
ICEWIND DALE: RIME OF THE FROSTMAIDEN
TEN-TOWNS
GUILD
DM's resources for Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden
Chapter 1: Ten Towns

ICEWIND DALE: RIME OF THE FROSTMAIDEN

TEN-TOWNS



EVENTYR

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Introduction

Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden is a chilly campaign that will take your characters from 1st to beyond 10th level, as they face frosty foes, deeply buried dangers, and dark deities, while reshaping the fate of Icewind Dale – and perhaps the entire Sword Coast along with it!

This campaign has an evocative setting with a multitude of interesting locations and awesome quests that will have your players engaged – and maybe even a bit nervous – as they are haunted and harrowed by all the magnificent evils Icewind Dale has to offer.

As awesome as *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* is, it isn't necessarily the easiest campaign to run. There's a lot going on and a lot to keep track off. In addition, the adventure's main story (or stories, really) lacks cohesion in places, making both structuring and pacing them a difficult task.

This download, which covers the introduction and Chapter 1 of the campaign book, provides you with tools and thoughts that will help you make *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* an exciting experience for your players – and much more manageable for you.

It is strongly recommended that you read through the campaign book before using these resources. And always remember, the advice and ideas given here are options – you know best what works at your table.

This download contains:

Overview & Structure. Quick summaries and thoughts about structure to help you plan out the larger adventure and the content in Chapter 1: Ten-Towns.

Starting the Adventure. Inspiration for a Session 0, additional character hooks, and advice for starting the campaign at higher levels and from other adventures.

Secrets & Wilderness Survival. Advice on using Character Secrets and handling Wilderness Survival.

Running Chapter 1: Ten-Towns. Thoughts about choosing a Starting Town and running the Starting Quests, as well as in-depth advice on each of the Ten-Towns, with specific recommendations for adjusting encounter difficulty to fit your party.

5 Full-Color, VTT-ready Encounter Maps. Includes maps for Easthaven Ferry, the 'Lake Monster'-quest, and the 'Foaming Mugs'-quest, and also a Snow Encounter Map and a Snow Street Map.

Encounter Sheets. All the enemy creatures of Chapter 1: Ten-Towns neatly arranged together on pages so you don't have to flip through piles of books at the table.

DM's Notes. Neatly condensed notes of everything in Chapter 1 for easy use at the table.

Follow Along for More

These DM's resources are the first in a series of resources for *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*. **Sign up to our mailing list here** to receive notifications and special discounts when new DM's resources are released. Also **follow us on Twitter** for more D&D-related fun, give-aways, and free content.

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Welcome to the Far north

Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden takes the characters on an adventure in the coldest and most inhospitable region of the Forgotten Realms – a region made even more inhospitable by the fact that Auril, the Frostmaiden, has cast a spell of perpetual darkness over Icewind Dale and the people of Ten-Towns.

This adventure is a mixture of a lot of different things – horror and humor, sandbox and railroad, gritty survival and epic fantasy. It's filled to the brim with interesting content, fantastical locations, and exciting enemies and encounters. That doesn't mean, however, that it is always an easy campaign for the DM to run.

On the following pages, we will take a look at the base premise of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* and provide advice on how to start the adventure and which elements to possibly include, exclude, or emphasize. We will also go over various rules and concepts described in the book, including wilderness survival rules and character secrets. But first, let's take a quick look at the story and structure in *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*.

Overview

One thing that can make *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* difficult to run for the DM, is the way its story and structure is presented. The adventure starts out as an open sandbox-style adventure in Chapter 1 and 2, before becoming more linear as it weaves through three separate stories in the later chapters. This makes the campaign's story feel a lot less cohesive than most other official campaigns, and creates a structure that can quickly become confusing for both DMs and players.

In this section, we'll provide a quick overview of the story and structure of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden,* doing our best to lay everything out clearly and concisely, so it's easy to understand what is going on.

Story

Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden doesn't really have *a* story, so much as it has three stories – or plots – which are loosely connected. In brief summary, they are:

- ***Auril's Everlasting Rime.*** For the last two years, Auril has cast a nightly spell of darkness over Icewind Dale.
- ***Duergar Despot.*** The duergar Xardorok Sunblight has raised a fortress in the mountains and is searching for a crystalline substance called chardalyn so he can build a dragon and unleash it on Ten Towns.
- ***Netherese Necropolis.*** The Arcane Brotherhood, spellcasters from Luskan, are searching for a Netherese city buried under the Reghed Glacier.

As mentioned, the connection between these stories is very loose. Auril's Everlasting Rime is the backdrop to the entire adventure, acts as the reason why Xardorok has come to the darkened Icewind Dale, and can be used to motivate the characters to seek out the Netherese necropolis to find a way to end it. Beyond that, however, the stories aren't really that well connected.

Pacing & Structure

Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden can reasonably be divided into three parts – or acts – each of which are relatively self-contained, and can easily be played separately. In summary, the structure of the campaign is:

- ***Act 1 (chapters 1–2).*** The characters travel around Ten Towns and Icewind Dale doing side-quests.
- ***Act 2 (chapters 3–4).*** The characters try to prevent Xardorok's dragon from destroying Ten-Towns.
- ***Act 3 (chapters 5–7).*** The characters battle Auril and other villains as they search for the Netherese necropolis and a way to end the Everlasting Rime.

The benefit of the acts being so self-contained is that you can – with relative ease – start the adventure at virtually any level between 1st and 7th, and also end the adventure early without having to abandon story points.

What's the Issue?

When the story and structure isn't entirely cohesive, it can potentially impact the adventure's pacing and purpose. From the start, the goal of the adventure will appear to be ending the Everlasting Rime, but if you run the adventure as written, the characters can accomplish this as soon as Chapter 5. And if they do so, the apparent goal of the adventure becomes looting an ancient Netherese necropolis instead – something that isn't even on the table at the beginning of the campaign, and maybe not the kind of adventure for the characters your players have created.

If you are running a sandbox-style game with players and characters that don't necessarily need the story to follow a classic narrative structure, this isn't much of an issue. But, if you and your players prefer a more 'heroic' journey with clear purpose – adventure in Icewind Dale until we're strong enough and have found a way to end the Everlasting Rime! – then this could be a bit jarring.

Luckily, it is something that can be fixed with relatively minor changes. On the following pages we'll discuss how to establish motivation and purpose from the start. In later DM's resources for the remaining chapters of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*, we will expand on how you make the story more cohesive and ensure that the characters are properly motivated throughout.

Starting the Adventure

In this section, we go over what you may want to cover in a session 0, take a look at how you can hook the characters into the adventure, as well as how to start the campaign at higher levels and from other campaigns.

Having a Session 0

Even more so than usual, *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* benefits from having a session 0 with the players, where you go over the campaign's **theme & setting**, **character concepts & backgrounds**, and **story hooks & motivation**, before starting the adventure.

Theme & Setting

It is a good idea to let your players know exactly what kind of theme and setting the adventure presents, both so they know what to expect and can tailor their characters to the adventure, and so you can get a sense of what your players may want to have emphasized.

You can start by informing the players that:

- The main focal point of the story is Icewind Dale, which Auril, the Frostmaiden, has enveloped in perpetual darkness.
- The adventure will take place wholly in arctic wastelands, small settlements, and various dungeons.
- The adventure features themes of survival, horror, and isolation, but also has comedy, Indiana Jones-style relic hunting, sci-fi elements, and classic high fantasy.

You can also ask the players if they would enjoy:

- An emphasis on wilderness survival, where the characters must battle constantly with the environment, or a less granular approach, where you don't bother too much with the minutia of survival?
- A sandbox-style game, where they are left to figure out for themselves where to go and what to do, or a more cohesive story, where the ultimate goal is clearer?

Their answers to these questions will help inform you on how to run the adventure, including which themes to emphasize and what style of play you should encourage.

Character Concepts & Backgrounds

Knowing the adventure's theme and setting, the players should have an easier time putting together characters that would work well and be enjoyable to play. If you want to use the secrets included in the book (pg. 14), you can start by asking the players:

- If they would like to draw secrets before making characters, since some secrets can have a big impact on a character's background, or prefer secrets that don't interfere too much with character backgrounds (see 'Character Secrets' on pg. 7 of this document).

Whether you use secrets or not, you can inform the players that:

- The characters should have a reason for being in Icewind Dale. You can let them draw inspiration from the Character Hooks in the book (pg. 13).
- All races can be found in Icewind Dale, but humans and dwarves are particularly common.
- Characters that work well in cold environments and have spells/abilities that are effective against arctic threats and creatures may be more enjoyable to play.

If you're not afraid of giving mild spoilers, you can also tell the players that:

- Evil druids and wizards, duergar, devil worshipers, undead, dragons, giants, and perhaps even the Frostmaiden herself, are among the possible threats in the adventure. Characters with backgrounds that involve these will work well.
- The adventure may also have something to do with ancient artifacts and epic magic long lost and forgotten – characters who have an interest in such things will probably feel right at home.

Story Hooks & Motivation

In the adventure as written, we're given no clear, singular story and hook, so it pays to make sure that the players have a firm reason for why their character is an adventurer – someone who will go on more or less any adventure in front of them. You may want to emphasize that this isn't about deciding *if* the characters want to go on adventures and accomplish minor tasks and quests, but *why* they want to do so. Especially if you're starting at 1st level, the adventure will at times almost require that the characters are willing to accept various tasks and quests simply because they're adventurers.

At its core, there's two types of motivation that works well with this adventure:

- ***Opportunist.*** The character seeks to exploit the chaos that reigns in Icewind Dale to amass riches and power.
- ***Fledgling Hero.*** The character seeks to aid the people of Icewind Dale – either because they live there, or because they were sent there to do so – in any way they can, with the ultimate goal of breaking Auril's spell.

When both you and your players know clearly what motivates the characters, it becomes easier to set up a base hook for the adventure, as well as making sure the characters are properly motivated to embark on the adventure. In the section 'Adventure Hooks' on the following page, you will find more information about how you can hook the characters into the adventure to begin with, either as a group or separately.

As we cover the various chapters of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* in coming DM's resources, we will also discuss specific hooks for smaller quests and subplots as they occur, and how you can ensure that the characters stay motivated throughout.

Adventure Hooks

As mentioned before, *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* has three separate stories. This can make it more difficult to determine how best to hook the characters into the adventure. In this section, we will take a closer look at the various hooks presented in the book and provide some additional hooks you can use to get the player characters invested in Icewind Dale.

Character Hooks

The campaign book presents various hooks (pg. 13) tied to the characters' backgrounds. A handful of these has the character being a local of Icewind Dale – Folk Hero, Outlander, Soldier, and Urchin – while the rest provides various reasons for why the character has come to Icewind Dale from elsewhere. Only one actually provides an *real* hook that is more than just a reason why the character is in Icewind Dale: the Acolyte, which has the character traveling to Ten Towns to break Auril's spell of eternal darkness.

All told, these character hooks can help the players come up with explanations for why their characters are in Icewind Dale, but don't do much to actually hook them into the campaign's story.

For Gold and Glory

The most common motivation for adventurers is gold and glory. While Icewind Dale doesn't seem to promise much of either, the potential for heroes to arise is always greatest where the outlook is bleakest. The characters may find themselves in Icewind Dale simply because they think there's an opportunity to become rich and famous heroes. If that is their primary motivation, you will need to add some additional incentives along the way, since many of the quests in the book offer no promises of tangible rewards. This is something we provide advice for in DM's resources for later chapters.



On a Mission

A surefire way to make sure that the characters know what they're supposed to do and why they're in Icewind Dale, is to start them off with a mission. While this mission should be clear enough to leave no confusion about the goal, it also needs to be vague enough to encompass the multitude of different quests and stories in *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*. This means the mission should probably be some variation of:

> "Go to Icewind Dale and help out the troubled Ten-Towns as best you can, possibly even ending Auril's Everlasting Rime."

Below are some ideas for factions that could have hired one or more of the characters to take on this mission.

Council of Speakers. Ten-Town's ruling council has come together to hire adventurers to aid the people of Icewind Dale: "In times like these, we need someone who are willing to travel around the Ten-Towns, acting as beacons of hope and providing aid to any who needs it".

Emerald Enclave. This group of druids, rangers, and similar folk seek to restore and preserve the natural balance in Ten-Towns: "The darkness that has taken hold over Ten-Towns is unnatural and upsets the natural order. Find a way to end it and restore balance."

Harpers. This benevolent faction hires the party to aid Ten-Towns however they can: **"**The poor folk of Ten-Towns are suffocating in darkness and isolation. Do what you can to aid the people of Ten-Towns and shine a little light in their lives."

Lord's Alliance. This confederation of powerful northern cities want to restore trade with Ten-Towns: **"**Darkness, chaos, and lawlessness reigns in Icewind Dale these days, making trade with the towns nearly impossible. Do what you can to restore order in Icewind Dale and, if at all possible, end the spell of darkness that has been cast on the land."

Order of the Gauntlet. This faction of knights and paladins seek to stamp out the evil that is growing in Icewind Dale: **"**Ten-Towns has fallen into depravity, some cities even going as far as sacrificing people to appease the evil Auril! Be the champions of order and justice that Ten-Towns desperately needs in this time."

Zhentarim. This group of scoundrels and ruthless merchants seek a foothold in Icewind Dale (beyond their presence in Targos): "Go to Ten-Towns and ingratiate yourself with the townsfolk and their leaders. Become the heroes they so desperately need, so that when the dust settles, they will beg for us to stay and lead them."

Missions Rewards

If the characters have received their mission from a faction, you can reward them as thus:

- 1 renown per quest completed in Chapters 1 & 2.
- 10 renown for dealing with Xardorok and the dragon, minus 1 for each town that is destroyed by the dragon.
- 10 renown for ending Auril's Everlasting Rime

If the characters need monetary compensation as well (or if they're hired by the Council of Speakers), they will also receive a total of 1,000 gp for stopping Xardorok, and 2,500 gp for ending Auril's Everlasting Rime.

Starting at Higher Levels

Because the campaign is so modular and divided into different parts, starting at higher levels is relatively simple. Below are some quick pointers for how and where to start the adventure at higher levels.

Starting at 2nd Level

For experienced players who don't really care for level 1 play – where characters are incredibly fragile and can't do a lot – starting at 2nd level may be preferable. Luckily, this is very easy in this campaign. Most of the content in Chapter 1 is tailored to 2nd-level characters anyway, so skipping 1st level only requires you to perhaps level the characters up a bit slower and maybe scale up the quest in Bryn Shander – that's about it.

Starting at 3rd Level

You can still lead with Chapter 1, even if the characters start at 3rd level, but you may want to keep the chapter a bit shorter, and focus on the more difficult quests and locations. Xardorok and the duergar's presence in the region may serve as the hook, and you can steer the characters toward the southern towns: Caer-Dineval, Caer-Konig, and Easthaven, where they can quickly unravel the duergar plot before heading into Icewind Dale and toward Xardorok's Fortress.

Starting at 4th–6th Level

When starting the adventure at 4th–6th level – perhaps coming from a different campaign, see 'Starting from Other Campaigns' on this page – you will probably want to lead with Xardorok and his duergar. In this case, the mission – stop the duergar before they destroy Ten-Towns – makes for a very direct and easy-to-follow hook.

Even so, you will probably still want to give the characters a chance to experience and explore Ten-Towns, since the dragon's attacks on the town don't carry the same weight or importance if the characters aren't just a little invested in, or familiar with, the towns.

Starting at 7th Level or Higher

If you start the characters at 7th level or higher, you can head straight to Auril's abode or even the Caves of Hunger, leading with the quest to end Auril's Everlasting Rime and/or locate the Netherese Necropolis. If you're going with the latter, you may want to cut Auril's Everlasting Rime out of the adventure entirely, as the darkness it has cast across Icewind Dale won't mean as much to characters who haven't really been there and seen its effect. In this event, simply exploring the Netherese necropolis could be enough quest on its own. If you have already played through a different campaign, you can have the *mythallar* (or some other ancient artifact) in Ythryn be the key to preventing or stopping some other disaster or calamity the characters care more about from earlier adventures.



Starting from Other Campaigns

If you're already playing – or have finished up – one of the other published campaigns, you may want to have that adventure lead into this one. Luckily, because *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* is so modular and can be started at different levels, this isn't too difficult. Below is inspiration and advice for starting from three other published campaigns (beware, spoilers!).

Ghosts of Saltmarsh

Several of the *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*-adventures can lead into *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*.

Characters that have 'dealt' with the lizardfolk in Chapters 2 & 3, or the sahuagin in Chapter 6, may learn that the sahuagin have moved south and begun terrorizing the shorelines there because a curse of terrible cold has wrecked their usual territories to the north. Deal with the curse in Icewind Dale and end the sahuagin threat for good!

You can also have the characters learn about Xardorok and his plans for a chardalyn dragon from the shaman aboard the 'Emperor of the Waves' – a follower of Lolth, who hates the duergar deeply.

Alternatively, the cultists on Abbey Isle are followers of Asmodeus, who were ransacked by Levistus' cultists (from Caer-Dineval) trying to learn the archfiend's plans in Icewind Dale. The surviving cultists know that Asmodeus has grand designs for Icewind Dale and that he is using a duergar as his instrument of destruction!

Lost Mine of Phandelver

If the group is playing through the Starter Set-adventure *Lost Mine of Phandelver*, the characters should be around 5th level when it ends.

If you haven't finished the *Lost Mine of Phandelver* yet, you can have the secret map found in the Wave Echo Cave be a map that shows the location of Xardorok's fortress in Icewind Dale, along with a brief outline of his plan to build a chardalyn dragon – plans The Black Spider stole from duergar he abducted in the Underdark. If the characters tell anyone – such as Sildar or Gundren – about the map or the plans, the NPC will urge them to head to Icewind Dale to stop the evil duergar!

If you have already wrapped up *Lost Mine of Phandelver*, you can instead have Sildar or Gundren approach the characters with information about the darkness that has settled over Icewind Dale and urge them to go see if they can help out. See the 'Lord's Alliance' under 'On a Mission' for inspiration.

Waterdeep: Dragon Heist

If the characters finish *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* in good standing with a faction, that faction's representative can approach them with news of the disturbance in Icewind Dale, using the mission statement from 'On a Mission' on the previous page. You can also have Laeral Silverhand deliver the new mission to the characters.

If the characters end up in bad standing with Waterdeep's authorities or various factions they have double-crossed, you can have any NPC that is still friendly to them – or just neutral – strongly suggest that they go to Icewind Dale, since it is the ideal place for troublemakers to lay low while things 'cool down'. You can also have Laeral Silverhand banish the characters to Icewind Dale if she discovers that they have stolen from the city, informing them that dealing with the troubles in Icewind Dale will be their way of doing penance.

Character Secrets

The characters secrets presented in 'Appendix B' of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* is a fun little addition that you can use to spice up your game. Guidance for using these hooks are given in the book (pg. 14), which we add to below by clearly laying out the different types of secrets and how you can use them.

Types of Secrets

While some of the secrets can have a very big impact on the characters and even the campaign as a whole, others have very little influence on either. We can separate the secrets into three general 'types': useful secrets, story secrets, and flavor secrets.

Useful Secrets

There are a handful of secrets that boosts the character's abilities and give them tangible in-game benefits.

- Doppelganger
- Littlest Yeti
- Midwinter Child
- Orc Stone
- Owlbear Whisperer

Out of these, Doppelganger, Midwinter Child, and Orc Stone provide the most tangible benefits and will make the character significantly stronger.

Story Secrets

There are a handful of secrets that tie into the story or locations that the characters may arrive at on their own:

- Escaped Prisoner
- Old Flame
- Pirate Cannibal
- Reghed Heir
- Runaway Author
- Spy

These secrets provide some background information for the characters, but, most importantly, they can actually come into play on their own throughout the campaign, without you having to any additional work.

Flavor Secrets

The rest of the secrets serve mainly as flavor that can provide some background information:

- Alagondar Scion
- Drizzt Fan
- Elusive Paramour
- Reincarnation
- Ring Hunter
- Slaad Host

In most cases, the only difference between these secrets and the Character Hooks (ID:RotF, pg. 13) is that they are more specific, giving the DM a little more to work with if you want to tie them into the story.

Using Secrets

Whether or not you want to include these secrets is up to you – and if you think the players will enjoy them.

Consider the Ramifications

Some of the secrets fundamentally change a character's backstory, so if you have players that write pages of backstory and really pour their heart and soul into them, they may not appreciate drawing a 'Doppelganger'-secret or 'Pirate Cannibal'-secret that completely negates everything they had in mind for their character.

If this is the case, you will probably want to have players draw secrets *before* they make their characters, so they can form their backgrounds around the secret. You can also choose to include only more 'harmless' secrets that have minimal influence on a character's background and personality, such as 'Drizzt Fan', 'Old Flame', 'Owlbear Whisperer', and 'Ring Hunter'.

Maintaining Balance

Depending on the sentiment of your players, you may find that having one player draw an immensely useful secret such as 'Midwinter Child' can cause envy with a character that draws 'Drizzt Fan', or a similarly neglibile secret. You can avoid this issue by either only using the secrets that give boosts in power (listed under 'Useful Secrets'), or by excluding the useful secrets – or at least the strongest ones, such as 'Doppelganger', 'Midwinter Child', and 'Orc Stone'.



Wilderness Survival

The book presents information and rules for Wilderness Survival in Icewind Dale (pg. 11). Below is some general advice for using and adapting these rules.

Avalanches

In brief summary, the rules for avalanches are as follows:

- Each character rolls initiative as the avalanche comes.
- On initiative 10 and 0, the avalanche moves 300 ft.
- A character caught in an avalanche makes a DC 15 Strength saving throw each time it moves, taking 1d10 bludgeoning damage on a failure (success halves).
- Creatures in the avalanche are blinded and restrained, and gain a level of exhaustion every 5 minutes. They can free themselves as an action with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, but if it fails three times, they can't try again. Other creatures can spend 1 minute digging a buried creature out.

With these rules, an avalanche's lethality depends entirely on how wide it is, how close it is to the characters when they notice it, and how far it travels after hitting them. Since you set these parameters, you essentially decide from the start who will be caught in the avalanche, and who won't. If you want rules that are a bit less rigid, you can use alternative rules below.

Optional: Avalanche as a Skill Challenge

Below is a way to run an avalanche as a skill challenge.

Setting the DC. First, determine the DC for all skill checks and saving throws during the challenge: DC 10 is easy, DC 13 is moderate, and DC 15 is hard.

Skill Checks. Each character makes three checks to determine how soon they notice the avalanche and how cleanly they get out of the avalanche's path – or find something to hold on to! – before they are swept away:

- Wisdom (Perception) check.
- Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.
- Strength (Athletics) check.

A character proficient in the Nature or Survival skills has advantage on all checks. When the checks are made, count each character's successful checks:

- **3 Successes.** The character gets clear without issue.
- **2 Successes.** The character gets clear but takes 1d10 bludgeoning damage in the process.
- **1 Success.** The character is swept away, taking 2d10 bludgeoning damage and ending up partially buried.
- **0 Successes.** The character is swept away, taking 3d10 bludgeoning damage and ending up buried.

Aftermath. When the avalanche is over, the characters are probably spread around the mountainside – some are still at the top, while others have been swept to the bottom. It is now a race to extricate buried characters:

- **Partially Buried.** A partially buried character is restrained, but has its head and arms free. It, or another creature within 5 feet of it, can spend 1 minute and make a Strength (Athletics) check to get it free.
- **Buried.** A buried character is blinded and restrained, and must make a Constitution saving throw at the end of each minute, suffering one level of exhaustion on a failure. The DC increases by 1 each minute. A buried character cannot extricate itself, unless it has magic or features that can aid it. Other creatures can locate a buried character by spending 1 minute and succeeding on a Wisdom (Perception) check, and extricate it by spending 1 minute and succeeding on a Strength (Athletics) check.

Blizzards

In brief summary, the rules for blizzards are as follows:

- Lasts 2d4 hours.
- Hearing is limited to 100 ft., visibility limited to 30 ft.
- Extinguishes open flames, erases tracks, and makes nonmagical flight nearly impossible.
- Disadvantage on ranged weapon attacks, Perception checks that relies on hearing, and – if not wearing goggles – Perception checks that rely on sight.
- A creature must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of its turn to maintain concentration.
- If they travel during a blizzard, the party must make DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) checks each hour to stay on course. If they fail by 5+, a party member becomes lost.

In short, a blizzard can affect the party by making combat difficult, causing delay, and splitting the party.

Using Blizzards

Even though the adventure includes rules for running a blizzard, it doesn't mean that you have to use blizzards frequently. When deciding whether or not to use a blizzard, you may want to ask yourself what it accomplishes. Blizzards are best used when:

- You want to make an encounter more challenging or interesting by having it take place during a blizzard.
- The characters are in a hurry, and you want to force them to choose between staying put or continuing on.

If the blizzard doesn't add anything to the current situation, it is nothing more than a boring inconvenience, where you roll some dice to determine how many hours the characters waste. In that case, you should probably just roll quickly through it, or skip it entirely.

Reducing Rolls. As written, the characters have to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check each hour while traveling through the blizzard, which can potentially last up to 8 hours. If you want to avoid having to roll eight survival checks in a row, you can choose that they always make three rolls, regardless of the duration of the blizzard or the journey in front of them.

Overland Speed

The overland speeds listed in the book (pg. 11), seem incredibly slow, even if we assume that characters are traveling through deep snow. A character without snowshoes' pace of 1/4 mile per hour comes out to a speed of about 2 feet per round, while a dogsled – ostensibly made for traveling on ice and snow – covers only a distance of 1 mile per hour (a speed of roughly 9 feet per round), even though real-world dogsleds usually average around 5 mph even in the worst conditions.

Increasing Overland Travel Speed

If you double the listed speeds you will come a bit closer to realistic paces, without greatly impacting the travel distances assumed in book. Remember, most of the overland travel speeds listed by each town assumes travel by road, so they aren't impacted by this change – but the road-pace of around 1.5 mph by foot now matches up better with overland travel speeds in the wilderness.

Overland Travel

	— Distance per hour —	
Method of Travel	**Original**	**Increased**
Dogsled	1 mile	2 miles
On foot, with snowshoes	1/2 mile	1 miles
On foot, without snowshoes	1/4 mile	½ mile



Chapter 1: Ten-Towns

Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden starts in the frontier setting that is Ten-Towns. Isolated and beset by foes from both within and outside their town's borders, each of the ten towns are struggling to survive Auril's Everlasting Rime.

On the following pages, we will go over the material presented in Chapter 1 of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*. We start by giving a brief overview of what's going on in the chapter, before discussing which town you can start the adventure in and how to run the starting quests. Next, we'll go over each of the ten towns, summarizing and evaluating each while offering advice on how to run them, including guidelines for adjusting encounter difficulty. Lastly, you will find advice about how you can guide the party through Ten-Towns and establish a loose structure for the chapter.

It's strongly recommended that you read through Chapter 1 of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* reading the following pages. And always remember, the advice and ideas given here are options – you know best what works at your table.

Overview

The first chapter of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* is essentially a setting description with a bunch of quests sprinkled in. The main purpose of the chapter can be summarized like this:

- Get the characters familiar with Icewind Dale and make them invested in Ten-Towns before the dragon is unleashed on the towns in Chapters 3 and 4.
- Level the characters up to 4th level, so they're ready to head into Icewind Dale proper.
- Give information about or foreshadow later events, NPCs, and locations, such as Auril the Frostmaiden, the Arcane Brotherhood, and Xardorok Sunblight.

With that in mind, let's take a closer look at how we can make Chapter 1 as fun and manageable as possible for both you and the players.

Starting Town

The first order of business is to determine a starting town. The book tells you to just pick one, or roll one at random, but also suggests that you pick Bryn Shander if in doubt. This makes good sense – as written, Bryn Shander is clearly the obvious choice. It has a simple quest tailored to 1st-level characters, it is central in Icewind Dale, and both starting quests fit well when starting in Bryn Shander. It is also the place newcomers to Icewind Dale would naturally go first. So, unless you have a good reason to start the adventure elsewhere, you probably won't regret starting the story in Bryn Shander.

Starting Quests

There's two starting quests presented in Chapter 1: 'Cold-Hearted Killer' and 'Nature Spirits'. These quests are meant to get the adventure started and get the characters moving around Ten-Towns and Icewind Dale.

Cold-Hearted Killer

In quick summary, this quest plays out as follows:

- **Getting the Quest.** Retired bounty hunter Hlin Trollbane approaches the party in a tavern and tells them that she thinks Sephek Kaltro, a merchant's guard, is behind recent murders.
- **Find Sephek.** The party must find Sephek by following Torg's caravan as it travels around Ten-Towns.
- **Slay Sephek.** Once they find the caravan, the characters must contend with Sephek and perhaps the merchant Torrga and the caravan's other guards.

This quest accomplishes two things: it ties into Auril's presence in Icewind Dale (Sephek is controlled by a winter spirit) and it forces the characters to travel to different towns in search of Torg's caravan. Note that Sephek is a very tough challenge for 1st-level characters, so it is probably best to only allow characters to catch up with him when they are 2nd-level or higher.

Adapting Cold-Hearted Killer

One potential issue with Cold-Hearted Killer is that it is a bit too straight-forward. As presented in the book, Hlin Trollbane straight out tells the characters that Sephek is the killer, based on nothing other than her gut feeling ("I'm guessing he's good with a blade" and "it was like the cold couldn't touch him").

If you want the quest to a bit more of a murder mystery, you can have Hlin be less confident in her suspicions, leaving room for the characters to do a little investigation on their own. This isn't overly difficult to do, and will make the eventual discovery of Sephek as the killer feel more earned. Instead of having Hlin declare Sephek the killer, you can change her reasoning to something like:

> "These three murders have two things in common. First, all three victims live in towns that hold lotteries to determine who to sacrifice to Auril: Bryn Shander, Targos, and Easthaven. I heard that the glass blower 'twas killed in Bryn Shander had been bragging about bribing officials to keep his name out of the lottery – may have some to do with it."
>
> "Second, all three murders happened while the travelling merchant company Torg's was in town. I know, because I make a habit of keeping track of where Torrga Icevein – the owner of Torg's – goes. Always causing trouble, that one!"
>
> "I don't know who's doin' them murders, but I'd bet me pa's beard that it's got something to do with those lotteries – and with that scoundrel Torrga and her thievin' caravan!"

This leaves the characters with two options for solving the mystery: try to find out where Torg's is heading and intercept it, or ask around about the victims in Targos, or Easthaven to learn more. Hlin urges them to hurry, saying that there's only a week or so (you decide) to the next lottery, which may spark another round of murders.

Investigating the Murders. In each town, the party can speak with the official responsible for the lottery.

In Bryn Shander, we can create the NPC Tilna Melo (CG human commoner), who grudgingly accepted the dwarf glassblower Branak's bribe. She divided the 10 gp bribe between the Bryn Shander's poorest families.

In Easthaven, we make up a halfling NPC named Tegon Dapperfeet (N halfling commoner), who serves as aide to the town Speaker. He kept the name of his sister, the halfling trapper Elsie Dapperfeet, out of the lottery.

In Targos, Skath (LE tiefling veteran, desribed in ID:RotF, pg. 56), who hangs out at 'Three Flags Sailing', is responsible for the lottery. He openly admits to accepting a bribe from the shipbuilder Terren – and urges other people to bribe him if they want to stay out of the lottery too.

All three officials can remember being asked about the bribes by an unnerving, under-dressed, blue-eyed human man shortly before the murders happened. Whether intimidated by the man's icy weapons or persuaded by his charm, each gave up the name of the person that would soon after be murdered. Not eager to divulge their own involvement, they haven't spoken about this to anyone else. This information should make Sephek the obvious culprit once the party gets a description of him.

Example. For an example of how to run this quest, see 'Cold-Hearted Killer as Structure' on pg. 16.

Nature Spirits

In quick summary, this quest plays out as follows:

- **Getting the Quest.** The acolyte Dannika Greysteel offers 25 gp and a magic lantern if the characters can find her a live chwinga.
- **Find Chwingas.** The characters must travel from town to town using the lantern to look for chwingas.
- **Confronting Chwingas.** The characters eventually find the chwingas' tracks and can convince a chwinga to follow them back to Dannika by playing nice with it.

This quest's main purpose is to get the characters moving from town to town – and to offer a cute little scene at the end, where the characters can have a tea party with the chwingas and receive supernatural charms. As written, this quest works well if you prefer something light and fanciful to get the party moving about Ten-Towns – a breath of fresh air!

Spicing it Up. If you want to add just a bit drama to the last run-in with the chwingas, you can have an encounter occur as the characters run into them, where the creatures encountered – a yeti, a frost druid and an awakened beast, or some chardalyn berserkers – actively try to kill or capture the chwingas.



Running Ten-Towns

On the following pages, we will go over each of the ten towns, offering advice on how to run them. Only locations and encounters where there's a need for comments are included.

Under each town, there's also a note about the difficulty of the town's quests and other encounters, including advice on how you can adjust the difficulty to parties of lower or higher levels. Bear in mind that every party is different, and that both party size, character levels, equipment, and player behavior can impact how easy or difficult an encounter is, so the adjustments below each town are only suggestions, and can be implemented wholly, partially, or not at all.

Bremen

In this friendly town, the characters can hear a story about tieflings and black ice, which may send them toward Caer-Dineval. They can also get the quest 'Lake Monster', which has them sailing out to confront an *awakened* plesiosaurus, which can in turn foreshadow Ravisin, the Frostmaiden's servant near Lonelywood.

Lake Monster

This quest is short and not overly challenging. It does have a few issues that can be quickly ironed out.

Getting the Quest. There's a long background for Grynsk, a dwarven fisherman that wants the characters to go fishing, which essentially boils down to Grynsk mistaking the party for fishers, asking them to catch trout for coppers, and dismissing them if they refuse. Then a half-elf researcher arrives, chastising the dwarf for sending the characters to their death for his own gain, before proceeding to do exactly the same. Tali offers no reward at all, even though they actually have a reward ready (a *spell scroll of animal friendship* and 5 gp) if the characters are successful. Consider having Tali simply present the promise of this reward to begin with. You can also have Tali approach the characters at an inn or tavern in town if the characters don't come by the docks or you don't want to bother with Grynsk's story.

Scouting the Lake. There's a table with all kinds of events that can happen while the characters wait for the plesiosaurus to appear. You can also just pick one or two of these events to help pass the time while they wait, before having the plesiosaurus show up after a few hours – just so things aren't dragged out too long.

Clever Beast. As the plesiosaurus appears, we are presented with another rolling table. Once again, you may want to just choose what the plesiosaurus does. Having the plesiosaurus first splash water on the boats before diving under and try to capsize a boat gives the characters a chance to resolve matters peacefully, while also making the encounter somewhat exciting.

Lake Monster Map. To help you run the 'Lake Monster'-quest, these resources include a map for a possible encounter with the plesiosaurus.

Adjusting Difficulty

The 'Lake Monster'-quest is the only provided option for combat in Bremen, but is written in a way where non-combat or non-lethal combat is most likely, so there should be no reason to adjust difficulty.

Bryn Shander

In Icewind Dale's largest settlement, the characters can learn about a researcher, which may send them toward 'Black Cabin' (pg. 116). They can also get the quest 'Foaming Mugs', which sends them halfway to Kelvin Cairn in search of a band of iron-stealing goblins from Karkolohk (pg. 140). In summary, Bryn Shander has some interesting locations with various rumors and bits of information, but isn't otherwise too busy. This makes it an ideal starting town.

House of the Morninglord

The gnome in this temple, Copper, can ask the characters to check in on his friend, who is working to end the eternal winter, in the Black Cabin (pg. 116). The Black Cabin isn't impossible for lower level characters to contend with, but you may still want to withhold information about it until the characters are a bit higher level and better prepared to travel in Icewind Dale, especially if you use Bryn Shander as starting town.

Foaming Mugs

This quest is pretty simple: kill some goblins, retrieve a sled filled with iron ingots, and get a reward.

Getting the Quest. It seems a bit odd that the dwarves will pay the characters 50 gp *each* to retrieve a sled with iron ingots worth only 150 gp in total. You may want to reduce the reward to either one 50 gp gemstone, or one 10 gp gemstone each.

Goblins. Six goblins at once can be difficult for 1st-level characters, but luckily they can easily surprise the goblins hauling the sled. You can also make negotiation easier by having beleaguered goblins freely suggest an alternative to continued combat: "we makes trade, yes, dumb iron for real treasure? Maybe you have gold, food, warm blanky, anything?" and allow the characters to feel clever by buying back the iron for a couple of rations or a few gold pieces.

Map. To help you run the 'Foaming Mugs'-quest, these resources include a map for a possible encounter with the goblins in the snow.

Adjusting Difficulty

The 'Foaming Mugs'-quest makes for a suitable encounter for 1st-level characters. Below is advice for adjusting encounters in Bryn Shander to characters of higher levels.

- **2nd Level.** Replace two **goblins** by the sled with a **polar bear** (friendly to the goblins) that smells the characters when they sneak up, negating surprise.
- **3rd Level.** Add two **polar bears** (friendly to the goblins) by the sled, that smell the characters when they sneak up, negating surprise.



Caer-Dineval

In Caer-Dineval, the characters can unravel a cult of devil-worshipers called the 'Knights of the Black Sword', get acquainted with Arcane Brotherhood-member Avarice, and learn about Xardorok's evil plans.

Knights of the Black Sword

It seems like good advice to only have the cultists initiate contact with the characters if they fulfill one of the requirements listed in the book (at the top of pg. 40). Otherwise, you may want to allow the characters to pass through Caer-Dineval without any overt attempts to lure them into the keep itself.

Adjusting Difficulty

Though none of the combatants encountered in the Keep at Caer-Dineval are particularly tough on their own, they are numerous enough to challenge 2nd-level characters. Below is advice for adjusting the difficulty to other levels.

- **1st Level.** Remove one **cultist** from each of the four towers (C4). Have Huarwar (C6) be a **cultist.**
- **3rd Level.** Replace one **cultist** in each of the four towers (C4) with a **cult fanatic**. Increase Kadroth's (C9) hit points to 50 and his spell DC to 14, and give him a 3rd-level spell slot and the spell *spirit guardians*.

Caer-Konig

In Caer-Konig, the characters can get the guest 'The Unseen', which will have them crossing paths with Xardorok Sunblight's son Nildar, and learn about Xardorok's intention to destroy Icewind Dale. As such, Caer-Konig ties in well with the story and Chapter 3 in particular – and can also lead characters to Easthaven.

The Unseen

This quest has a lot of build-up filling several pages in the book, which boils down to the characters tracking down invisible duergar who are stealing from the town.

Getting the Quest. If you don't want to leave it up to the characters' altruism whether or not they accept this quest, you can have Trovus offer up a relic of his adventuring days – a *breastplate of warning (dragons)* – as a reward if the characters succeed.

Following The Tracks. The book dictates that the characters lose the tracks about 50 feet away from the building, but can pick a new track up again in the morning. This little hurdle could cause the characters to wander around aimlessly, or completely abandon the search, and doesn't seem to add anything to the adventure. To avoid issues, you may want just let the characters find the tracks on the first go.

The Duergar's Information. While foreshadowing Xardorok and the duergar threat is cool, you may not want to blow the lid off the whole operation just yet – it wouldn't do for the characters to go tromping off toward the mountains in search of Xardorok at 2nd level. You may decide that the common duergar don't know where Xardorok's fortress is, and give Nildar – who should know – a better chance of escaping (see 'Nildar's Escape'). The letter found in his quarters gives the party a clue on where to go next, so it's not just a dead end.

Breastplate of Warning (Dragons)

Armor (breastplate), common

This magic armor is inscribed with Draconic glyphs.

Warning (Dragons). This armor is created to warn against dragons. When a dragon is within 120 ft. of the armor, the glyphs on its surface glow with a dull, red light.

Nildar's Escape. As the Duergar Outpost is written, there's only a slim chance that Nildar can escape, even if he hears the characters comin, since his room is at the back of the fortress with only one way in or out. If you want to give Nildar a better chance of getting away – so he can't tell the party where Xardorok's fortress is, or so he can become a recurring villain – you can put a secret escape route in his chamber that leads to the western part of 'O8. Duergar Quarters'. If Nildar flees here, he will order the duergar in O8 and the spore servants in 'O7. Spore Servants' to cover his retreat, giving him at least a chance of getting away.

Adjusting Difficulty

The encounters in the 'Duergar's Hideout' are not too difficult and should be appropriate for 2nd-level adventurers. Below is advice for adjusting difficulty to characters of 1st or 3rd level.

- **1st Level.** Remove one sleeping **duergar** (O8) and 2 **spore servants** (O7). Reduce duergar hit points to 13.
- **3rd Level.** Add 1 duergar to O3 and O8. Increase Nildar's hit points to 40.

Dougan's Hole

In this unfriendly and desolate town, the characters can get the quest 'Holed Up', where they encounter devious winter wolves and an awakened mammoth. Dougan's Hole is one of the least developed towns, and its quest doesn't tie into the larger story.

Holed Up

This quest to free two children from an awakened mammoth and two winter wolves is very reminiscent of classic Brothers Grimm-adventures, and has a distinct fairytale-feel. There's an added benefit to this quest: it's not really tied to Dougan's Hole, and can very easily be plotted in anywhere else in Icewind Dale, whether as a random encounter while the characters are traveling, or in another town they pass by.

Getting the Quest. This quest isn't really given, as much as it dumps into the characters lap as they encounter the devious winter wolves outside town. If you want to use a more traditional approach, have the children's' mother Hilda beseech the adventurers for aid, since the Town speaker refuses to do anything, and offer her late husbands *boots of the winterlands* as a reward.

Adjusting Difficulty

The encounters in the 'Frost Giant Ice Lodge' are very difficult, and are best suited for characters of 3rd or 4th level. Below is advice for adjusting the difficulty to lower levels.

- **1st Level.** Koran and Kanan are awakened **wolves**. Norsu uses the **elephant** statblock and has four levels of exhaustion due to hunger (half speed & hit points, disadvantage on ability checks, attacks, & saves.)
- **2nd Level.** Koran and Kanan are awakened **dire wolves.** Norsu uses the **elephant** statblock.
- **3rd Level.** Norsu has three levels of exhaustion due to hunger (half speed, disadvantage on ability checks, attacks, and saving throws).

Easthaven

In this prosperous town, the characters can run into duergar and learn more about Xardorok's plans. They also witness the execution of a member of the Arcane Brotherhood, and get the quest 'Toil and Trouble', in which they must procure a *cauldron of plenty*. They may also be involved in capers by Zhentarim and Duergar.

All told, Easthaven is one of the most developed towns described in the book, featuring multiple quests and quest locations, as well as strong ties to the main story.

Easthaven Ferry

Unless you have a particular reason why you want the characters to find the duergar here early, you probably shouldn't make a big deal about the Easthaven Ferry to the characters until they have already been to Caer-Konig and dealt with Nildar. Since Durth, who lives on the ferry, has a map to Xardorok's fortress, characters may head there as soon as they find him – which may just be a bit too early.

Map. To help you run 'Easthaven Ferry', these resources include a map for a possible encounter aboard the Easthaven Ferry.

Toil and Trouble

This quest has the characters searching a hag's lair for some missing fishers.

Public Execution. This is a nice bit of foreshadowing for Dzaan, who may show up later in the adventure, but it does have potential to cause issues. The characters may try to intervene, for no other reason than adventurers are notoriously bad at just letting things happen without trying to insert themselves into the situation. To avoid a potential conflict here, you can either have Dzaan already burning when the characters arrive – his dying screams draw their attention! – or have Captain Arlaggath really underscore the wizard's crimes, and make very clear to the party that 12 well-armed soldiers (**veterans**) are nearby.

Adjusting Difficulty

As written, Easthaven is probably best suited for a party of 2nd-level adventurers. Below is advice for adjusting the difficulty to other levels.

- **1st Level.** Replace the **water weird** (U7) with an **ice mephit.** Remove the **will-o-wisp** (U10). Have just two **duergar** carry out 'The Chardalyn Caper'.
- **3rd Level.** Allow the **frost giant skeleton** (U9) to act at the end of the second round.



Flaming Longsword

Weapon (longsword), uncommon

The blade of this magic longsword is dyed a bright crimson.

Flaming. When you hit with an attack using this weapon, the target takes an extra 1d4 fire damage.

Good Mead

In this mead-hub, the characters can get the quest 'The Mead Must Flow' where they are tasked with tracking down a couple of verbeegs. They may also come to blows with the Zhentarim, as they involve themselves in election of a new speaker for the town. While fairly well-developed, Good Mead has only minimal ties to the overarching story of Icewind Dale.

The Mead Must Flow

This quest has the party tracking down a verbeeg and retrieving the town's honey mead.

Getting the Quest. If you don't think the characters will risk their lives just for free lodging and drink, you can sweeten the deal by offering them the now-deceased Speaker Kendrick's *flaming longsword* – which would be a suitable reward given his temperament and the name of the town's shrine to Tempus.

Adjusting Difficulty

The encounters are fairly difficult and will probably work best for characters of 3rd level or higher. Below is advice for adjusting difficulty to lower level characters.

- **1st Level.** Remove the **verbeeg marauders'** 'Multiattack'-feature and halve their hit points. Use a **brown bear** statblock for the cave bear.
- **2nd Level.** Remove the **verbeeg marauders'** 'Multiattack'-feature.

Lonelywood

In isolated and friendly Lonelywood, the characters can get the quest 'The White Moose', which sends them against an awakened white moose and the frost druid Ravisin. Lonelywood doesn't have much going on, besides foreshadowing Auril and leading to Bremen.

Elven Tomb

The party delves into an ancient elven tomb.

E4. Sarcophagus and Crystal Pillars. The mummy and the brazier is a cool touch, but since the party is unlikely to have a humanoid hand with them, they won't be able to get the fire going. If you want to make this more likely, you can allow a character to activate the brazier's magic by sticking its hand into the brazier while the other ingredients are burning – without taking any damage from the fire! You can also allow a non-humanoid hand – such as fox's paw – do the trick.

E5. Moon Dial & E7. Mirror of the Full Moon. The inscription in E5 about the mirror in E7 says that a character can have 'seven questions answered', but a *crystal ball* – which the mirror is described as – is used to cast *scrying*, not answer questions, and has no limitations of uses. If you want the inscription to make more sense, you can either have the mirror function like the spell *commune*, but with seven uses per day, or change the inscription in E5 to: "Gaze upon your own face and find who you seek".

Adjusting Difficulty

The encounters in 'The White Moose' are difficult, but should be manageable for a party of 3rd level or higher. Below is advice for adjusting difficulty to lower levels.

- **1st Level.** Skip any random combat encounters. Remove the **awakened white moose's** 'Multiattack'-feature and halve its hit points. Limit the **frost druid's** spellcasting to 2nd level and reduce its hit points to 40.
- **2nd Level.** Skip the **banshee**-encounter. Limit the **frost druid's** spellcasting to 3rd level or lower.

Targos

In this large town, the characters can get the quest 'Mountain Climb', in which they must travel to Kelvin's Cairn to rescue a wilderness guide and confront yetis. They can also get themselves entangled with the Zhentarim, if they're not careful. Targos doesn't tie too much into the larger story in Icewind Dale, but its quest serves well to get the party moving around Icewind Dale.

Mountain Climb

This quest is a fun little expedition that has the party traveling all the way to Kelvin's Cairn.

Getting the Quest. As written, the party is supposed to follow the dog to the home of Keegan and Garret. If you find that the characters do not oblige the dog, you can have Keegan show up looking for it instead, and then give the characters the quest as he sees them. If the characters don't seem particularly interested in traveling to Kelvin's Cairn without a suitable reward, you can have Keegan put a value on his scrimshander artwork – 40 gp – instead of saying it isn't worth much.

Journey to Kelvin's Cairn. If you double the overland travel pace as described on pg. 9 of this document, the 12-mile journey directly from Targos to Kelvin's Cairn through the Dwarven Valley takes 'only' 12 hours, or 1½ traveling days, if the characters have snow shoes. The characters can get there in 6 hours – a single day of travel – if they can acquire a dog sled.

Avalanche. Because of the way this scenario is set up, and how the rules for avalanches are written, most of the characters are unlikely to be able to move up to 100 ft. (depending on where they are) in difficult terrain in a single turn to avoid taking up to 3d10 bludgeoning damage from the avalanche. To allow you to easier adjust the difficulty of the avalanche, you can use the variant rules for avalanches given on pg. 9 of this document instead, and use the recommended DCs given under 'Adjusting Difficulty' below.

Adjusting Difficulty

The 'Mountain Climb'-quest should work for 2nd-level characters. Below is advice for adjusting difficulty.

- **1st Level.** Set the DC of the avalanche to 10. The **crag cats** in the 'Fallen Climber'-encounter flee if either is reduced to half hit points. Change the **yetis'** multiattack feature so they make two claw attacks or uses Chilling Gaze, and reduce their hit points to 30.
- **2nd Level.** Set the DC of the avalanche to 13.
- **3rd Level.** Set the DC of the avalanche to 15. Increase the male adult yeti's hit points to 70.



Termalaine

In this prosperous and friendly town, the characters can get the quest 'A Beautiful Mine', which has them clearing kobolds, a grell, and a ghost, out of a mine. Along the way, they may find a crystal connected to an illithid ship (see 'Id Ascendant', pg. 132).

A Beautiful Mine

This location runs pretty well, except for one potentially dangerous issue. In M3, a character who fails a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw is swept away to their death – you may want to give the character, or another character who can grab hold of them, a DC 10 Athletics check to prevent them from being swept away instantly.

Adjusting Difficulty

While the ghost in 'A Beautiful Mine' is dangerous, the encounters should still work for a 2nd-level party. Below is advice for adjusting difficulty to other levels.

- **1st Level.** Remove the grell's 'Multiattack'-feature. Janth's **ghost** only attempts to possess characters, and loses 10 hit points each time a possession ends.
- **3rd Level.** Double the number of **icewind kobolds.**

Summary

All told, each of the ten towns in Icewind Dale presents something of interest, making for viable and worthwhile adventure locations. Which of them you want to use should depend on your and your players' preferences, as well as how difficult you want encounters to be, and how you want to tie locations to the story. Below is a brief summary of the difficulty and story-ties of each town.

Difficulty

If you run the locations as described in the book, the towns' and their challenges can roughly be divided into three difficulties: easy, medium, or hard.

- **Easy (Level 1).** Bremen and Bryn Shander.
- **Medium (Level 2).** Caer-Dineval, Caer-Konig, Easthaven, and Termalaine.
- **Hard (Level 3+).** Dougan's Hole, Good Mead, and Lonelywood.

This doesn't mean that you can't run these locations even if the characters are lower or higher level than suggested here, just that you may have to make some adjustments to the encounters if you do.

Story

Some of the towns tie strongly into the three main plots, some can lead to other locations or quests – and some are more less completely disconnected from the rest of the campaign.

- **Bremen.** Can lead to Caer-Dineval, foreshadows Ravisin in Lonelywood.
- **Bryn Shander.** Can lead to Black Cabin & Karkolohk.
- **Caer-Dineval.** Foreshadows the Arcane Brotherhood and can lead to Xardorok.
- **Caer-Konig.** Can lead to Xardorok.
- **Dougan's Hole.** No ties.
- **Easthaven.** Foreshadows the Lost Spire of Netheril and the Arcane Brotherhood, can lead to Xardorok, and Targos.
- **Good Mead.** Can lead to Id Ascendant and Targos.
- **Lonelywood.** Foreshadows Auril, can lead to Bremen.
- **Targos.** Can lead to Bryn Shander, Caer-Dineval, Caer-Konig, and Kelvin's Cairn.
- **Termalaine.** Can lead to Id Ascendant.

Structuring Ten-Towns

While the Ten Towns make for an excellent sandbox – and sandboxes are fun! – you may still want to guide your players toward the content you think they would have most fun with. You can do this by giving them information that allows them to make free choices about where to go, but limiting the information to 2–3 of the towns or locations you think fits them best.

Choosing a General Direction

If you run the locations and quests as they are presented in the book, you may want to start the characters out with an easy quest and then steer them toward increasingly difficult quests. Likewise, it's also probably best not to steer the party towards Xardorok too soon, which means saving Caer-Dineval, Caer-Konig, and Easthaven for last.

Going off these observations, it seems like a good idea to start the adventure off in one of the central or western towns – Bremen, Bryn Shander, Targos, and Termalaine – to let the characters find their footing. Once they have reached 2nd or 3rd level, you can begin steering the action toward eastern towns – Caer-Dineval, Caer-Konig, and Easthaven – where the difficulty is greater and the story ties are stronger. Dougan's Hole, Good Mead, and Lonelywood are all quite tough and don't have particularly strong story ties, so you can hold off on these, or guide the party towards them once they have reached level 3.

Below is some advice on how you can build an open structure that steers the party without railroading them.

Cold-Hearted Killer as Structure

You can use the starting quest 'Cold-Hearted Killer' as a structure for the first chapter of the adventure. An example of how this can be accomplished is detailed below, but you can and should change things around to fit your preferences.

Bryn Shander. We start by changing the order of the murders, so that the first murder happened in Easthaven, the second in Bryn Shander, and the third in Targos. This gives us a more logical path of travel for the caravan (from south to north). Assuming that the characters start in Bryn Shander (see 'Starting Town'), it makes sense for them to head to Targos first to determine where the caravan is heading and/or learn more about the shipbuilder that was murdered there.

Targos. In Targos, they can ask around to find out that Skath (a **veteran** and Zhent mercenary who leads the militia) is responsible for the monthly lotteries. If they confront him – he often hangs out at 'Three Flags Sailing' – he freely admits to taking a bribe from Berren the Shipbuilder, and also that he said the same to that "weird, blue-eyed fellow that followed Torrag around" (Sephek) who asked him a few days ago if anyone had paid to get out of the lottery. The party has a suspect now, but don't know where Torg's is heading next.

Bremen/Termalaine. If the characters head up to Bremen or Termalaine to look for Torg's, they can complete the quests there, but don't find anyone else who has seen Torg's caravan (it didn't pass through there).

Targos. When the characters return to Targos (or if they decide to leave without heading to Bremen or Termalaine first), they are approached by Keegan or his dog Boy (ID:RotF, pg. 57), and given the quest 'Mountain Climb'. There's added incentive here – Keegan informs the party that Garret was heading to Caer-Konig and Kelvin's Cairn with a group of adventurers, and that the group accompanied Torg's at least some of the way, as the caravan was looking to make a shortcut across the Dwarven Valley. If the characters can find Garret, he'll surely know where Torg's was headed!

Torg's Location

Days before/after adventure start	Location
–5	Easthaven
–4	The Eastway
–3	Bryn Shander
–2	Targos
–1 & 0	Dwarven Valley
+1	Caer-Konig
+2	Caer-Dineval
+3	Easthaven
+4	Good Mead
+5	Dougan's Hole
+6	Good Mead
+7	Easthaven
+8	The Eastway
+9	Bryn Shander
+10	Targos

Kelvin's Cairn. When the characters find Garret, he can inform them that Torg's was heading to Caer-Konig, and planned to head west from there, going to Caer-Dineval, Easthaven, Good Mead, and Dougan's Hole. If the characters take the long route around to Kelvin's Cairn, they may run into Torg's on the way instead.

Catching Up. You can use the Torg's Location-table to determine when and where the characters catch up to Torg's, or simply decide when you think the time is right.

Summary. In the example detailed here, the adventure starts in Bryn Shander – where there's a 1st-level appropriate quest – before guiding them north, where there's towns with 2nd-level appropriate quests. It then steers them to the east, preferably starting with the less dangerous towns Caer-Konig, Caer-Dineval, and Easthaven, before possible leading them to Good Mead, and Dougan's Hole, where the toughest challenges are.

Using Rumors to Guide the Party

The book also provides ten rumors (pg. 18) that you can use to steer the party toward your preferred towns. As long as they have more than one viable option for where to go next, the players are unlikely to feel railroaded, and as long as they don't have too many, they probably won't end up feeling overwhelmed. Below is an example of how you can use rumors to guide the party.

Bryn Shander. The characters finish the quest in Bryn Shander, and get to 2nd level before hearing rumors 1 (Bremen), 9 (Targos), and/or 10 (Termalaine).

Bremen, Targos, & Termalaine. The characters finish quests in some or all of these three towns. If they don't pick up leads that steer them east or south on their own (the story about Huarwar in Bremen or the 'Mountain Climb'-quest in Targos), you can provide them with rumors 3 (Caer-Konig), 4 (Caer-Dineval), and/or 8 (Lonelywood), once they reach 3rd level.

Caer-Dineval & Caer-Konig. While handling quests in Caer-Dineval and Caer-Konig, the party are clued into the threat of Xardorok. This should eventually lead them to Easthaven, but if it doesn't, you can use rumor 6 to help them get there. Now they're 4th level and ready to take on the challenges of Icewind Dale – and Xardorok!

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