)

This room is a child's wonderland. A skilled woodcarver has been hard at work carving and painting all manner of wooden toys, ranging from small animal figurines to life-sized mannequins with articulated limbs painted to resemble beautiful princesses, armored soldiers, and regal kings wearing crowns of gilded foil. The smaller pieces clutter tables, shelves, and even the floor. A small fireplace, its ashes cold, occupies one corner, while next to it stands a comfortably padded chair. A small table holds an assortment of small carving knives and a half-finished wooden figurine. Wood shavings cover the floor in drifts and piles.

Baba Yaga is an accomplished woodcarver and has put the skill to good use over her lifetime to lure hapless individuals into her clutches.

**Creatures:** When the PCs first enter this room, the dybbuk Yarova who inhabits the cottage (see area **L5**) passes unseen through the floor to possess some of the carvings and figures, causing them to surreptitiously move when the PCs are not looking. The PCs might hear a click of wood, only to turn to find one of the figures facing a different direction, or catch one of the mannequins seemingly winking at them. Allow the PCs to attempt

Perception checks opposed by Yarova's Stealth check to notice the dybbuk moving from figure to figure, but Yarova does not confront the PCs here.

Six of the mannequins in this room are actually advanced wood golems. These living mannequins remain inert unless disturbed or activated by fighting in area **K3** (see **Development**, below).

### LIVING MANNEQUINS (6)

**CR 9**

#### XP 6,400 each

Advanced wood golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 164)

N Medium construct

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +3

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19 (+4 Dex, +9 natural)

**hp** 113 each (17d10+20)

**Fort** +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +8

**DR** 5/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** 2 slams +23 (2d8+6)

**Special Attacks** splintering (DC 18)

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 22, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +17; **CMB** +23 (+25 grapple); **CMD** 37 (39 vs. grapple)

**Feats** Improved Grapple<sup>b</sup>

**Treasure:** The carved figures are quite skillfully rendered, and anyone willing to pack and haul approximately 500 pounds of the carvings could sell them for a total of 1,500 gp. In addition, the carving knives constitute a set of masterwork artisan's tools for woodcarving.

**Development:** When the dybbuk possesses the furnace golem in area **K3**, the living mannequins here likewise activate and join the battle in that room.

## K3. KITCHEN (CR 14 OR 16)

A great cast-iron stove in one corner keeps this room is pleasantly warm, its stove pipe extending upward through the ceiling. A plate of cookies sits atop the stove's cooling shelf, filling the room with a delicious aroma. A small paper placard stands next to the plate. A table with two tall stools stands next to a door to the south, and another door exits to the east. In the far corner of the room, a child-sized wooden cage hangs by a hook from the rafters. The cage is empty, its door hanging open.

The small placard next to the plate of cookies is scribed in Common and reads, "Welcome to Granny's kitchen. Thank you for coming for dinner. Please come in, have a cookie, and make yourselves at home." Each of the cookies

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

on the stove has a bite taken out of it. The cookies are made from molasses and raisins and are fairly fresh, are nothing more than tasty treats. If the doll is consulted, Baba Yaga says nothing. The cage in the corner is stout and can hold a Small creature. In the bottom of it is a single child-sized boot, a wax candle with a bite mark in it, and a small, thick stick of wood—the only remains of the last of Baba Yaga's victims brought here.

**Creature:** As soon as the placard has been read, the dybbuk Yarova (see area L5) passes up through the floor and possesses the cast-iron stove. Baba Yaga created the stove specifically for the dybbuk to possess and control as a furnace golem. When Yarova possesses the stove, it unfolds itself into a vaguely humanoid shape whose stovepipe head brushes the 15-foot-high ceiling, the banked fire in its belly immediately roaring to life.

When the furnace golem activates, any living mannequins remaining in area K2 likewise activate and enter the room to attack, attempting to overpower intruders and toss them into the golem's furnace. The living mannequins do so recklessly, even exposing themselves to additional damage. Both the furnace golem and the living mannequins fight until destroyed.

## FURNACE GOLEM

CR 14

XP 38,400

*Tome of Horrors Complete* 333

N Huge construct

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

### DEFENSE

**AC** 29, touch 7, flat-footed 29 (-1 Dex, +22 natural, -2 size)**hp** 144 (19d10+40)**Fort** +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6**DR** 15/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, fire, magic;**Resist** cold 20

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +28 (4d6+11 plus 2d6 fire and grab)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** breath weapon (50-ft. line, 10d6 fire damage, Reflex DC 19 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), furnace interior, grab (Medium or smaller), heat (2d6 fire)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 32, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1**Base Atk** +19; **CMB** +32 (+36 grapple); **CMD** 41 (43 vs. trip)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Furnace Interior (Ex)** A furnace golem can try to shove a grabbed opponent up to two sizes smaller than itself into its interior by making a successful grapple check. An opponent thrown into the furnace golem's interior is trapped as a metal grating closes over the opening in the same round. A trapped creature automatically takes 2d6 points of fire damage each round. Escaping the creature's

interior requires a successful DC 30 Strength check to bend the bars. Alternatively, a trapped creature can escape by dealing at least 25 points of damage to the bars (AC 22; the golem's damage reduction applies to attacks against the bars as well). A Huge furnace golem's interior can hold two Medium, eight Small, or 16 Tiny or smaller creatures.

**Immunity to Magic (Ex)** A furnace golem is immune to spells or spell-like abilities that allow spell resistance. Certain spells and effects function differently against it, as noted below.

- A magical attack that bypasses a furnace golem's cold resistance slows it (as the *slow* spell) for 3 rounds, with no saving throw.



FURNACE GOLEM

# REIGN OF WINTER

- A magical attack that deals fire damage breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for each 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points.

**Treasure:** The interior of the oven contains the charred remnants of a few child-sized bones as well as a singed but still intact sapphire ring worth 2,000 gp. An *apple of eternal sleep* (*Ultimate Equipment* 281) sits in a nearby cupboard.

**Development:** When the furnace golem is destroyed, the PCs can catch a brief glimpse of Yarova as the dybbuk leaps laughing from the broken stove to disappear through the eastern wall.

## K4. BEDROOM (CR 15)

Gauzy lace curtains hang over the window in this quaint, cozy bedroom. A thick pile of rustic quilts lies folded at the foot of a four-poster bed, atop which sits a tin foot warmer. A wooden rocking chair sits between the windows beside a small table holding a porcelain bowl and pitcher.

This comfortable chamber is just as it appears, a cozy bedroom. The items inside are of sturdy craftsmanship but are not particularly valuable.

**Creature:** A jotund troll named Gaj, the “Gentleman Jotund,” currently inhabits this room, hunched over beneath the room’s 15-foot-high ceiling. He wears a matching vest and ushanka of wolf fur, concealing eight of his nine heads beneath his vest. Gaj is an ally of Baba Yaga, but the dybbuk Yarova (see area L5) has used her malevolence ability to possess the troll. Yarova cannot use Gaj’s extraordinary or supernatural abilities, but she retains her own mental abilities, spell resistance, spell-like abilities, skills, and feats. She uses Gaj’s body to attack the PCs, attempting to swallow one of them whole while focusing the rest of her attacks on other opponents, one PC at a time.

If the PCs have already defeated Yarova, Gaj greets them here and politely asks them to leave “Grandmother’s cottage.” If the PCs show him the matryoshka doll containing Baba Yaga, or otherwise convince him they are here on Baba Yaga’s business, the giant troll doffs his hat and steps aside, allowing them access to the bedroom’s closet (area K5).

### GAJ, THE GENTLEMAN JOTUND CR 15 XP 51,200

Male dybbuk-possessed jotund troll (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 272)

NE Huge humanoid (giant)

**Init** +3; **Senses** all-around vision, low-light vision, scent; Perception +29

#### DEFENSE

**AC** 30, touch 7, flat-footed 30 (–1 Dex, +23 natural, –2 size)

**hp** 216 (16d8+144); regeneration 10 (acid or fire)

**Fort** +15, **Ref** +5, **Will** +17

**SR** 26

#### OFFENSE

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Melee** club +21/+16/+11 (2d6+10), bite +16 (2d6+5 plus grab), claw +16 (1d8+5 plus grab)

**Ranged** rock +11 (2d8+15)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

**Special Attacks** fast swallow, malevolence (DC 26), possess object, rock throwing (120 ft.), swallow whole (4d6+15 bludgeoning damage, AC 21, 21 hp)

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 18th; concentration +25)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 19), *telekinesis* (DC 22)

3/day—*dominate monster* (DC 26), *feeblemind* (DC 22), *inflict serious wounds* (DC 20)

1/day—*greater heroism*, *modify memory* (DC 21), *tongues*

#### STATISTICS

**Str** 31, **Dex** 8, **Con** 29, **Int** 15, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 25

**Base Atk** +13; **CMB** +25 (+29 grapple); **CMD** 34

**Feats** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Flyby Attack,

Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lunge, Step Up, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Bluff +25, Diplomacy +25, Intimidate +28, Perception +29, Sense Motive +29, Stealth +12

**Languages** Abyssal, Celestial, Russian

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Malevolence (Su)** The dybbuk retains its malevolence and possess object abilities while possessing Gaj (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 108).

**Development:** If the possessed troll is slain, Yarova leaps from the body and disappears through the door to area K5, avoiding combat if possible, and retreats to her lair (area L5). If the PCs drive Yarova from Gaj’s body, she flees the room as described above. Gaj is momentarily disoriented, but unless the PCs dissuade him otherwise, he assumes the PCs attacked him, and renews his attacks. Use the standard jotund troll stat block on page 272 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 for Gaj when he is not possessed.

**Story Award:** If the PCs manage to get past Gaj without fighting him, award them 51,200 XP, as if they had defeated him in combat.

## K5. CLOSET

This nondescript closet is lined with cedar panels, and various cloaks, dresses, and robes hang from hooks along the walls.

The floor of the closet is a magical portal that only opens with *Baba Yaga’s besom* (see page 62). When the

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

PCs first enter this area, the matryoshka doll giggles and says, "Hidey, hidey hole. Can't get in unless you knock, knock, knock with the witch's stick." If the PCs have not yet recovered *Baba Yaga's besom* from area **K1**, Baba Yaga tells them, "You have to find it! I left it in the hut somewhere!"

If *Baba Yaga's besom* is knocked against the back wall of the closet three times, the floor disappears, dumping everyone inside the closet down a 300-foot-deep shaft. However, anyone in the shaft is affected by *feather fall* and drifts safely down to area **L1** in the caverns below the cottage. The floor reappears 1 minute after the shaft opens. Breaking through the floor itself (hardness 5, hp 60, break DC 20) also reveals the shaft beneath the floor.

**Treasure:** A *shawl of the crone* (*Ultimate Equipment* 268) hangs from a hook on the wall among the other mundane pieces of clothing.

## L1. CAVERN ENTRY

A thin rime of ice coats the walls of this cold natural cavern. A heavy woolen curtain hangs over an opening to the north.

The shaft in the closet in the cottage above (area **K5**) deposits creatures in this chamber. One minute after the shaft opens, it disappears, leaving only a solid ceiling of stone 20 feet above. The cavern ceilings maintain this height throughout the rest of the complex unless otherwise noted. If questioned, Baba Yaga states, "Watch out. The cold queens live ahead. Though maybe 'live' isn't the best word for it. But they're very, very angry." After a few moments, the matryoshka doll makes a sniffing noise and she adds, "You're not the first. I smell the blood of my grandchildren ahead."

## L2. ICE CAVERN (CR 16)

A thick layer of smooth ice coats the walls, floor, and ceiling of this cavern, creating a translucent shell that looks like a scene out of a fantasyland. Icicles dangle from the ceiling, creating a maze of hanging natural sculptures high above. Some appear to have fallen as clumps of broken ice blocks scattered across the floor.

The floor of this chamber is slippery ice and requires a successful DC 10 Acrobatics check to walk across at half speed. Fighting or trying to move faster requires a successful DC 20 Acrobatics check to avoid slipping and falling prone. A character who makes a double move on the ice and succeeds at his Acrobatics check gains 10 feet of movement per round in a straight line due to sliding, but slides an additional 20 feet after attempting to stop unless able to brake herself.

The broken ice blocks are actually the shattered remnants of ice elementals, which can be identified with a successful DC 21 Knowledge (planes) check. If the remnants are examined, it is apparent that the elementals were destroyed in combat. In fact, they were killed by Winter Guards sent here by Queen Elvanna (see area **L3**) as they passed through this chamber, though left no other traces behind.

**Creatures:** Six elder ice elementals remain in this cavern. These creatures encountered the Irriseni party earlier and took a beating for not coordinating their attacks. Now the survivors wait beneath the icy floor until all of the PCs are within the cavern before using their ice glide ability to burrow up and surround the PCs, attacking them from all sides. The elementals pursue PCs any fleeing combatants and attempt to force them off the ledge into area **L4**.

### ELDER ICE ELEMENTALS (6)

**CR 11**
**XP 12,800 each**
**hp 152 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 115)

## L3. STAGING AREA

When Queen Elvanna seized the *Dancing Hut* following Baba Yaga's capture, she learned of the existence of these caverns and their function as the secret repository of Baba Yaga's life force. In addition to posting the ice devil guards in area **A6**, Elvanna also sent a group of her Winter Guard into the caverns to find Baba Yaga's life and claim it for Elvanna. Using her secret "back door" to the inner sanctum (see area **M7**), Elvanna brought the group from Whitethrone and transported them directly to this chamber. The group arrived only a few hours before the PCs, but its members have already fallen afoul of the denizens of the caves and are all now dead.

The Winter Guard used this chamber as a staging area for their exploration of the caverns. Various items of equipment and supplies are stacked neatly on the floor as if someone expected to be returning here soon. Searching the gear reveals the group apparently consists of five individuals, at least one of whom is likely Large. The equipment is mundane adventuring gear consisting of ropes, packs, food and water, and other assorted items that could come in handy but were left behind until they were needed. A successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) check is enough to recognize some of the equipment is Irriseni in origin.

**Treasure:** Among the items left behind are an ale jack carved from ivory (worth 125 gp) and a saltcellar composed entirely of magical ice (worth 500 gp). The saltcellar has a faint conjuration aura, and is identifiable as likely having come from the Royal Palace of Whitethrone with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (nobility) check. A character who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check can

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surmise that the saltcellar was probably used as a sort of magical key to bring its bearer to this dungeon without traveling through other areas of the *Dancing Hut*, though it no longer possesses the ability to do so.

## L4. SMOKY CAVERN (CR 16)

An icy ledge overlooks a rocky cavern filled with foul-smelling smoke. Barely visible through the haze, a jumble of broken stone and debris covers the floor.

This chamber is huge, with a 100-foot high ceiling. The ledge from area **L3** lies 60 feet above the floor, which is considered difficult terrain due the treacherous rubble underfoot. The smoke obscures all sight beyond 5 feet and provides concealment to all creatures in the room. In addition, creatures who breathe the smoke must attempt a Fortitude save each round (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or spend that round coughing and choking (this does not affect any other actions). A character who chokes for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. The smoke is the result of an *eversmoking bottle* (see *Treasure* below); although the smoke can be dispersed with wind, it does not dissipate unless the bottle is commanded to reseal.

To the southeast, two ledges 70 feet above the floor lead to area **L5**. In the southwest corner is a large sinkhole. A piton has been driven into the stone at the edge of the sinkhole, supporting a series ropes knotted together that descend 150 feet down the sinkhole to the floor of area **L6**. The rough walls of the chamber require successful DC 15 Climb checks to scale, but using the ropes to climb down the sinkhole requires only successful DC 5 Climb checks.

**Creatures:** A bizarre extraterrestrial plasma ooze, long ago captured by Baba Yaga, lurks beneath the smoke in this chamber, slowly digesting the remains of one of the Winter Guard warriors, Farlof, sent here by Elvanna. As soon as the ooze detects more intruders with its blindsight ability, it activates its magnetic pulse ability and fires plasma rays at opponents. With its blindsight and no breath ability, the plasma ooze is completely unaffected by the smoke. The plasma ooze pursues intruders throughout the cavern, but electromagnetic fields put in place by Baba Yaga keep it from leaving the chamber, either via the ledges or the sinkhole.

### PLASMA OOZE

**CR 16**
**XP 76,800**
**hp** 241 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 220)

**Treasure:** Farlof's metal gear lies on the floor of the cavern, where it was attracted by the plasma ooze's magnetic pulse. It consists of a suit of +1 *dwarven plate*, a

+1 *light steel shield*, a +2 *greatsword*, and a *ring of counterspells* (*baleful polymorph*). Farlof's companions used the smoke produced by an *eversmoking bottle* to cover their retreat from the plasma ooze. The bottle lies near the eastern wall, directly across from the ledge to area **L2**, and can be found with a successful DC 25 Perception check. In addition, one of the ropes leading down into the sinkhole is a *rope of climbing*.

**Development:** Although the corpse of the Winter Guardsman Farlof can be found in the cavern, what little remains undigested is not enough to be subject to *speak with dead* spells and the like.

## L5. USED PUPPETS (CR 15)

Dried and desiccated corpses are stacked against the walls of this chamber like so much cordwood. Seated cross-legged in the center of the chamber is an armored warrior wearing a felt-lined helmet. An axe lies on the floor at his feet, and his hand clutches a bloody dagger as he stares sightlessly straight ahead. The front of his armor is covered in blood, which has pooled in his lap into a tacky, partially coagulated puddle.

The dead warrior was another member of Elvanna's Winter Guard expedition. After the majority of his party fell victim to the linnorms in area **L6**, this warrior, named Angwalf, fled back up the sinkhole and took refuge here from the plasma ooze in area **L4**, only to run afoul of the dybbuk Yarova. The dybbuk took possession of Angwalf's body and forced him to cut his own throat, after which he sat here and bled to death. The other bodies in the cabin are all victims of the dybbuk over the long years.

**Creature:** The dybbuk Yarova makes her lair in this chamber. She is currently hiding among the corpses stacked against the wall. If the PCs examine Angwalf's corpse, Yarova leaps forth, a mad-eyed spectre with blood-red hands, and attempts to possess a likely warrior with her malevolence ability, using the stolen body to battle the other PCs.

### YAROVA

**CR 15**
**XP 51,200**

 Female dybbuk (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 108)

**hp** 207

### TACTICS

**During Combat** Yarova uses her possessed foe's body to fight her other opponents, combined with her own spell-like abilities, dominating others to become her allies and targeting spellcasters with *feeblemind*. If the plasma ooze in area **L4** is still alive, she uses *telekinesis* to push enemies off the ledges into that room if given the opportunity.

**Morale** Here in her lair, Yarova fights until destroyed, even if expelled from her chosen victim.

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**Treasure:** Angwalf's corpse still wears his bloodstained +1 cold resistance banded mail and carries a pouch holding a *potion of bear's endurance*, a *potion of remove blindness/deafness*, a ruby worth 500 gp, and 35 gp. His +2 *greataxe* lies on the ground before him.

**Development:** If the PCs use *speak with dead* to communicate the corpse of the warrior, he is surly and uncooperative (his Will save to resist the spell is +6). If he fails his save, he reveals that his name was Angwalf, and that he and his companions, the warriors Farlof and Lutra, the winter witch Vjerica, and the ice troll Thjalfarr were members of Queen Elvanna's Winter Guard, sent here by Elvanna to recover the life of Baba Yaga. None of the Winter Guards knew exactly what they were looking for, but they were told it could be found in these caverns and they had orders to secure it against any other intruders. Angwalf can relate that Farlof was killed by the plasma ooze in area L4. Angwalf fled when he saw Lutra and Thjalfarr slain by the linnorms in area L6. He does not know what happened to Vjerica.

## L6. SANDY CRAGS (CR 16)

Small burning gas vents provide dim light in this vast chamber, and the air is noticeably warmer. The walls are broken and crumbling, rising in a series of crags around the edges of the chamber, some nearly climbing to the ceiling. The floor is covered in fine black sand interspersed with chunks of brittle stone. Near the bottom of the rope lies the charred and still smoldering carcass of some large humanoid-shaped creature. Another corpse, this one less badly burned, lies wedged among the rocks at the base of a nearby crag. Far to the north is a pair of tall bronze doors. One of them stands ajar.

The sinkhole in area L4 descends 70 feet before opening up into the 80-foot-high ceiling of this chamber. The rope in the sinkhole descends the full 150 feet to the floor. Each contour line depicted on the map on page 39 indicates an additional 20 feet of height above the chamber floor (these are cumulative). A successful DC 15 Climb check is required to move among the crags. The bodies are more members of Elvanna's Winter Guard who were slain by the inhabitants of this cavern. The large burned corpse is the ice troll Thjalfarr; the smaller corpse is the human warrior Lutra.

**Creatures:** Two crag linnorms inhabit this chamber. They nest upon high crags and keep watch over the sinkhole entrance. The fire giants at area L8 bring the linnorms food once a month, but otherwise the dragons sleep here and keep their vigil. Both linnorms are currently awake due to the battle that occurred a few hours ago, and they know one intruder escaped back up the sinkhole, so they keep a close watch on the dangling rope. The linnorms fight to the death but do not leave this chamber.

## CRAG LINNORMS (2)

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

hp 202 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 190)

**Treasure:** The ice troll Thjalfarr's possessions were all immolated with him. Lutra, however, was dropped from a great height and her possessions, a +2 *mithral shirt* and a *rod of thunder and lightning*, were spared. The rest of the linnorms' hoard lies atop the highest crag in the southwest corner of the room. This pile consists of *druid's vestments*, *gloves of arcane striking* (*Ultimate Equipment* 236), a *horn of antagonism* (*Ultimate Equipment* 302), a *potion of protection from cold*, a *potion of slipstream* (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced*



YAROVA



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*Player's Guide*), a golden brooch engraved with the coat-of-arms of Irrisen (worth 80 gp), an amethyst necklace (worth 1,100 gp), three large topazes (worth 200 gp each), 120 pp, 3,800 gp, 5,250 sp, and 10,040 cp.

**Development:** Although badly crushed and mangled, Lutra's corpse is in good enough shape that *speak with dead* can be used to communicate with her. The ice troll's body is too badly burned. If questioned, Lutra can provide much the same the same information as Angwalf in area L5. She did not see Angwalf flee, but she did notice the winter witch Vjerica slipping through the bronze doors to the north before her life left her.

## L7. HELL HOUND KENNELS (CR 15)

The fire giants in area L8 use this cavern as a kennel for their Nessian warhound pets.

**Creatures:** Six advanced Nessian warhounds inhabit this cavern. They spend most of their time sleeping or roughly "playing" with each other or the fire giants in area L8, and eagerly attack anyone entering their cavern who is not a fire giant.

### ADVANCED NESSIAN WARHOUNDS (6) CR 10

**XP 9,600 each**

**hp** 150 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 173, 294)

**Development:** The warhounds begin baying if they spot intruders, alerting the giants in area L8, who prepare for the intruders' arrival.

## L8. MAGMA RIFT (CR 17)

The corridor widens into a large cavern before ending precipitously at the edge of a chasm filled with slow-moving magma. Across the rift, the passage continues beyond a landing where two columns of stout, black rock buttress a low wall between them.

This cavern is uncomfortably hot, though not dangerously so. The chasm is 50 feet deep and just over 30 feet wide. A fall into the magma below deals 5d6 points of falling damage plus 20d6 points of fire damage for each round a creature remains immersed in the magma. A creature falling into the magma continues to take 10d6 points of fire damage each round for 1d3 rounds after exposure ceases.



FIENDISH FIRE GIANT

**Creatures:** A platoon of eight fiendish fire giants is stationed on the landing on the western side of the rift to guard the approach to the hall of thrones. They superstitiously avoid the devils in the next room, and they have no knowledge of what lies behind the doors there. Usually, half of the giants are sleeping at any one time, unless awakened by the baying hell hounds in area

L7, in which case all of them are awake and active. The giants hurl boulders at intruders across the chasm. All receive the benefit of cover from the 10-foot-high stone wall that extends between the pillars. If the PCs manage to make it across the rift, the giants move to engage them in melee, attempting to pin opponents back against the cliff edge. The giants fight to the death.

### FIENDISH FIRE GIANTS (8) CR 11

**XP 12,800 each**

**hp** 142 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 148, 294)

**Treasure:** The giants' camp sits on the landing behind the wall, and holds their mundane equipment, including a Gargantuan assault bridge (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 165) that they use to cross the magma chasm to visit the hell hound kennels (area L7) and the sandy crags (area L6) to feed the linnorms there. The camp also holds the giants' accumulated treasures, consisting of a *shatterspike*, *figurines of wondrous power* (golden lions), a *wand of inflict serious wounds* (17 charges), a platinum-and-emerald necklace (worth 3,500 gp), a small diamond (worth 500 gp), two opals (worth 350 gp each), 360 pp, 5,300 gp, and 12,200 cp.

In addition, large metal locker stands against the southwestern wall. Every week it magically fills with charred foodstuffs and barrels of bitter spirits suitable for fire giant palates. The locker itself is not magical, but Baba Yaga's servitors elsewhere in the *Dancing Hut* use their own magic to keep these guards (and the linnorms in area L6) well fed and well provisioned.

## L9. HALL OF DEVILS (CR 16)

Gas jets erupt from the rock walls of this long hall to provide it with red-tinted illumination. Animated carvings of devils torturing the souls of the damned decorate the walls, and the floor is lined with a carpet of charred bones and cracked skulls. Screams of pain and terror echo through the room, and the air

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

is heavy with the stench of brimstone. Two rows of dark stone columns extend down the hall toward double doors of black iron at the far end.

The animated wall carvings and the bones covering the floor, as well as the sounds and smells, are *persistent images* created by this chamber's inhabitant to decorate her abode. In this chamber, these *persistent images* are permanent, powered by Baba Yaga's magic, unless changed or dispelled. The ceiling arches overhead, reaching a height of 60 feet in the center of the chamber. The doors at the end of the hall are cold to the touch and beaded with moisture.

**Creatures:** This hall is the territory of a handmaiden devil named Olcazra and her retinue of six advanced erinyes. Baba Yaga long ago charged Olcazra with guarding this room, though few realize that her real purpose here is to ensure that Baba Yaga's daughters do not escape their imprisonment in the chamber on the other side of the doors. Nevertheless, Olcazra and her handmaidens are just as capable of defending this area against anyone who would disturb the undead queens beyond.

Currently, Olcazra and her handmaidens are torturing the last survivor of Queen Elvanna's Winter Guard expedition, the winter witch Vjerica. Vjerica escaped the destruction of her party by the linnorms in area L6, and used *invisibility* and flight to bypass the hell hounds and fire giants in areas L7 and L8. Unfortunately for her, these precautions were useless against the devils here, who toyed with the winter witch for some time until Olcazra entrapped her in her tentacle cage.

When the PCs enter the room, the devils finally finish off poor Vjerica. Her lifeless body drops from Olcazra's tentacle cage as the handmaiden devil and the erinyes all take to the air. Olcazra casts *black tentacles* around the PCs, while three of the erinyes teleport into the corridor behind the PCs to cut off their retreat. The remaining erinyes then attempt to entangle anyone not caught in the black tentacles. The erinyes prefer to stay at range to fire flaming arrows at foes, but Olcazra relishes melee combat, attempting to entrap at least one opponent in her tentacle cage while she lashes out at her foes with her claws. The devils fight to the death.

**OLCAZRA** **CR 14**  
**XP 38,400**  
 Handmaiden devil (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 86*)  
**hp 187**

**OLCAZRA'S HANDMAIDENS (6)** **CR 9**  
**XP 6,400 each**  
 Advanced erinyes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 75, 294*)  
**hp 112 each**

**Treasure:** In addition to the erinyes having longswords and composite longbows, Olcazra wears a necklace of gold-plated human vertebrae interspersed with carnelians (worth 1,500 gp). Vjerica's corpse still wears her equipment as well, consisting of *bracers of armor +4*, two *potions of protection from arrows*, a *scroll of fear*, a *scroll of greater teleport*, a *wand of invisibility* (38 charges), and *wings of flying*.

## L10. COLD CORRIDOR (CR 15)

The iron doors leading into this corridor from area L9 are locked (hardness 10, hp 120, break DC 28, Disable Device DC 30) and trapped (see Trap below). Once beyond the doors, read or paraphrase the following.

This corridor has walls of smoothed slate coated in a thick rime of frost. A pair of iron doors at the far end likewise bears this coating of frost. Inscribed upon them is an image of a hut atop long, birdlike legs, beneath a stylized crown of icicles.

The temperature is perpetually below  $-20^{\circ}$  F in this corridor, though the PCs are in no danger unless they linger here. The doors to the west are not locked, but they are frozen shut (hardness 10, hp 120, break DC 33). As the PCs approach the doors, the matryoshka doll says, "Watch out. My daughters sit inside. No doubt they're very angry."

**Trap:** Opening the doors from area L9 causes a blast of frigid air to burst from the doors, forming a cloud of icy mist that quickly evaporates.

**FRIGID BLAST TRAP** **CR 15**  
**XP 51,200**  
**Type** magic; **Perception** DC 31; **Disable Device** DC 31  
**EFFECTS**  
**Trigger** touch; **Reset** automatic (1d4 rounds)  
**Effect** spell effect (intensified<sup>APG</sup> *cone of cold*, 20d6 cold damage, DC 19 Reflex save half); multiple targets (all targets in a 60-ft. cone)

## L11. HALL OF THRONES (CR 19)

A wide cavern opens away from the door, lit by a diffuse glowing cloud that continually hovers near the ceiling. Arranged in a semicircle around the entrance are fourteen identical stone thrones, their high backs each bearing the same dancing hut sigil and a small plaque beneath. Seated upon twelve of the thrones are corpses dressed in royal regalia in various stages of decomposition. Like the corridor outside, a thin layer of frost covers everything in this room, including the thrones and their occupants.

The air in this room remains at a constant  $0^{\circ}$  F, so characters lingering here run the risk of hypothermia or frostbite from exposure to the cold (*Core Rulebook 442*).

## REIGN OF WINTER

A *dimensional lock* effect (CL 20th) blocks extradimensional travel into or out of this chamber.

This chamber holds the source of Baba Yaga's unnaturally long life, in the form of the life energy of her daughters who have served as queens of Irrisen. After a daughter has reigned for 100 years as Irrisen's queen, Baba Yaga replaces her with another daughter and takes the dethroned queen and the first generation of her offspring into the *Dancing Hut*. But Baba Yaga's promises of untold power and indescribable experiences as a reward for her daughter's term of service are empty, as she requires her daughter's power and vitality for herself. But if Baba Yaga were simply to slay her daughter outright, all of the former queen's power, aged and matured over 100 years as Irrisen's queen, would pass on and be divided among her children, so Baba Yaga first kills her grandchildren, then brings her daughter to this cavern and magically links her to one of the thrones in this chamber, where she drains her daughter's life force to replenish her own.

But even drained of their vitality, Baba Yaga's daughters do not truly die. With the transfer of power, they become one with her—in a sense gaining the promised power and experiences, though hardly in the spirit of the unspoken agreement. Their bodies remain imprisoned here, next to their enthroned sisters, withered undead husks of the powerful witches they once were, dreaming of half-remembered past glories and thirsting for vengeance against the mother who stole their power. While Elvanna did not know the precise details of her sisters' fate, she came to suspect something of the truth, which formed the primary impetus for her attempted coup.

There are 14 thrones in this chamber, one for each queen in Irrisen's 1,400-year history. Each throne bears the sigil of Baba Yaga and Irrisen and a plaque naming the queen who sits upon it (recognizable with a successful DC 15 Knowledge [local] check). In order from earliest to most recent, left to right, they are Jadwiga, Morgannan, Urvalane, Pjallarane, Aelena, Harcatha, Sascha, Karina, Tashanna, Velikas, Kseniya, Betyrina, Yelizaveta, and Elvanna. Twelve of the thrones hold what's left of Baba Yaga's daughters. Those daughters to the extreme left are little more than brittle bones with leathery skin stretched over them, while those on the right are in much better condition, their pale corpses yet unblemished by the passage of time. The ninth throne (Tashanna's) and the fourteenth (Elvanna's) are empty. Elvanna has yet to be enthroned here, and Tashanna, who led her own revolt against Baba Yaga 500 years ago, impressed her mother enough that she was spared this fate.

When the PCs first enter the chamber, Baba Yaga giggles, and her voice issues from the matryoshka doll: "There they are; twelve queens all in a row. Such beautiful,

loyal daughters... they each ruled a hundred years and then gave me their lives so I could live on. The life of Baba Yaga sits before you; all you need to do is take each of their hearts and steep them to make a fine witch's brew." She giggles again and goes silent.

**Creatures:** Baba Yaga's daughters are now undead creatures called crone queens, their youth and vitality drained to sustain Baba Yaga, but the Witch Queen's magic and the lingering remnants of their own power keep them in a state somewhere between life and death. All 12 of the enthroned queens writhe and twitch with foul necrotic animation, but the first eight crone queens are fused to their thrones, the long centuries having taken their toll, leaving them little more than barely sentient shells, slumbering in deathlike torpor. These eight ignore the PCs, but the last four crone queens—Velikas, Kseniya, Betyrina, and Yelizaveta—still retain much of their memories and seethe with hatred of Baba Yaga. They can sense the presence of their mother in the matryoshka doll carried by the PCs and leap from their thrones to attack the PCs as soon as they enter. The four crone queens fight until destroyed.

### BETYRINA, KSENIYA, VELIKAS, AND YELIZAVETA (4) CR 15 XP 51,200 each

Crone queens (see page 84)

hp 209 each

**Treasure:** Each of the enthroned crone queens wears the garb of an Irriseni queen, a royal outfit worth 200 gp each, as well as an assortment of jewelry worth 3,000 gp each. In the southern corner of the room is a small table and two chairs. A brass samovar—a traditional Russian tea urn—sits upon the table, beside a silver platter containing a complete silver tea service for eight, worth a total of 900 gp.

**Development:** Once the four active crone queens have been defeated, Baba Yaga instructs the PCs to remove the heart of each of the queens present. The eight remaining crone queens are unable to stop the PCs from doing so, at most weakly raising their arms or moving their heads to glare at the PCs with icy hatred as their frozen hearts (or what remains of them) are cut out of their chests. Placing the 12 hearts of the crone queens in the teapot atop the samovar immediately transports the PCs back to the sacred pool in Grandmother's Cauldron (area A3).

### LEAVING THE HALL OF THRONES

Upon returning to Grandmother's Cauldron with the samovar containing the frozen hearts of the 12 crone queens, Baba Yaga instructs the PCs to fill the samovar with water from the sacred pool, heat it to boiling and steep the hearts in the water, then pour the brew over the

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

matryoshka doll. Doing so causes the doll to crack open once again, revealing the last doll inside. Baba Yaga can now speak freely with the PCs through the final doll, and she immediately begins to chastise them for their slowness and any perceived mistakes they've made to this point. She is rude and acerbic but does not push the PCs too far. Though they still need her to save their world, she still needs them to free her. In addition, Baba Yaga grants the PCs a fourth boon. Each PC gains a permanent +2 inherent bonus to one ability score of the PC's choice.

With the final doll revealed, Vigliv appears from her tree to give the PCs one last bit of guidance. This is described at the beginning of Part Five.

**Story Award:** Award the PCs 76,800 XP for opening the matryoshka doll's fourth layer.

## PART FIVE: THE WITCH QUEEN'S KURGAN

With the final layer of the matryoshka doll removed, Vigliv appears one final time from the trunk of her tree.

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"The fate, the power, the death, and the life of Baba Yaga, all have you claimed. Only one thing remains for you to break her free from her prison and save your world: her blood, which flows through the veins of the ruling queen of Irrisen, her daughter Elvanna. Elvanna's blood is her birthright, handed down from her mother, and represents both Baba Yaga's and Elvanna's burning desire to rule their fates and those of others. It is only with Elvanna's blood, returned to her mother, that you can save your world from the eternal winter that threatens it.

"Even now, Elvanna has sequestered herself in Baba Yaga's inner sanctum, here in the *Dancing Hut*, where Baba Yaga formulated her most potent spells and executed her most glorious triumphs, and where Elvanna now works her greatest ritual to cement her power, conquer your world, and supplant her own mother as Queen of Witches.

"Now you must go to this sanctum and face Queen Elvanna before she can finish her ritual. But beware, for time is running short, and Elvanna is truly her mother's daughter. Her will to power is as strong as the blood in her veins, and she will not give up her desires easily. Heed the guidance of Baba Yaga, however, and you may yet win the day, freeing her and saving your world."

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Unless the PCs intend to attack Vigliv or her tree, this is the last time they encounter the primordial norn. If their dealings with Vigliv so far have been respectful and considerate of one of her power and age, Vigliv grants them a final boon before leaving, giving each of the PCs a golden thread. Vigliv explains that she has harvested these excess threads from the PCs' own threads of fate, which have grown long and densely plied as they have pursued their quest to free Baba Yaga and save their

## THE THREADS OF FATE

Each PC may cut his (and only his) harvested thread once as an immediate action to change his fate as desired from the possibilities below. This is a supernatural ability and does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Anyone else cutting the thread has no effect. Once a thread has been cut, it loses its golden luster and becomes nonmagical. Cutting these excess threads does not harm the PCs in any way.

### CUTTING THE THREADS OF FATE

When a PC cuts his thread of fate, he can choose one of the following benefits, which takes place immediately.

- The PC can reroll one saving throw, attack roll, skill check, or ability check and take the higher of the two rolls.
- The PC gains an extra standard action on his turn for 1 round, even to cast a second spell if so chosen.
- The PC can change his place in the initiative order one time to the position of his choice.
- The PC gains a +10 luck bonus on one roll of his choice or to his AC for 1 round.
- All of the PCs' current wounds are completely healed.
- All conditions currently affecting the PC are removed.
- The PC can recall up to 12 levels of spells that have already been cast or spell slots that have been used, restoring them to the character's mind, just as if they had not been cast. For example, a character could recall one 9th-level spell and one 3rd-level spell, or three 4th-level spells, or any combination of spells, provided the total number of spell levels does not exceed 12.

world. See the sidebar on this page for the powers of these threads of fate. After granting of this boon, Vigliv disappears back into her tree.

When Vigliv departs, Baba Yaga speaks again, taking a more conciliatory tone with the PCs to make peace with them after the tongue lashing she gave them (though she can't resist making occasional cutting remarks). She tells them that Elvanna is indeed already in her inner sanctum working on her ritual, but is still a couple of days away from completing it. If the PCs wish to prepare for this final showdown, they may rest before entering the inner sanctum. If the PCs want to reequip themselves or sell off their treasure to buy new equipment, this would be a good time to call on the mercane Zilvazaraat (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* #70 13). The PCs would do well to remember that the *Dancing Hut* still stands on Earth, where there are no "magic shops" to buy or sell magical gear, likely making the mercane their only option to equip themselves for the upcoming battle. There should be just enough time to send Zilvazaraat an order and receive its delivery before Elvanna completes her ritual.

## REIGN OF WINTER

## M. THE WITCH QUEEN'S KURGAN



Once the PCs are ready to face Queen Elvanna, Baba Yaga instructs them to take the samovar from the hall of thrones with them and leads them to the curved, narrowing cliff path at area **A8**.

### THE ENDLESS STEPPE

Anyone stepping into the cave at area **A9** immediately finds herself standing in the midst of a lonely, frigid steppe with a bitter wind howling out of the north. The sky is an endless leaden, overcast dome above a brown plain of frozen mud and dry grass. The Endless Steppe is another demiplane within the *Dancing Hut*. A *dimensional lock* effect (CL 20th) blocks all extradimensional travel within the demiplane. There is no sign of the cave entrance that brought the PCs here; the PCs will need to free Baba Yaga if they want to escape the Endless Steppe.

Baba Yaga explains that this demiplane mimics her homeland in southern Russia, where she found an ancient burial mound called a kurgan and took it as her abode in the time before she constructed her *Dancing Hut*. Later, she transported that kurgan inside her hut to serve as her inner sanctum. Baba Yaga advises the PCs that whichever direction they travel, and by whatever means, the Witch Queen's Kurgan (area **M**) lies 1 day

away. She warns that Queen Elvanna has undoubtedly already been here and has likely turned Baba Yaga's guardians against her. In addition, Baba Yaga knows that at least one native creature of the frigid steppes inhabits the demiplane. It never previously inconvenienced her, so she never bothered to hunt it down, but she cautions the PCs to be wary.

### HOWL OF THE WINDWALKER (CR 17)

Regardless of what method of travel the PCs use, night falls before they reach the Witch Queen's Kurgan.

**Creature:** As the sun sinks to the horizon, the PCs catch their first hint of the predator that Baba Yaga warned them of—a wendigo that haunts the Endless Steppe. The wendigo begins stalking the PCs as they make their way toward the Witch Queen's Kurgan, using its howl when night has fallen or when the PCs first make camp, if they choose not to push on through the darkness. If the PCs do camp on the steppe, the wendigo howls again in the dead of the night before making use of its dream haunting ability to try to infect a sleeping PC with wendigo psychosis. Just before dawn, whether the PCs camp or not, the wendigo howls again as a precursor to an attack, using *wind walk* to try to snatch a single PC—particularly one who is sleeping.

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

If successful, the wendigo deposits the captive PC atop the kurgan at area **M**, where that character might have to face the guardians there without the aid of his companions. The wendigo otherwise tries to avoid combat, preferring to retreat and await the PCs in its lair (area **M5**).

## WENDIGO

**CR 17**
**XP 102,400**
**hp** 279 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 281)

## M. THE WITCH QUEEN'S KURGAN (CR 17)

When the PCs arrive at the Witch Queen's Kurgan, read or paraphrase the following.

Rising from the bleak plain like a beacon stands a huge earthen mound. It is clearly artificial, protruding prominently from the otherwise flat steppe, but it is just as obviously thousands of years old, as its contours are the natural result of long years of wind and rains, and the brown grasses of the steppe grow in an unbroken blanket over its sides. A low, dark entrance, little more than a cave opening, leads into the mound near the bottom on the south face, framed by two mammoth tusks. Two squat, lichen-covered female statues flank this opening, but the details of whatever they once depicted have long since been erased by the years.

Baba Yaga originally found this 60-foot-high burial mound on the steppe in southern Russia that her own people once traversed in their nomadic wandering. This mound, or kurgan, belonged to a far older culture that had long since departed, so Baba Yaga took the kurgan as her first lair as she began her rise to power among mortals. She neither knows nor cares about the people that once used this place, only that their reverence of an ancient goddess mirrored her own vanity early on, and she chose to adopt it for her own secret ends.

**Creatures:** Baba Yaga is not aware of every creature that lives within this demiplane, which is but one of many contained within the *Dancing Hut*. Many years ago, a matriarchal tribe of taiga giants was pulled into this demiplane as part of another experiment and forgotten. They have made a home here and flourished, and have come to regard the kurgan as sacred ground. Baba Yaga rarely left the confines of her mound when present, and so she has never encountered the taiga giants, but a scouting party sent out by Queen Elvanna managed to stir the giants up (and were subsequently slain by them). As a result, four taiga giants riding Gargantuan baluchitheriums are now patrolling the perimeter of the mound. These giantesses use bows instead of throwing boulders, have skill ranks in Ride rather than in Climb, and have replaced their Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack, and Self-Sufficient feats with Deadly Aim, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat,

and Weapon Focus. The giants performed their spirit-summoning rituals before riding out, and attack anyone approaching the kurgan. They fight to the death and hunt anyone who flees, but they do not enter the kurgan since their tribe considers the mound taboo.

## TAIGA GIANT STEPPE-RIDERS (4)

**CR 12**
**XP 19,200 each**
**hp** 157 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 131)

**Ranged** +2 composite shortbow +14/+9/+4 (2d6+12/x3)

**TAIGA GIANT STEPPE-RIDER**

# REIGN OF WINTER

**Feats** Deadly Aim, Endurance, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Shot on the Run<sup>®</sup>, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (composite shortbow)

**Skills** Knowledge (religion) +11, Perception +11, Ride +7, Stealth +6 (+12 in undergrowth), Survival +16

**Gear** hide armor, +2 *composite shortbow* (+10 Str) with 30 arrows, spear

## GIANT BALUCHITHERIUMS (4)

CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 138 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 192, 291)

**Treasure:** Besides their bows, each giantess carries an ivory figurine of their ancient goddess, resembling a crudely stylized female figure, carved from a mastodon tusk (worth 600 gp each) and has assorted bangles of copper and semiprecious stones hanging from their saddles (worth 300 gp each). In addition, one carries a bag containing the treasures looted from Elvanna's patrol: a +2 *returning spear*, two masterwork longswords, a horned *helm of brilliance*, three pearls (worth 100 gp each), and 385 gp in Irriseni currency. Lastly, the two mammoth tusk doorposts framing the kurgan's entrance are worth 1,200 gp each, though each weighs upward of 150 pounds.

## M1. Ancient Shrine (CR 16)

A vast chamber has been dug out of the mound, the ceiling overhead supported by stout wooden posts and shored up with rough timbers to prevent the packed dirt from collapsing. A large alcove in the north side of the chamber holds a strange statue depicting a humanoid with the head of a hippopotamus, sitting cross-legged and clutching a double-bladed greataxe in its massive hands. Although dark stains smear the statue's features, it has been beautifully preserved from the passing ages by its sheltered position inside the mound.

The interior walls and floors in the mound are composed of hard-packed earth and stone. The ceiling in this chamber is 30 feet high. Elsewhere in the mound, all ceilings are 15 feet high and are clad in the same rough timbers as described in this chamber, unless otherwise noted. The mound has settled enough that even removing the wooden beams from the ceiling does not cause an immediate collapse. The chambers inside the mound are dark unless otherwise noted.

**Creatures:** The ancients who originally built this kurgan traveled from more southern lands and carried with them the belief in a god of the underworld who took the form of a hippopotamus-headed humanoid whose name is long lost to history. They built this idol and made countless blood sacrifices to it over the centuries before

they finally moved on. As it received its blood sacrifices over the years, the idol somehow developed a sentience and became an animated construct. Now it attacks any who enter this chamber other than the wendigo (area M5) or Baba Yaga. The idol has never attacked Baba Yaga, and she is unaware that it is sentient. The idol attempts to charm anyone examining it and then stands up and spits an ooze to block intruders from retreating. The idol then activates its fear aura and charges into melee combat with its axe. The idol pursues intruders anywhere within the kurgan, and fights until destroyed. If brought to area M7, the idol can even be used against Queen Elvanna, as it attacks all intruders indiscriminately.

## IDOL OF THE FORGOTTEN GOD

CR 16

XP 76,800

Advanced bipedal stone idol behemoth hippopotamus  
(*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 157, *Advanced Bestiary 27*, 230)  
N Huge construct (augmented animal)

**Init** +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +21  
**Aura** fear (60 ft., DC 21, 1 hour)

### DEFENSE

**AC** 27, touch 8, flat-footed 27 (+19 natural, -2 size)

**hp** 155 (21d10+40)

**Fort** +14, **Ref** +14, **Will** +9

**Defensive Abilities** hardness 8, half damage from energy attacks and ranged attacks; **Immune** construct traits

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to sonic

### OFFENSE

**Speed** 50 ft.

**Melee** *labrys of the stone idol* +27/+22/+17 (6d6+19/x3), bite +19 (4d8+5/19-20 plus grab) or bite +24 (4d8+11/19-20 plus grab), 2 slams +24 (1d8+11)

**Ranged** spit ooze +13 touch (3d6 plus ooze effects)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

**Special Attacks** capsize, charming gaze (10 ft., DC 23), spit ooze, trample (2d6+16, DC 31)

### STATISTICS

**Str** 33, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +15; **CMB** +28 (+30 bull rush, +32 grapple); **CMD** 38 (40 vs. bull rush)

**Feats** Ability Focus (charming gaze), Awesome Blow, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Martial Weapon Proficiency (greataxe), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception)

**Skills** Perception +21, Stealth +3, Swim +15

**Languages** Proto-Indo-European

**SQ** power from worship

**Gear** *labrys of the stone idol* (+3 *stone impact greataxe*; see page 63)

### SPECIAL ABILITIES

**Charming Gaze (Su)** Any creature within 10 feet of the idol of the forgotten god that meets its gaze must succeed at a DC 23

## THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

Will save or be affected as though by a *charm monster* spell (caster level 7th). The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Fear Aura (Su)** As a free action, the idol of the forgotten god can project a continuous aura of fear. Every creature within 60 feet must succeed at a DC 21 Will save or be shaken for 1 hour. Creatures charmed by the idol are immune to this effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

**Power from Worship (Su)** For every 10 creatures with Intelligence scores of 6 or higher that are currently charmed by the idol of the forgotten god's charming gaze, the idol gains 2 temporary hit points and a +1 bonus on Perception checks.

**Spit Ooze (Su)** As a standard action once every 1d4 rounds, the idol of the forgotten god can spit an advanced glacial ooze (see below) from its mouth at a single target within 60 feet. This is a ranged touch attack that deals 3d6 points of bludgeoning damage plus the ooze's slam attack damage to the target. On a successful hit, the ooze also automatically engulfs the target. An ooze takes no damage from being spit, and does not provoke attacks of opportunity as it travels to its target.

**ADVANCED GLACIAL OOZE**

CR —

*Tome of Horrors Complete* 458

N Large ooze (cold)

**Init** -3; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Perception -5

**DEFENSE**

**AC** 10, touch 6, flat-footed 10 (-3 Dex, +4 natural, -1 size)

**hp** 135 (10d8+90)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +0, **Will** -2

**DR** 5/bludgeoning; **Immune** cold, ooze traits

**Weaknesses** vulnerable to fire

**OFFENSE**

**Speed** 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

**Melee** slam +12 (2d6+9 plus 1d6 cold)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

**Special Attacks** cold, engulf (DC 21, 1d6 cold and entrap), entrap (DC 24, 1d6 rounds, hardness 0, hp 10)

**STATISTICS**

**Str** 23, **Dex** 5, **Con** 28, **Int** —, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

**Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 21 (can't be tripped)

**Skills** Swim +14

**SQ** transparent

**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

**Cold (Ex)** A glacial ooze's form is extremely cold, dealing 1d6 points of cold damage with its slam attack. Creatures attacking a glacial ooze unarmed or with natural weapons take this cold damage each time one of their attacks hits.

**Entrap (Ex)** A creature encased in ice from a glacial ooze's entrap ability takes 2d4 points of cold damage each round until freed.

**Transparent (Ex)** A glacial ooze is hard to identify, even under ideal conditions, and a successful DC 20 Perception check is required to notice one. Creatures who fail to notice a glacial ooze and walk into it are automatically engulfed.

**Treasure:** Over the years, a number of items have been left as offerings to the idol, which lie collected at its feet, including a *dark blue rhomboid ioun stone*, a *scroll of insect plague* scribed on a piece of uncured hide, a pile of uncut gems (worth 2,800 gp total), seven bits of mammoth ivory with rough scrimshaw carvings of elk and plains bison (worth 50 gp each), and a section of petrified tree trunk 3 feet high, 1 foot thick, and weighing 225 pounds that has been carved to resemble some crude prehistoric deity or nature spirit (worth 3,500 gp).



IDOL OF THE FORGOTTEN GOD



# REIGN OF WINTER

## M2. Chamber of Hides (CR 16)

This chamber is musty and smells faintly of decay. Stacked against the walls are hundreds of bundles of hides and pelts, votive offerings left by whatever people built this place long ago.

**Creature:** Included among the many hides, stiff with dry rot, are rolls of scaled skin—identifiable as the shed skins of giant snakes with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check. If anything in the room is disturbed or the intruders linger here longer than 2 rounds, these dried snakeskins animate as a hollow serpent and attack. The creature fights until destroyed but does not leave this room.

**HOLLOW SERPENT** **CR 16**  
**XP 76,800**  
**hp 230** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 149)

**Treasure:** The vast majority of the pelts and hides here have succumbed to age and are worthless, but secreted among the piles of stiff and rotten furs is one black bear pelt that remains as supple as the day it was cured. Enchanted long ago by primitive shamans, this pelt functions as a *cloak of resistance +5*, and can be found with a successful DC 32 Perception check.

## M3. Guarded Passage

The corridor widens here to create two alcoves containing stylized stone statues of saber-toothed tigers engraved by the ancients with crude glyphs and sigils.

Although they appear similar to the taotiehs in area M4, the saber-toothed tigers here are just inanimate statues.

## M4. Hall of Guardians (CR 15)

Six pillars support the wooden ceiling of this chamber. Four stone statues of saber-toothed cats stand between the pillars.

**Creatures:** Unlike the statues in area M3, the four statues here are guardian constructs called taotiehs. They attack anyone other than Baba Yaga who passes through this room and stalk intruders throughout the kurgan and even onto the steppe outside. Once they have sighted prey, they do not relent until their quarry is dead or they are destroyed.

**TAOTIEHS (4)** **CR 11**  
**XP 12,800 each**  
**hp 107 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 260)

**Treasure:** One of the taotiehs swallowed a valuable treasure long ago and still retains it in its extradimensional

core. If the taotieh is destroyed, an *instant fortress* can be found among the rubble with a successful DC 30 Perception check.

## M5. Lair of the Windwalker (CR 17)

Two earthen tunnels converge here, and the floor of the intersection is clogged with broken bones and bits of dried flesh from creatures that obviously met violent deaths. The cobwebs and advanced state of decay of some of the remains show that these remains have been collected here for many, many years.

Unless the PCs specifically state they are examining the ceiling here, only those characters succeeding at a DC 20 Perception check notice that the wooden ceiling of the corridor ends 20 feet before this intersection. Above the intersection itself, the ceiling rises 50 feet.

**Creature:** In the south wall of the intersection, 40 feet up, a ledge has been cut away to form a lair for the wendigo that stalks the steppes around the kurgan. If the wendigo was not already slain as the PCs approached the kurgan (see page 50), it waits here for its prey. The wendigo takes its meals on the ledge and then casually knocks the remains over to accumulate in the corridor below. The wendigo uses its howl before attacking, and attempts to snatch a victim to take up to its ledge and consume at its leisure. It fights to the death against intruders that have penetrated this far into its abode. If the wendigo was already killed, this area is empty.

**WENDIGO** **CR 17**  
**XP 102,400**  
**hp 279** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 281)

**Treasure:** Among the bits of bone and half-eaten flesh that remain on the ledge, a skeletal hand still wearing a *ring of shooting stars* can be found with a successful DC 24 Perception check.

## M6. Doors to the Inner Sanctum (CR 10)

**Trap:** The stone double doors leading into the inner sanctum are not locked, but Queen Elvanna has placed a *symbol of vulnerability* (CL 20th, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 243) on them. The symbol activates when anyone approaches close enough to read it.

**SYMBOL OF VULNERABILITY** **CR 10**  
**XP 9,600**  
**Type** magic; **Perception** DC 34; **Disable Device** DC 34

### EFFECTS

**Trigger** spell; **Duration** 200 minutes; **Reset** none  
**Effect** spell effect (*symbol of vulnerability*<sup>UM</sup>, 60-ft. radius)

# THE WITCH QUEEN'S REVENGE

## M7. Inner Sanctum (CR 21)

This chamber has been cut from the heart of the kurgan in the shape of a crescent moon. A pale glow from the center of the room illuminates two tall stone statues. The one on the left is a crude female figure with exaggerated feminine features, an ancient fertility idol representing the nameless goddess revered by the original builders of this mound. The one on the right is much more skillfully carved with more modern techniques, depicting a beautiful woman standing tall and proud, robed in witch's garb, her left hand extended outward to receive a supplicant and her right holding up a crescent moon above her head. Between the two statues, an ancient, pitted iron cauldron bubbles over a fire pit, steam rising from its contents, and giving forth the pale, white radiance that provides the room's dim light. A tall mirror with a frame of glittering ice stands behind the cauldron.

This chamber is Baba Yaga's inner sanctum, where she has conducted her most powerful magic for centuries. The entire chamber is blanketed by a permanent *mage's private sanctum* effect (CL 20th) put in place by Baba Yaga years ago.

The wooden ceiling 40 feet above is skillfully joisted, and no columns interrupt the floor space. The statue on the left was crafted by the original builders of the kurgan to propitiate their goddess of the moon. A young Baba Yaga carved the second statue herself to mark her own rise in power and to presage her ambition to supplant the goddess who once held sway over the steppes she walked. Despite its decrepit appearance, the cauldron between the two statues is impervious to all physical and magical damage, and has an overwhelming aura of transmutation—it has been the wellspring for many of Baba Yaga's most potent magics, and now serves the same function for Elvanna's ritual. The cauldron is actually a part of the *Dancing Hut*, and cannot be removed from the hut. The mirror behind the cauldron is Elvanna's "back door" into the inner sanctum. This *mirror gate* has a strong aura of conjuration, and serves as a permanent *gate* between the inner sanctum and the Royal Palace in Whitethrone. The *mirror gate* functions only for Elvanna herself, and like the portal in the cave in area A9 that brought the PCs to the Endless Steppe, it is unaffected by the demiplane's *dimensional lock* effect.

**Creatures:** Queen Elvanna, the fourteenth daughter of Baba Yaga, is here working her ritual to expand Irrisen's

eternal winter over all of Golarion. In fact, Elvanna has been freely moving between the Royal Palace and the inner sanctum the entire time the *Dancing Hut* has been in the PCs' possession. With her ritual nearing its conclusion, however, Elvanna has sequestered herself here in the inner sanctum, accompanied by two slimy demodands who act as bodyguards and protectors. Elvanna still requires another 2 days to complete the ritual, however, and she is not about to let the PCs stop her now.

The two statues are actually shield guardian stone golems, created by Baba Yaga to protect the sacred confines of her inner sanctum. As Elvanna's blood is the blood of Baba Yaga, the shield guardians have not automatically attacked her, but neither can she control them.

At this point, Baba Yaga remains trapped inside the matryoshka doll. As the PCs battle Elvanna, she can at last vent her rage upon her rebellious daughter. Baba Yaga's actions are limited, but she telepathically informs the PCs that they can give up the boon of damage resistance or spell resistance that she previously granted them (see Return to Mаметqul's Tent on page 25) to gain control of one of the shield guardians.

If a PC chooses to do so, he must spend a move action to permanently lose the damage resistance or spell resistance granted by Baba Yaga and choose one of the shield guardians to control. Thereafter, that PC is considered the chosen shield guardian's master, as if he possessed the golem's keyed amulet, and can issue orders to the shield guardian. If two PCs are willing to sacrifice their boons in this way, then both shield guardians can be turned against Elvanna.



BABA YAGA

### QUEEN ELVANNA

CR 20

XP 307,200

hp 232 (see page 58)

### SLIMY DEMODANDS (2)

CR 16

XP 76,800 each

hp 241 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 70)

#### TACTICS

**During Combat** The demodands move to intercept anyone attempting to engage Elvanna in melee combat. They cast *acid fog* to control the battlefield and attempt to summon tarry demodand allies if they seem outnumbered or outmatched.

**Morale** The demodands fight to the death, faithfully defending Queen Elvanna.

# REIGN OF WINTER

## GUARDIANS OF THE INNER SANCTUM (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Shield guardian stone golem (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 158, 163)

N Large construct

**Init** -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

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### DEFENSE

**AC** 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (-1 Dex, +18 natural, -1 size)**hp** 107 each (14d10+30); fast healing 5**Fort** +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4**DR** 10/adamantine; **Immune** construct traits, magic

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### OFFENSE

**Speed** 20 ft.**Melee** 2 slams +22 (2d10+9)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.**Special Attacks** slow (DC 17)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 13th; concentration +8)

1/day—shield other, spell storing (fertility idol contains *bestow curse* [DC 32], witch contains *debilitating portent*<sup>UC</sup>; both CL 20th)

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### STATISTICS

**Str** 28, **Dex** 9, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 1**Base Atk** +14; **CMB** +24; **CMD** 33**SQ** find master, guard

**Development:** If the PCs defeat Elvanna, Baba Yaga demands that they soak the final matryoshka doll in Elvanna's blood to finally free her. If the PCs balk at doing this, Baba Yaga informs them that only she can reverse the ritual that Elvanna started—without her, Irrisen's winter will spread to encompass all of Golarion. A successful DC 25 Spellcraft check confirms this fact—the means to end the ritual is beyond the power of the PCs. Assuming the PCs agree to free Baba Yaga, soaking the matryoshka doll in Elvanna's blood causes the doll to crack open. Thick white smoke pours from the broken doll, and 1 round later, Baba Yaga appears in person. The Queen of Witches is free once more!

**Story Award:** Releasing Baba Yaga from the final matryoshka doll earns the PCs an award of 100,000 XP.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With Queen Elvanna defeated and Baba Yaga freed, the PCs' quest is nearly at an end. As promised, Baba Yaga chants a short incantation, causing the bubbling cauldron to go dark and still. All across Golarion, Elvanna's winter portals close, sparing Golarion its frigid fate. With another incantation, Baba Yaga shatters Elvanna's *mirror gate*, permanently shutting the "back door" to her inner sanctum. If Elvanna somehow survived the final battle, Baba Yaga demands that the PCs turn her over so she can properly punish her wayward daughter. Whether they agree or not, Baba Yaga takes control of the helpless witch, refusing to allow the

PCs to do her further harm and magically whisking Elvanna away—presumably to an icy throne deep within the *Dancing Hut* to join her sisters.

Although Baba Yaga is evil, the PCs have done her a great service, and the Queen of Witches is not without a sense of gratitude. She allows the PCs to keep the boons she granted them during this adventure, as well all of the treasures they have recovered from within her *Dancing Hut* (Baba Yaga can always craft more) and from Elvanna, with the exception of the *Icecrown of Irrisen*, which will go to the next queen of Irrisen. Now that Baba Yaga is free, the PCs have no more need of the mantle of the Black Rider; Baba Yaga revokes the mantle, removing the *geas*, but the PCs retain the ability score increases they gained from the mantle. In addition, Baba Yaga offers the PCs a final boon—any one thing that is within her power (within reason) to grant. See Continuing the Campaign on page 64 for examples of the rewards Baba Yaga is willing to grant. As the *Dancing Hut* remains on Earth, Baba Yaga is also willing to return the PCs to Golarion—though they would be wise to word their request politely and carefully, or this could count as their boon. Regardless, unless the PCs attempt some double cross, Baba Yaga is true to her word and grants the PCs the boons they request in good faith and in perpetuity.

## WHAT DOES BABA YAGA DO?

After she is released from her prison, Baba Yaga is once more free to go about her mysterious business. Although two of her greatest enemies—her children Elvanna and Rasputin—have most likely already been defeated by the PCs, the consequences of their failed rebellion remain, and Baba Yaga's first priority is to set her house in order. How exactly she goes about this depends upon the PCs' actions and the boons they requested.

After granting the PCs their boon (and hopefully returning them to Golarion), Baba Yaga turns her attention to the now-vacant throne of Irrisen. Her first step to create three new Riders to herald her delayed return—perhaps drawn from the PCs' own allies who accompanied them on their quest to free Baba Yaga. This done, Baba Yaga returns to Irrisen and immediately removes Elvanna's children from power—just as she had planned to do upon Elvanna's abdication. As the remaining Jadwiga scramble to fill the power vacuum left behind by the Jadwiga Elvanna, Baba Yaga crowns a new queen of Irrisen—either a heretofore unknown daughter brought from some other world, or perhaps her granddaughter Anastasia, if the girl was rescued from Rasputin's monastery on Earth.

With Irrisen's throne secure, Baba Yaga leaves Golarion for other worlds and other concerns—but it's only a matter of time before she returns once more.



If the PCs choose to betray or attack Baba Yaga, their attempts are likely doomed to failure. Baba Yaga is a mythic creature, far beyond the ability of the PCs to defeat at this point, particularly following their battle with Elvanna. If the PCs are interested in confronting Baba Yaga at a later date, however, the Continuing the Campaign article on page 64 provides details on how this might be accomplished. Baba Yaga's mythic stat block appears on page 74.

### WHAT IF THE PCs LOSE?

If the PCs are unable to defeat Queen Elvanna and Baba Yaga remains trapped in her matryoshka doll prison, Elvanna's ritual continues unabated. Two days later, she finishes the ritual, and winter portals appear all over Golarion, spreading Irrisen's eternal winter far beyond its borders. How fast and how far this new ice age spreads is left for you to determine, but without Baba Yaga or the PCs to stop her, Elvanna is not content to just sit in her palace in Whitethrone. As the cold snows of the north descend onto the lands of the south, so too do armies of cold fey,

frost giants, ice trolls, winter wolves, and Elvanna's own Winter Guard, led by Elvanna herself in her *Dancing Hut*.

As Irrisen's armies sweep through the Lands of the Linnorm Kings and the Realm of the Mammoth Lords, viking warriors, Kellid barbarians, and mighty mammoths join Elvanna's forces, soon adding orcs from Belkzen as well. Elvanna leaves the Worldwound alone for now, but Varisia and Ustalav soon fall, followed by Lastwall and Nirmathas. Eventually, even Andoran, Cheliox, and Taldor are threatened, as the endless winter expands beyond the lands of the Inner Sea.

Thousands die of famine as crops and livestock succumb to the unseasonable cold, and trade comes to a standstill as rivers freeze and roads become choked with snow. Civil unrest topples governments even before Irrisen's armies reach them, and summer becomes just a distant memory. The armies of the south band together to halt the onslaught, but mere soldiers are powerless against the encroaching, endless winter. If new heroes do not come forth to stem the tide, Elvanna will claim all of Golarion as her icy throne world, proclaiming herself the new Queen of Witches.