# In The Black Midwinter



A 3 Hour Festive Adventure
for 2nd-4th level characters

GUILD

# In The Black Midwinter

## A One-Off Festive Spectacular

A three-hour adventure for 2nd-4th level characters

by Simon Perrins

In The Black Midwinter is a Festive adventure, designed to be played in one session. The PCs battle an ancient evil threatening a remote village in the subarctic north. Very much the same as most D&D adventures, only this time, it's Christmas themed! This adventure is intended to be run as a one off, not entirely serious game separate from your regular campaign, but with some minor modifications, can be integrated into any setting. As long as your world has snow, you'll be fine. Mulled wine, stupid hats and holiday cheer not included, but very highly recommended.




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# Introduction To The Second Edition

*Chapter One:* The adventurers are travelling through a frozen wasteland, briefly get into combat with a red herring (not literally), and find an abandoned village.

*Chapter Two:* They investigate said village. There are options to explore a house filled with traps, and have multiple run ins with mischeivous dwarves, but these are not essential to the story, so can be cut if you want to get to the main bit.

*Chapter Three:* The players meet a mystical entity, who gives a bit of information, and, for his own amusement (and ours) forces them to use a very powerful and potentially very dangerous magic item. Fun!

*Chapter Four:* The big showdown with two legendary creatures who are, if I'm honest, not terribly differentiated. The characters must work out how to defeat these beasts from the clues they've uncovered during the course of the adventure, or use their natural cunning and ingenuity. Failing that, just hitting the monsters very very hard will also work.

*Wrap up:* If they're still alive, have it start snowing (but, you know, good , snow rather than evil, energy sapping snow), and wish everyone a Merry Midwinter. If they've all been killed, an alternate ending might be considered for characters in an ongoing campaign. They wake, as if from a dream, and the whole expedition into the icy wastes has just been a fever dream brought on by the excessive indulgences of Midwinter Celebration. And mildly poisoned orcish booze. And just when your players are complaining about the obvious cop out, have them notice they each have a rusted old sleighbell, with the words GRUSS VOM KRAMPUS embossed upon it.

If you're going to use cliches, use **all** the cliches!

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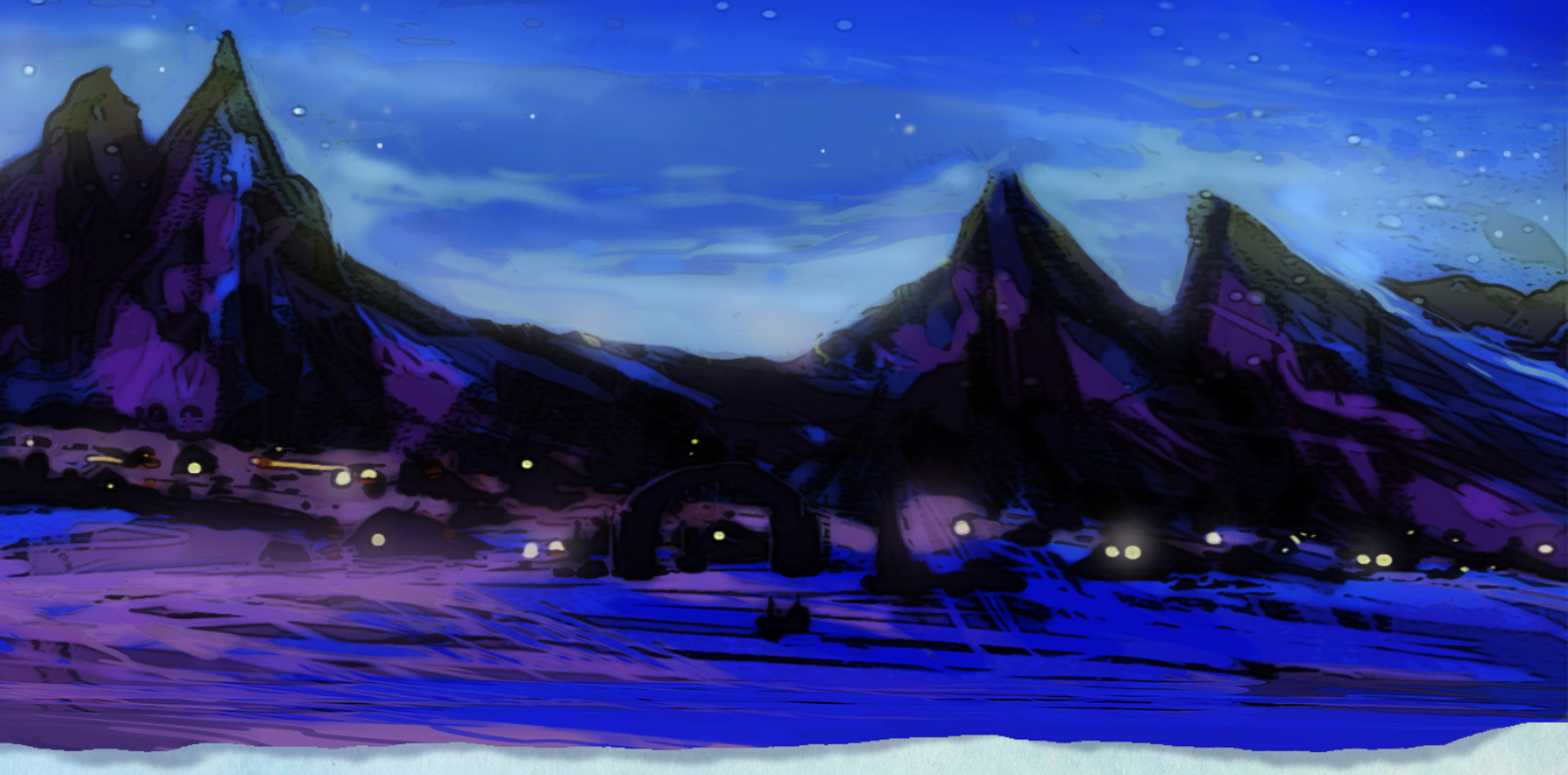


# Chapter 1: Snowbound

The adventure takes place during Midwinter, a Festival that celebrates the end of the year, and ushers in the new with hopes of prosperity and plenty. This can be swapped out for "Winter Solstice" or anything else appropriate to your setting. I've avoided using the word Christmas, but we all know that's what it is, and as I said, this isn't meant to be a particularly serious session, so use that if you prefer. When you're ready to start, read the following to your players:

> You are in the wilds of the frozen north, and the land of The Yeti. You have been hired by Djimmssun The Big, a local trader baron whose caravans have been disrupted by the actions of The Blizzard King - a particularly ghastly creature. You have been tracking it for several weeks, travelling further and further north, but the trail has gone cold (no pun intended). Beset by freakish unseasonal weather, supplies are critically low, and you are cold, tired and hungry.

The PCs have been travelling some time and are currently suffering from exhaustion. Depending on the difficulty you want to present at the opening, this can be set at Level 2 or 3 as per the Players' Handbook.

> As you are tracking the beast a terrible wind rises and you are caught in a vicious snowstorm. Abandoning the trail you cast about vainly looking for some shelter from the elements, and suddenly an abominable sight looms out of the flurries of snow and hail, and attacks, (with a great axe crafted from the bones of some unfathomable giant creature).

This is The Players' quarry, **The Blizzard King** (see **Appendix B**). For a more challenging encounter, include a number of **Snow Golems** (see **Appendix B**), that are hidden in the freezing mist, and attack at range with their missile attack. After a couple of rounds the beast disengages, hurling a fistful of hail into the eyes of its nearest attacker, and launches itself back into the freezing torrent at an unbelievable pace. Very soon, as quickly as it started, the storm subsides, yet The Blizzard King is nowhere to be seen.

**A Note On Boxed Text**

Boxed Text is provided here for the sake of consistency with other D&D adventures, but I can never make it work at the table. See Appendix E for alternatives to the boxed text.

## Midwinter's Ghost

You are off the trail now, and the night is drawing in. You are in danger of dying from exposure at this point, but up ahead you see a tall figure, clad in tattered black robes, trailing great iron chains. The figure silently regards you, and in a slow stately motion raises an arm. You realise it is pointing ahead. Following the direction, those of you with elven eyes can just about make out a small distant settlement. This is on none of your maps...

If the characters attack, use the stats for a **Wraith** (Monster Manual). The ghostly figure listens if the characters try to communicate with it, but it is guarded and is unlikely to answer. Its only aim is to indicate the town ahead.

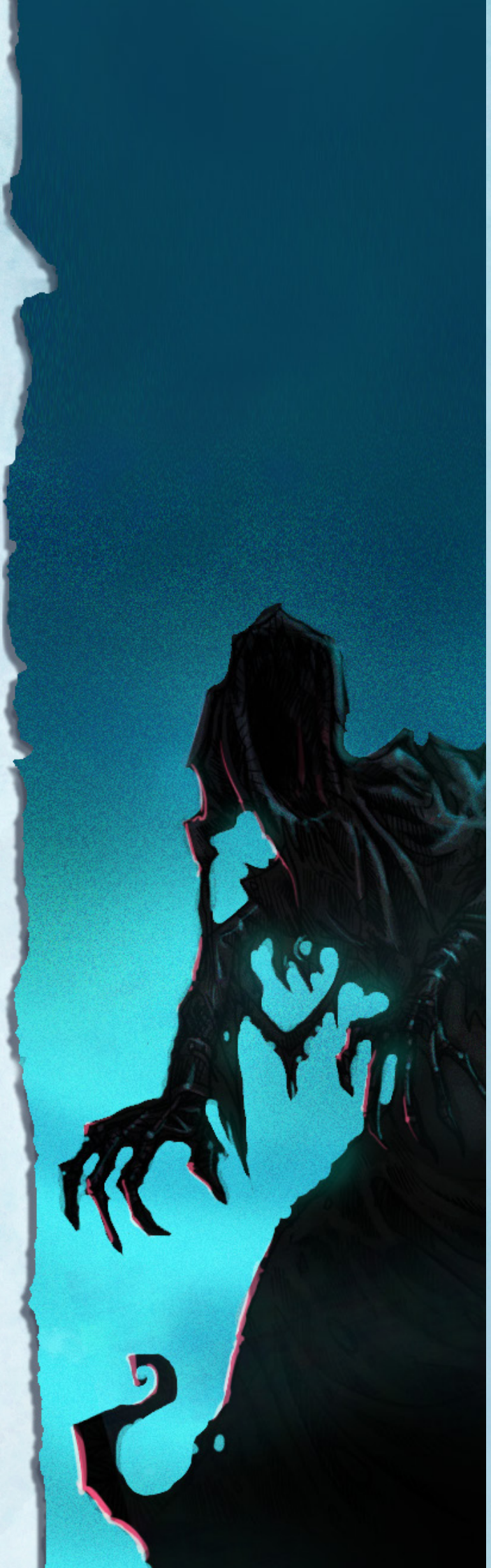
## Chapter 2: Cratch, The Forgotten Town

The entrance to the town is marked by a great stone archway **(1)**. This is frozen over, but the name of the town, Cratch, is legible. There are more carved letters in the stone arch that are obscured by frost, but this can be chipped away at (tedious, time consuming work, but not difficult), or melted by a flaming torch or fire based cantrip. Once legible, the words read:

*Midwinter's heart a song to sing*
*Lakeside watch a bell to ring*
*Solstice time return from roam*
*All kept safe within each home*

There is a great carved wooden goat stood on its hind legs **(2)**. There are ancient Runes worked into the base of the statue that name the beast as Julbocken (a DC13 Intelligence (Arcana) check will allow a PC to recall that, in local folklore this is The Goat of The Black Frost - see **Appendix C**, Secrets of Cratch)

A great stone statue stands in the centre of the village, depicting a mighty, barbaric seeming



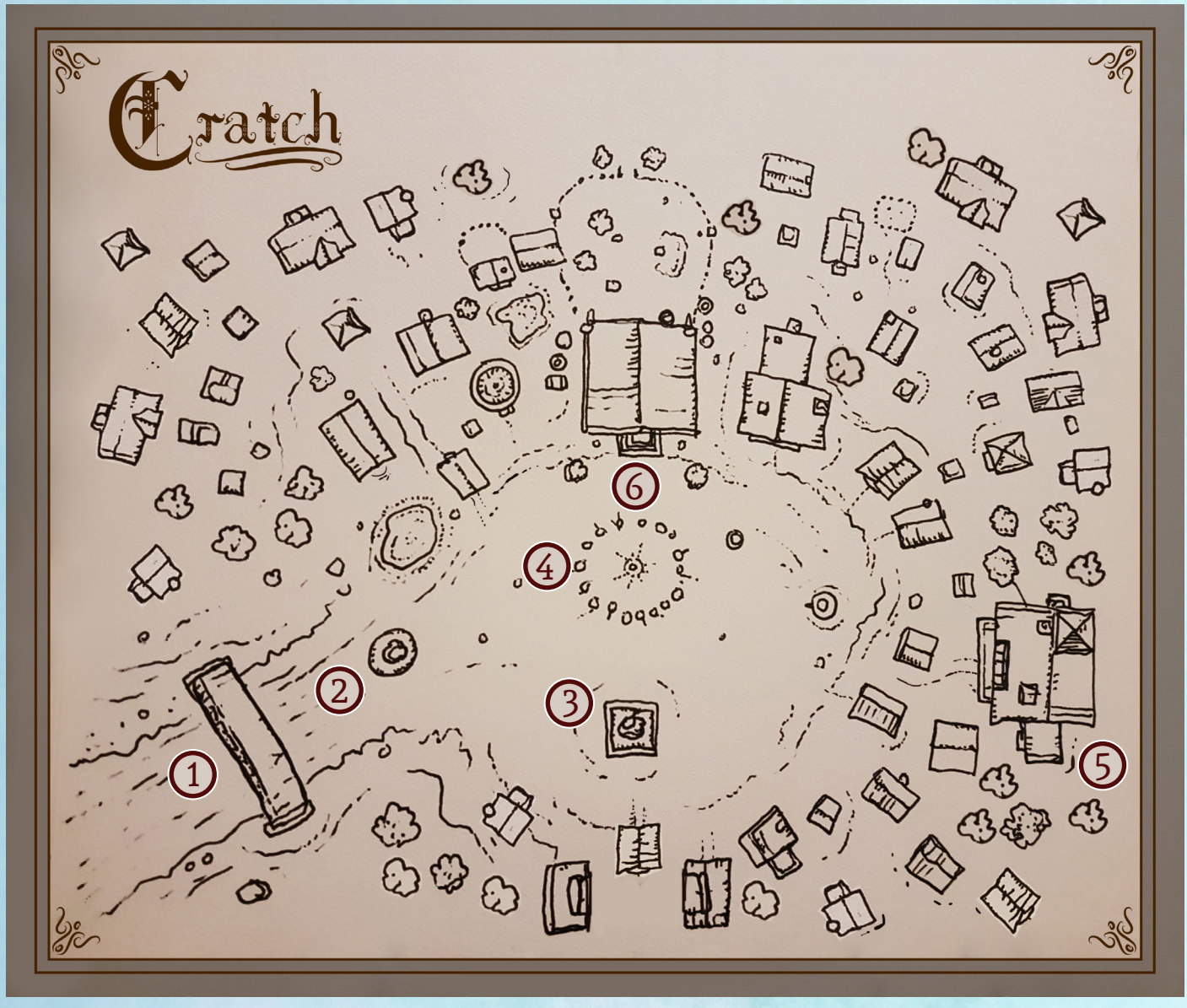
The town looks to be a typical small settlement of the northern wastes, perhaps more cut off than most, but still well kept, and attractively, if modestly decorated for the Midwinter Festival. Its isolation is not what distinguishes it, however. There is a silence, a grim stillness, more chilling than the winter cold. Snow blankets every surface. An ages old statue, depicting a noble barbarian warrior, watches blankly from the town centre. Cratch seems empty, completely abandoned. Yet a single light glimmers from a large building near the centre.

warrior hero **(3)**. It is dedicated to Klain of Brulis (- see **Appendix C**, Secrets of Cratch).

A hard (DC15) perception check near an occupied building (see the encounter table) may reveal the presence of an inhabitant. The only exception is the largest residential building- that of the halfling merchant Holan Kellister..

The town is almost completely deserted. The only signs of life are the odd cat, dog or other domesticated creature. If the party enters a building that does not contain any of the Yule Lads, maybe tell them they hear an erratic banging from the floorboards overhead, that will turn out to be the house cat running about.

The centre of the town **(4)** is a circular gathering point, demarkated by a ring of large, flat stones. There is a raised mound of earth in the middle, which is used for speeches, announcements and the like.



### Encounters in Cratch

When the party enter any of the houses in Cratch, apart from The Meadhall or Holan's House, roll 1d12 + 1d20. Consult Appendix B for details on The Yule Lads. If you roll the same number twice, treat the second roll as no encounter.

| Roll | Encounter |
|---|---|
| 2 | Gully Gawk |
| 3 | Stubby |
| 4 | Spoon Licker |
| 5 | Pot Scraper |
| 6 | Bowl Licker |
| 7 | Door Slammer |
| 8 | Skyr Gobbler |
| 9 | Sausage Swiper |
| 10 | Window Peeper |
| 11 | Doorway Sniffer |
| 12 | Meathook |
| 13 | Candle Beggar |
| 14 | Sheep Cote Clod |
| 15-32 | No encounter |

A hard (DC15) perception check near an occupied building (see the encounter table) may reveal the presence of an inhabitant. The only exception is the largest residential building- that of the halfling merchant Holan Kellister **(5)**.

A dim light glows from The Cratch Meadhall **(6)** - see Chapter 3.

# Holan's House

The only house in the village that has no chance of an encounter with one of the Yule Lads is the home of Holan Kellister. Palatial and opulent (for a small settlement such as this), it was a prime choice for a couple of the marauding dwarves, but they were driven away by what they believe to be a malevolent ghost. The house has subsequently been given a wide berth by the bandits, but the truth is there is no haunting in this place, merely a plucky and resourceful child. Caulkin Kellister, youngest son of the merchant, set up a series of traps to thwart the Yule Lads, and still awaits their return.

Front Door **(1)** - When the door is opened it triggers a crossbow trap **(3)** (Dexterity saving throw DC12, fail 1D6 damage)

Swinging iron trap **(4)** - DC12 Dexterity Save, if failed causes 1D6+2 bludgeoning damage

Back Door **(2)** - There are seven steps up to the back door. The top three have been soaked with water which has turned to ice (Perception DC13 to spot in darkness, if they're not spotted the character climbing will slip down the steps for 2D6+2 damage).

Boiling hot doorknob - DC17 Perception to spot, causes 1D4+1 fire damage

Nails hidden in steps **(5)**. DC12 Perception to spot, 1D4+1 piercing damage. If the character takes 2 or more damage, their speed is reduced by 5.

Fire trap **(6)** - DC14 Dexterity Save, 2D8+2 fire damage (half damage on a successful save)

Glue spray and feathers **(7)** - Glue drops from rafters (via a Rube Goldberg like complex pulley system attached to the floorboards - DC13 Perception to spot). DC17 Dexterity save to dodge. 1D4 bludgeoning damage from the pot, then a sack of feathers thrown into the air will become glued to the character.

Broken glass Midwinter ornaments and decorations litter the floor acting as Caltrops **(8)**. DC11 Perception to spot (if the Character is looking). Any creature that enters the area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or stop moving and take 1 piercing damage. Until the creature regains at least 1 hit point, its walking speed is reduced by 10 feet. A creature moving through the area at half speed doesn't need to make the saving throw.

Swinging paint can **(9)** - DC12 Dexterity Save, if failed causes 1D6+2 bludgeoning damage

Caulkin escapes via rope from his bedroom **(10)** to treehouse **(11)**

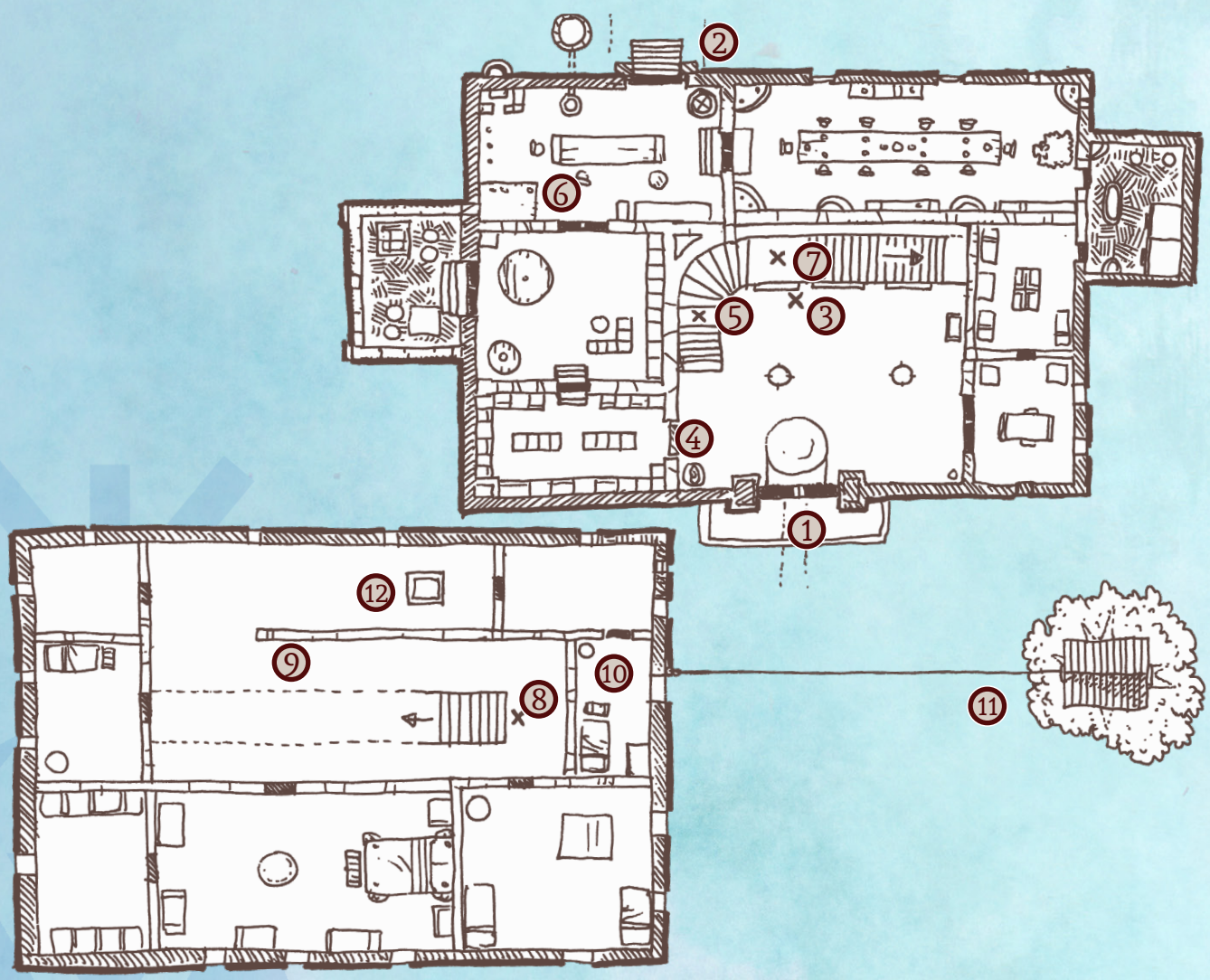
If they climb across he cuts the rope (fall 3D6).

If caught he is carrying a poisonous spider

The rope ladder up to the treehouse has been booby trapped with oil half way up (fall 3D6). If Caulkin is at the top in the treehouse, he will set the rope alight (fall 3D6 or 2D6 fire damage).

If the party make it up to the attic **(ceiling hatch at 12)** or into the treehouse (if he's escaped to it), they will meet Caulklin, a halfling child. He is outwardly punchy, belligerent and mocking but a DC12 insight check will reveal this is bluster and he is secretly frightened. He may be calmed with a DC15 persuasion or performance check (modify for situation and the character's appearance and demeanour. Because of his run in with The Yule Lads, he's now scared of Dwarves, so they make the check at disadvantage).

He may reveal a number of the secrets of Cratch, depending on how calmed he can be. He knows nothing of the true nature of The Yule Lads, thinking of them as some kind of monsters. He knows Ebin, and that the orphan had opened The Casket, but no one believed him. He ran and hid, while the entirety of the town were taken by The Krampus.



# Chapter 3: Fire and Wine

This hall is the largest building in Cratch, and located in the centre of the town. As you enter through the ornately carved dark wood doorway, your senses are assaulted by the smells of food, fire and wine. The warmth of the hall comes as a shock after weeks spent trekking through the frozen wastes, and to weary travellers used to dried salt pork and hard biscuits, the riot of tantalising odours from hot food and mulled wine is intoxicating. The banquet laid out along the long table running along the middle of the hall is a cornucopia of roasted meats and exotic fruits. Your empty stomachs are gripped in the pain of hunger. Other than the elaborate feast and a roaring fire, the hall is empty.

Players will no doubt be wary of this enticing and suspicious feast. If players resist, add a further level of exhaustion as starvation takes its toll. If a character submits to temptation, describe the food in excruciating detail. Eating the food in any combination will remove all exhaustion.

Once exhaustion has been removed, any character that continues to gorge themself (not difficult, to be honest) will begin to heal lost hit points. This should be a gradual process, so gauge how things are going with the players at the table. Maybe make a few die rolls behind the screen to set them on edge. As more characters feast, subtly mention that the fires seem to be burning brighter and hotter, and the fragrance of the wine becomes even sweeter. If anyone drinks wine (and if you're doing your job, someone should), remember to roll for its effects (see table, below).

Winter Wine - random effects
Roll a D12

| |
|---|
| 1- gain 1D4 temporary hit points |
| 2- Dutch Courage, if the player enters combat within the next hour, during the first round the player makes attacks with advantage |
| 3- rose tinted, any charisma based skill checks made against the player have advantage (or any saving throw that the player is required to make is made at disadvantage) |
| 4- Violently happy. You find yourself chuckling at inappropriate moments. Stealth, Deception, Persuasion checks are made at disadvantage for the next hour. |
| 5- no effect. How disappointing. |
| 6- Midwinter cheer. You feel ok. Negative alcoholic effects like Deep in your cups, Fog of War and Blue devils are removed. |
| 7- Deep in your cups. You are plunged into an existential crisis. Any wisdom based skill checks or saving throws are made at disadvantage for the rest of the adventure. |
| 8- Fog of War. You find it difficult to tell how many fingers your companions are holding up. Perception checks are made at disadvantage for the rest of the adventure. |
| 9- Blue devils- too despondent to operate effectively, if the player enters combat within the next hour, during the first round the player makes attacks with disadvantage |
| 10- throw up, take 1D4 poison damage |
| 11- take 1D6 poison damage |
| 12- poisoned, take 1D6 poison damage |

Now might be a good time to bring out the mulled wine, egg nog, or any other festive beverages you have provided for your players. It's entirely reasonable, that for this session, you hand out Inspiration to any players that bring snacks and treats to the table, so maybe drop a few hints and see what you get. Merry Midwinter!

After a suitable amount of time has passed (and, more importantly, all characters have partaken of the feast) the hall seems brighter than ever, and sitting at the end of the hall watching over the characters a figure has appeared. A huge man of jocular demeanour, this is Bran, the Blessed, a local nature spirit. Often referred to as Father Midwinter, or The Winters King, he occasionally protects the people of the town, but in secret ways only he truly understands. He wants to remove Krampus but will not make any mention of the malevolent creature.



Encounter: Lord Bran

A large, hulking figure in opulent fur robes and crowned with holly and mistletoe is watching you from the head of the hall. He grins at you in an overly friendly manner

"Call me Bran, Blessed of the elders of Cratch. Ever have I sat in this meadhall, and year upon year the folk have come to offer their tribute.

"You have eaten well from my table. You have have drank deep from my bowl. But these are the least of my gifts to you. I have something greater for you. Something that will aid you in your quest. Do you accept this present? Before you choose, know this. One takes, all take..."

However, if they do not partake:

You have refused the bounty I have offered, to your own ill. No matter. I have a much greater gift for you. For all of you. But mark well. One chooses. All choose. And if chosen, a gift cannot be returned.

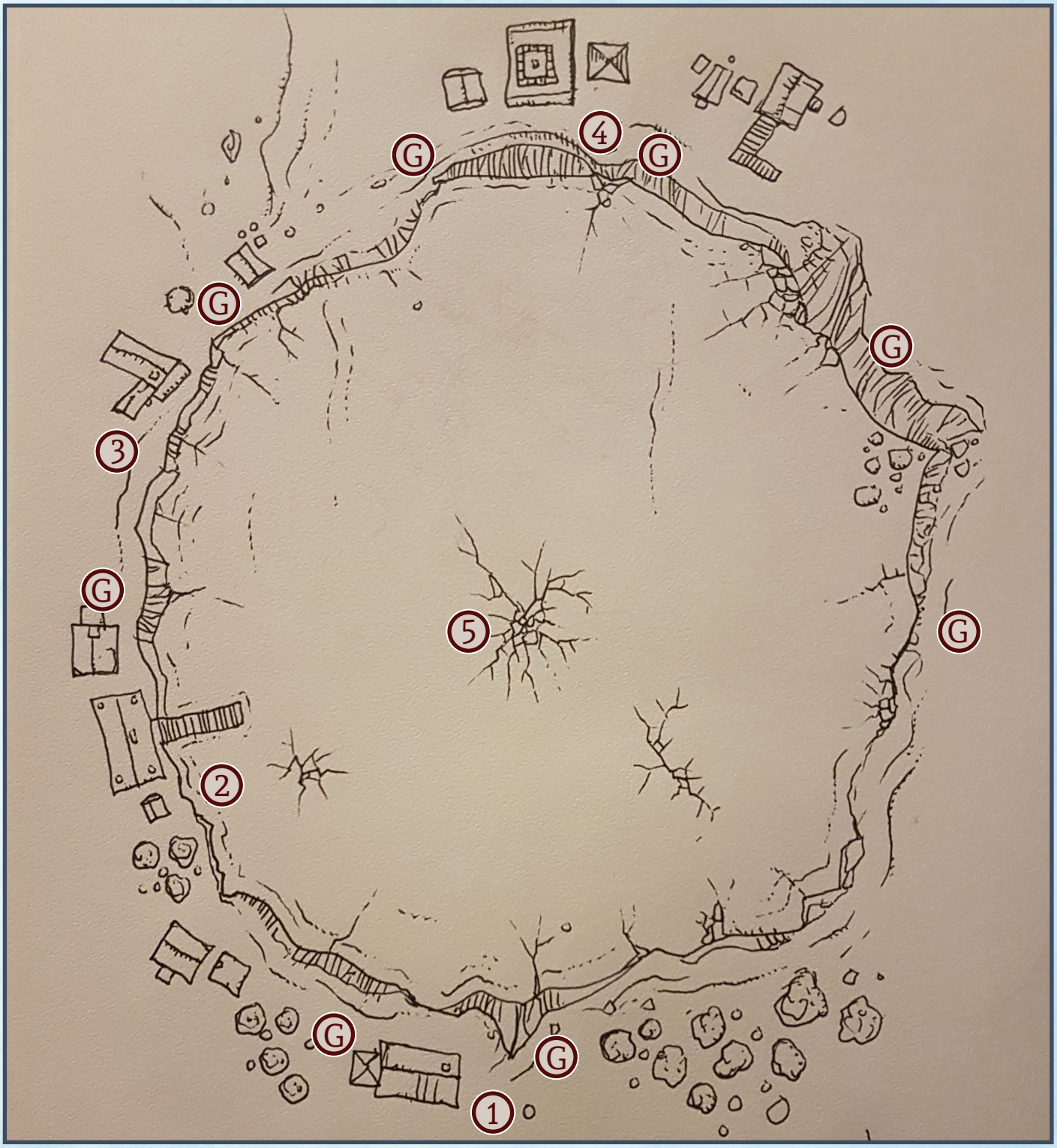
He will not divulge the nature of his gift, save for vague and contradictory allusions to power and wonder. It is beautiful, it is terrible, it is a meaningless trifle, it will change your very destiny etc.

Once at least one player declares that they accept his gift, a pack of cards appears before them. This is **The Deck Of Merry Things** (See **Appendix A**). Once it has appeared each player/ character must draw a card from the deck and place it face down.

Once they are all drawn, reveal the cards one by one. If a player refuses to draw a card, Bran draws one for them. He will exclaim that "It can't denied, destiny has spoken etc." You know the drill.

Once all cards have been revealed Bran will appear to diminish. He declares that the party should go north, to Kije Lake, where "a boy awaits a salvation, and an evil must be faced". He won't elaborate, and, if pressed he (and the remaining feast) will disappear in a cloud of snow, extinguishing the fires, and leaving the hall an empty cold shell.






# Chapter 4: Don't Let The Bells End

This is it, the final encounter. Obviously anything in here can lead to later adventures, but you're probably getting close to the end of your session by this point.

Even more silent than the town of Cratch, if such a thing were possible, is the forlorn sight of Kije Lake. A handful of fisherman's shacks, and small piers encroach upon the water, which is fully frozen over.

Dotted around the perimeter, are more of the snow effigies that you saw in Cratch. Above the lake, at its north shore, is a watchtower. Something, perhaps a figure, sits at the centre of the ice.

The chill in the air is almost unbearable here, the presence of something unfathomably evil has brought the freeze of the mountains down to these lands and encased everything in a layer of ice.

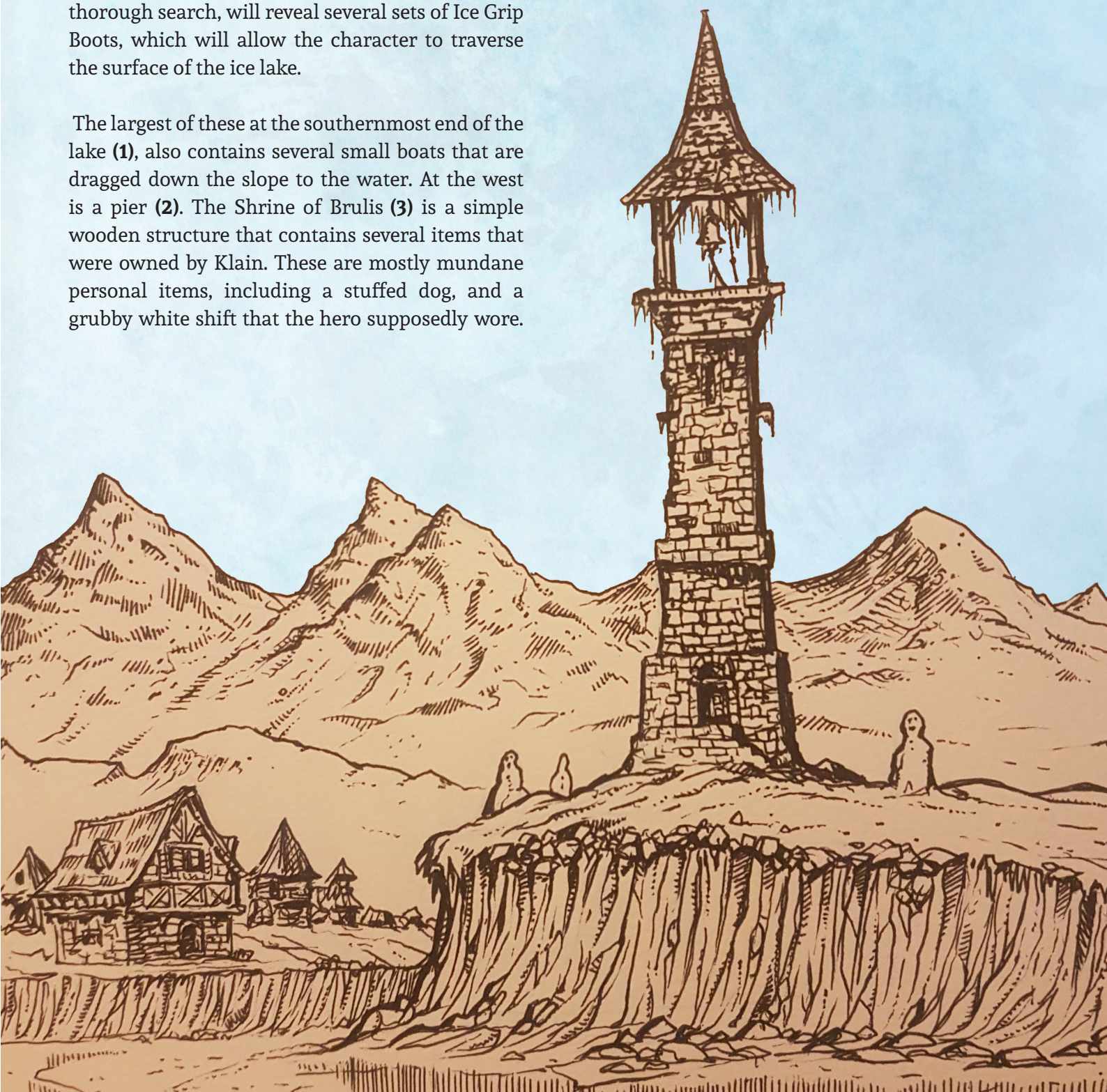
Kije Lake provides Cratch with the fish that sustains it through the year. It's deep enough to connect with underground rivers, so that's where the fish come from, don't question it.

The houses and shacks arranged around the lake contain fishing apparatus, rods, lines, nets, baskets etc. A DC13 Perception check, along with a thorough search, will reveal several sets of Ice Grip Boots, which will allow the character to traverse the surface of the ice lake.

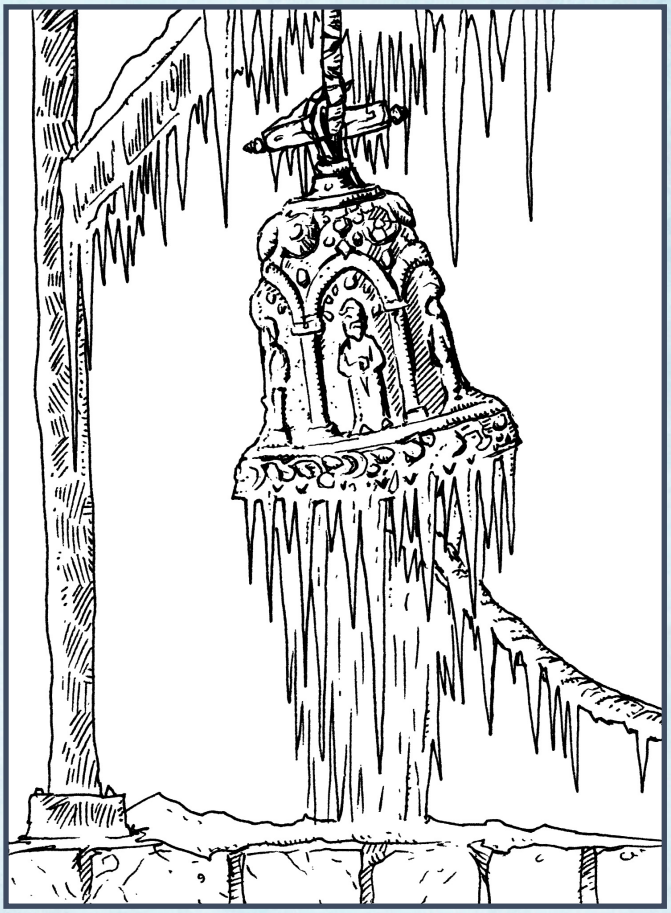
The largest of these at the southernmost end of the lake **(1)**, also contains several small boats that are dragged down the slope to the water. At the west is a pier **(2)**. The Shrine of Brulis **(3)** is a simple wooden structure that contains several items that were owned by Klain. These are mostly mundane personal items, including a stuffed dog, and a grubby white shift that the hero supposedly wore.

However, a thorough search (and a successful DC20 Perception check) will turn up the sword Kiyaii (see **Appendix D**) inside a locked chamber (a DC18 lockpicking check with Thieves Tools, or a DC22 Strength Check to smash). Note that if the sword has already been obtained via the Deck of Merry Things, the chamber is empty. Basically, it's your last chance to give your characters a game breaking magic item for the final battle.

Towering over the lake, at its north shore, is The Watchtower **(4)**. This 30ft tall structure contains a



great silver bell, which has become encased in ice (this is Krampus' handiwork). In order to ring the bell, the ice needs to be shattered (take 20 hit points of bludgeoning damage) or melted (it's vulnerable to fire, of course). If the ice is shattered the bell will ring by itself for one round. To continue to ring the bell a character will need to physically pull the rope within the tower, or push the bell from a distance, using missile attacks (consider the bell to have AC14).



Arranged around the lake are a number of the **Snow Golems** (see **Appendix B**) that were seen in Cratch. Increase or reduce the number according to the number of players you have.

The ice on the frozen lake is thick enough to walk across. When the central figure **(5)** is approached it becomes apparent this is a young boy, in ragged shabby clothes. He seems mesmerized, transfixed by the shards of ice laid out in front of him. On closer inspection the ice shards appear to be letters. They spell out WIND MERIT

Frost has gathered on the boy's hair, on his face and eyes, over his fingers and onto the shards of ice. Once the frost is brushed away from the ice shards they are revealed to be letters.

The boy either cannot hear you, or chooses not to respond. But as you attempt to communicate with him a shadow falls across the lake. A great horned figure fills the eastern sky. From the opposite side of the lake, to the west, a booming howl of a large beast.

Leaping over the boat houses in the west, is a nightmarish horned figure. Bearing a switch of thorned branches in one hand, and a large sack in the other, this can only be the harbinger of despair at Midwinter, The Krampus.

Galloping towards you from the east, swinging a huge club, is a monstrous creature half goat half man. This is Julbocken, the Goat of the Black Frost.

## Gruss Vom Krampus

**Krampus** and his thrall **Julbocken**, (see **Appendix B**) will now attack. He is waiting for the boy to freeze to death, because that's what he's into, and will stop the party communicating with or aiding the boy at all costs. If you're feeling particularly devilish, the Blizzard King can show up here as well. He's probably feeling a little left out at this stage.

The Snow Golems will animate at this point. They will not move in to engage, but will attack from a distance with their snowballs. They will particularly attempt to prevent the party from entering the Watchtower.

The endgame is for the party to defeat The Krampus, and awaken Ebin, which will allow the villagers to be released.

The ringing bell in the Watchtower will weaken Krampus ( he is at combat disadvantage during any round in which bell rings).

The Bell has a different effect on Julbocken - It drives him berserk - he attacks the nearest creature in frenzy (advantage to attacks he makes and attacks made against him).

The boy Ebin can be awakened with a DC20 Persuasion, or Performance check (let your player describe how they are addressing him rather than asking for a check, then gauge the most appropriate skill. Characters may assist of course, but at this stage it's likely they will have their hands full!).

The roll gains a +2 bonus if the bell is ringing. Another +2 bonus is gained if the ice shards are rearranged to their original configuration, which is of course to spell out MIDWINTER . The shards were dropped out of the Casket of Midwinter.

When the boy is awakened and motivated to do so, he stands, takes out the box, and closes it.

At this point, Krampus is defeated, he drops the sack and from it emerge all who were imprisoned within it.

He will howl his frustration into the night, and for the first time, will communicate directly with the party...

"Ask not for whom the bell jingles... it jingles for thee..."

At this, he will briefly fill the entire nigh sky, then return to his own realm. Until next Midwinter, obviously...

**Ice**

The Ice lake is considered Difficult Terrain, so in order to move safely, creature movement is halved. If a player elects to slide, they need to take an action to make a DC15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If the check is failed, the creature falls prone (and will move randomly (decided by the DM), and take 1d6 bludgeoning damage. If any character is wearing the Ice Grip Boots, they make their Acrobatics checks with Advantage.
If a player succeeds on their Acrobatics check, they may move up to 150% of their normal movement, whereever they want.

While fighting on the ice, there is the danger that the ice will be broken. If a player making a melee attack hits an enemy with a Critical, or does more than 15 points of bludgeoning damage in one hit, the ice below them breaks. Both the attacker and the defender need to make a Dexterity Saving Throw (DC 13-15 depending on circumstances), if they fail they go into the water.

While Krampus' Ice Magic is upon the area, a creature immersed in the lake takes 10 cold damage per round, and will catch sight of the horrific faces of the drowned (actually an illusion). In order to get out of the water, a creature must make a DC12 Athletics check. For prolonged exposure, treat the lake as Frigid Water as outlined on page 110 of **The Dungeon Master's Guide**).



APPENDIX A

# The Deck of Merry Things

The intention here, obviously, is for you to print off these well drawn if slightly rushed cards, in a clear *homage* to The Tarokka Deck from *I6: Ravenloft* (1983), and then wow your players with this astonishingly theatrical presentation. However, if you have no access to a printer, are running this game at short notice, or simply just can't be bothered, simply roll 2D12 on this handy dandy random table...

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 | ***The Ancient - The First Midwinter*** |
| 3 | ***Black Midwinter*** |
| 4 | ***Feast of Fools*** |
| 5 | ***Festive Ass*** |
| 6 | ***First Footer*** |
| 7 | ***Ghosts*** |
| 8 | ***The Gift*** |
| 9 | ***The Greater Gift*** |
| 10 | ***Grinch*** |
| 11 | ***Idiot*** |
| 12 | ***Jester*** |
| 13 | ***Krampus*** |
| 14 | ***Merry and Bright*** |
| 15 | ***Northern Lights*** |
| 16 | ***Party Pooper*** |
| 17 | ***The Prisoner*** |
| 18 | ***Reign*** |
| 19 | ***Ruin*** |
| 20 | ***Samaritan*** |
| 21 | ***Star*** |
| 22 | ***Winter Sun*** |
| 23 | ***Winter Wine*** |
| 24 | ***Wise Man*** |

APPENDIX A

# The Deck of Merry Things

This is a more festive variant on the infamous artefact from Dungeons & Dragons' illustrious history. It's probably best used with one off characters specifically created for this adventure, but if you want to use it in your ongoing campaign, go for it.

If any of the effects are resisted (or, say, a stupid hat is not worn) the character is assailed by an eruption of green and red lightning (**lightning bolt 8d6, dex save DC15, half damage on a success**).

***The Ancient - The First Midwinter***
Also known as The Mystic

The card depicts a sage like figure, reaching up and holding a crescent moon, surrounded by stars.

The bearer of this card is entitled to a Wish.

***Black Midwinter***
Also known as Failed Harvest

A Midwinter scene, but haunted, withered and ominous. A curse upon you...

The bearer of this card receives The Curse of The Black Midwinter. Lower their HP total by 10, and they suffer a disadvantage to all constitution checks until lifted.

***Feast of Fools***
Also known as Tipped Scales

The card depicts a banquet, presided over by a blindfolded figure bearing a set of scales. You feel a deep part of your psyche change... You feel a deep part of your psyche change...

The character's Alignment is switched.

LG - Chaotic Scrooge
LN - Roll 1D4, consult list below
LE - Roll 1D4, consult list below
NG - Roll 1D4, consult list below
N - Roll 1D4, consult list below
NE - Roll 1D4, consult list below
CG - Roll 1D4, consult list below
CN - Roll 1D4, consult list below
CE - Lawful Jolly

1 **Lawful Jolly** -creatures can be counted on to promote happiness, fun and good cheer, all year round, but particularly at Midwinter. To be honest it can be a bit much, but their heart's in the right place. Not so much the first one to the party, more the one organising the party, buying everyone presents, and making everyone wear silly hats. Red and green dragons, paladins, and most Midwinter elves are lawful good.

2 **Neutral Kringle** -folk do the best they can to celebrate the season, according to their needs. Happy with most things as long as they're seasonal. Nevertheless they're still exasperated by Lawful Jolly folk.

3 **Neutral Humbug** - is the alignment of those who deny Midwinter. They do whatever they will, but make no effort to observe the Midwinter traditions, as it's become too commercialised these days.

4 **Chaotic Scrooge** -creatures act with arbitrary negativity and even violence towards the season. They will actively try to ruin and destroy the festivities and cause grief and harm to others. Chaotic Scrooge is the alignment of most demons, devils and assholes.

***Festive Ass***
Also known as The Stocks

The card depicts a figure wearing a mask of a donkey's head. In some theatrical traditions, this represents the fool.

The unfortunate bearer of this card loses two levels. If you're feeling festive, you can restore them at the end of the session. As long as they beg.

***First Footer***
Also known as The Teacher

The card shows a boisterous figure, crashing through a doorway bearing a mug of ale and an overbearing demeanour

The bearer of this card become proficient in 3 random skills.

***Ghosts***
Also known as The Damned

This card depicts a miserly old man, best by three malevolent ghosts.

The curse of ignorance. The bearer loses one quarter of their spell slots (round down, I'm not a monster) and they suffer disadvantage to all Intelligence checks.

***The Gift***
Also known as the patron

The card depicts a jewel box. A box of such delights.

The bearer of this card receives Advantage on Persuasion until the end of the adventure. If the character survives the battle with Krampus, add in an epilogue to the session where a group of Midwinter Elves appear, and reveal that the character is now the owner of a fortress in the far North. The catch is that in order to retain ownership they must spend the rest of their life in the fortress hanging with the elves and making toys)

***The Greater Gift***

The card depicts a smiling woman offering a wrapped gift.

The card confers a wondrous item - consult **Appendix D** (if someone has already received a wondrous item at this stage, make it clear that this one is a lot better. Maybe it has an extra minor ability (See DMG), or it just looks super awesome in comparison. It's definitely the best one.

***Grinch***
Also known as Grasping Hand

The card shows a shadowy, shaggy figure with grasping hands emerging from the darkness. You know this creature wants to somehow steal the Festival of Midwinter

The holder of the card loses their most treasured possession - usually a magic item. If they do not own one, then a magic item (or falling that, money, heirlooms, teeth etc) is taken from one of the other members of the party. This one is good for getting your players to hate each other.

***Idiot***
Also known as Burning Book

A foolish figure, the worst kind of village idiot appears on this card. He wears a foolish hat and smiles dimly in the face of disaster.

The bearer of this card must wear the stupidest Christmas hat you can lay your hands on. If you don't have one, make a really crappy one out of paper. And write "idiot" on it just so everyone gets it. In addition to wearing the hat, the bearer loses 3 points of intelligence, and has disadvantage to Wisdom checks.

***Jester***
Also known as The Harlequin

The figure on the card wears the traditional Jester's motley and cockscomb.

The bearer of this card swaps his character sheet with that of another at the table. Roll to determine the "lucky" other player. If you're using characters from an ongoing campaign you may wish to reverse this effect at the end of that adventure. Otherwise your players may run you out of town. If that happens, explain to them that life is

unpredictable and capricious.

***Krampus***
Also known as The Storm

The card of Krampus, the Midwinter Demon. He leers at you from the etching...

Although the player should feel uneasy, a wondrous item appears. It is a crystal snow globe, depicting a tiny village within, that looks suspiciously similar to Cratch. This is clearly magical (and extremely rare and expensive) object, but its purpose is a mystery. Imply that it will have some effect later in the adventure. Unfortunately the only effect it will have is that the bearer earns the enmity of Krampus. The demon will attack the owner first, and, should they survive, the wondrous orb will turn to ice and melt away.

***Merry and Bright***
Also known as The Hourglass

The card depicts an hourglass, perhaps timing the cooking of a hearty roast pheasant.

You now have the ability to alter one moment in time. DM discretion is advised.

***Northern Lights***
Also known as The Temple of Northern Lights

The card depicts a temple below fiery magical lights in the night sky.

The bearer of this card is the recipient of a Geas (PHB). They must defeat the next opponent they meet by non violent means (their companions may assist and use as much violence as they like). If the geas is resisted the card bearer is hit by festive green and red lightning (lightning bolt 8d6, Dex save DC15, half damage on a success). If the geas is obeyed, the bearer of the card receives a wondrous item (consult **Appendix D**).

***Party Pooper***
Also known as The Witch

This card depicts a hag like creature.

This card confers The Curse of Everything. Every attack roll, skill check or saving throw the player makes from now on is at a -2 penalty. Sucks to be you.

***The Prisoner***

The card shows a twisted, skeletal hand grasping an open sack. Within the sack is naught but darkness.

The bearer of this card instantly disappears. See the description of Krampus' bag, in **Appendix B.** When Krampus appears and begins his attacks, the player may begin to make a Saving Throw per round (DC 13 Wisdom). If successful, they are returned to the real world and rejoin the game.

***Reign***
Also known as Evil Reindeer

The card shows a monstrous reindeer, rampant in a snowy forest glade.

A shadow appears before you. A mighty armoured figure that lumbers towards you. Your companions are frozen in place and you must face it alone.

If the **Animated Armour** (MM) defeats the player they are not killed, but they suffer a permanent reduction of 10 to their maximum hit points. If they defeat it, it becomes their protector. It will fight only to protect them, but will not take orders or protect any other member of the party.

***Ruin***
Also known as You've Ruined Midwinter

The card depicts a Midwinter celebration in ruins. What hath wrought such a terrible scene? A sense of emptiness comes upon you

The holder of the card loses their possessions. All of them, armour, weapons and gear. Magic items will not be taken, but other than those, the character will be left unarmed and naked (you may wish to preserve their dignity by allowing them to retain their underwear, like in a video game). Most common mundane items may be found around Cratch, to replace everything the player has lost.

***Samaritan***
Also known as The Knight Before Midwinter

The card depicts a knight, wreathed in holly and other greenery. As you gaze upon the card, the same Knight materializes before you.

This is a 4th level fighter that has been summoned to serve the bearer of the card. He knows nothing of current events or the area, and is fairly taciturn generally, but he will follow any orders given and fight valiantly.

***Star***
Also known as Follow The Star

This card depicts a great star, lighting up the night sky, and positioned so as to appear to be atop the tallest tree in a forest of firs.

The holder of this card receives +2 to their Intelligence ability score.

**Winter Sun**
(wondrous item - see notes on PCs)
Also known as The Relic, Gold

The card depicts a blazing sun rising above a winter's landscape. You can practically feel the chill. A bright light and a spray of snow appears before you, and emerging from it is a wondrous item.

The bearer of this card receives a wondrous item from **Appendix D**.

***Winter Wine***
Also known as Good Harvest

The card depicts a ewer of wine, surrounded by grapes. You can almost taste the warm, dark beverage.

A stoppered bottle of (presumably) the wine from the card (and from Lord Midwinter's banquet) appears before you. This is a healing potion that will replenish the drinker and all of their companions for 3d8 hit points.

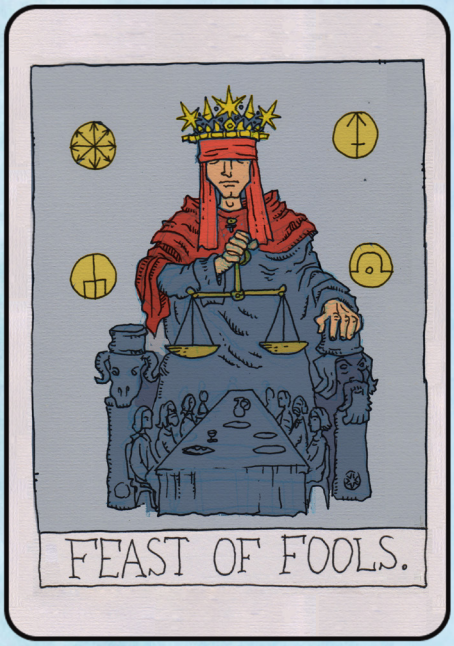
***Wise Man***
Also known as The Scholar

The card depicts an old man, a traveller on the road carrying a heavy pack filled with sticks or something. He looks like he could be a philosopher or magician, one who dates back from pagan times. It would make a great album cover.

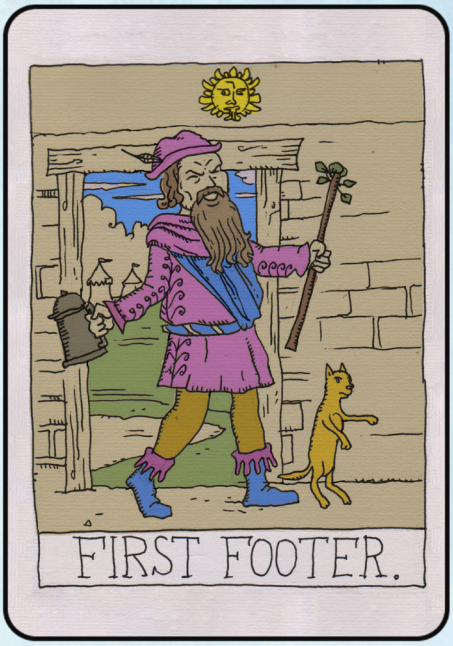
Any question that the bearer of the cards will be answered truly (although not necessarily clearly. It is likely to be vague or frustratingly obscure - references to hedgerows and remembering laughter etc).


THE ANCIENT.


BLACK MIDWINTER

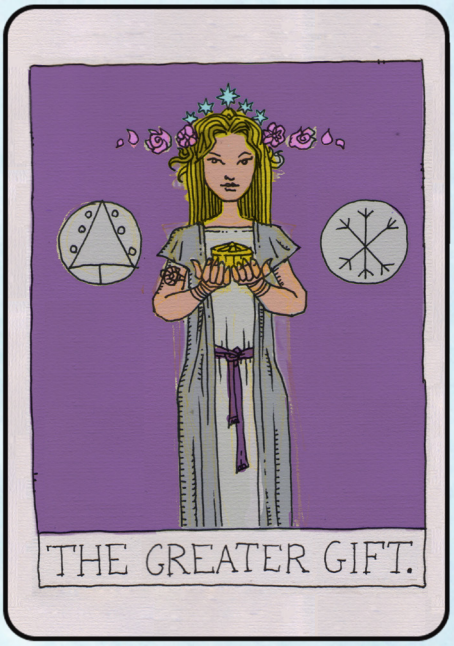

FEAST OF FOOLS.


FESTIVE ASS.


FIRST FOOTER.


GHOSTS.


THE GIFT.

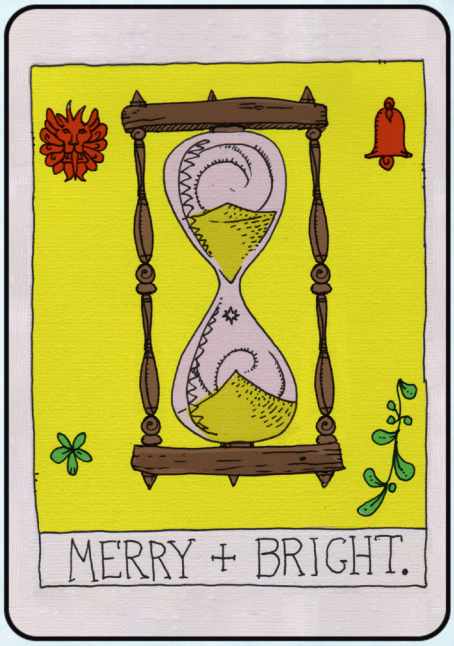

THE GREATER GIFT.


GRINCH.

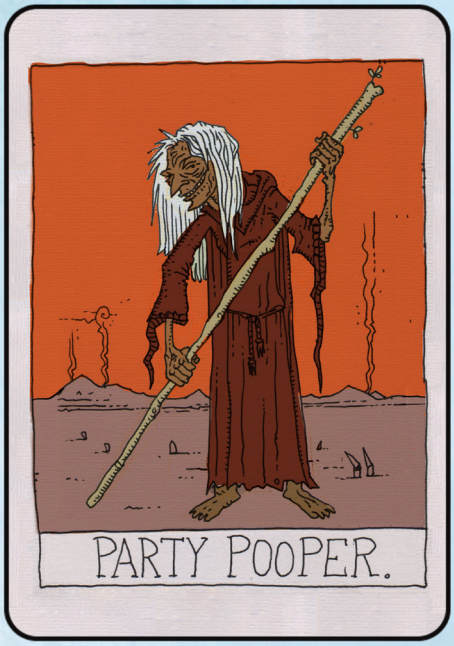

THE IDIOT.


JESTER.


KRAMPUS.


MERRY + BRIGHT.

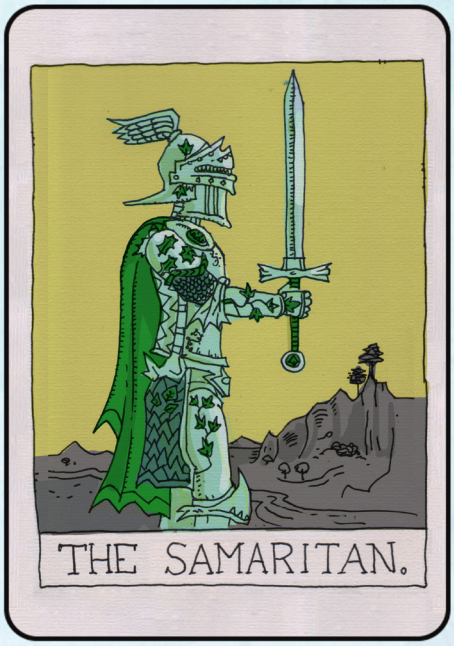

NORTHERN LIGHTS.


PARTY POOPER.


THE PRISONER.


REIGN.


RUIN .


THE SAMARITAN.


FOLLOW THE STAR.

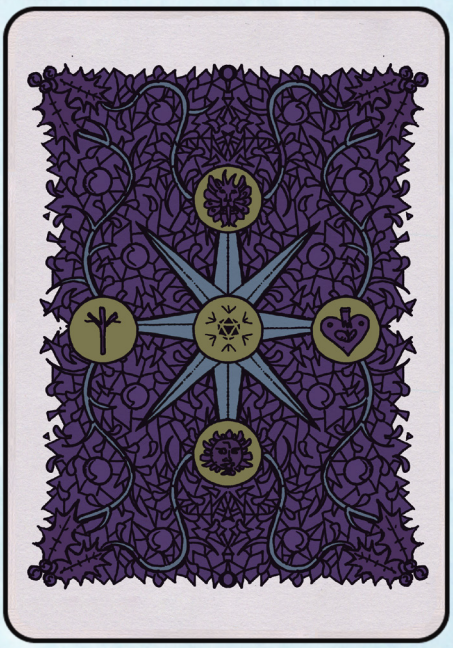

WINTER SUN.


WINTER WINE.

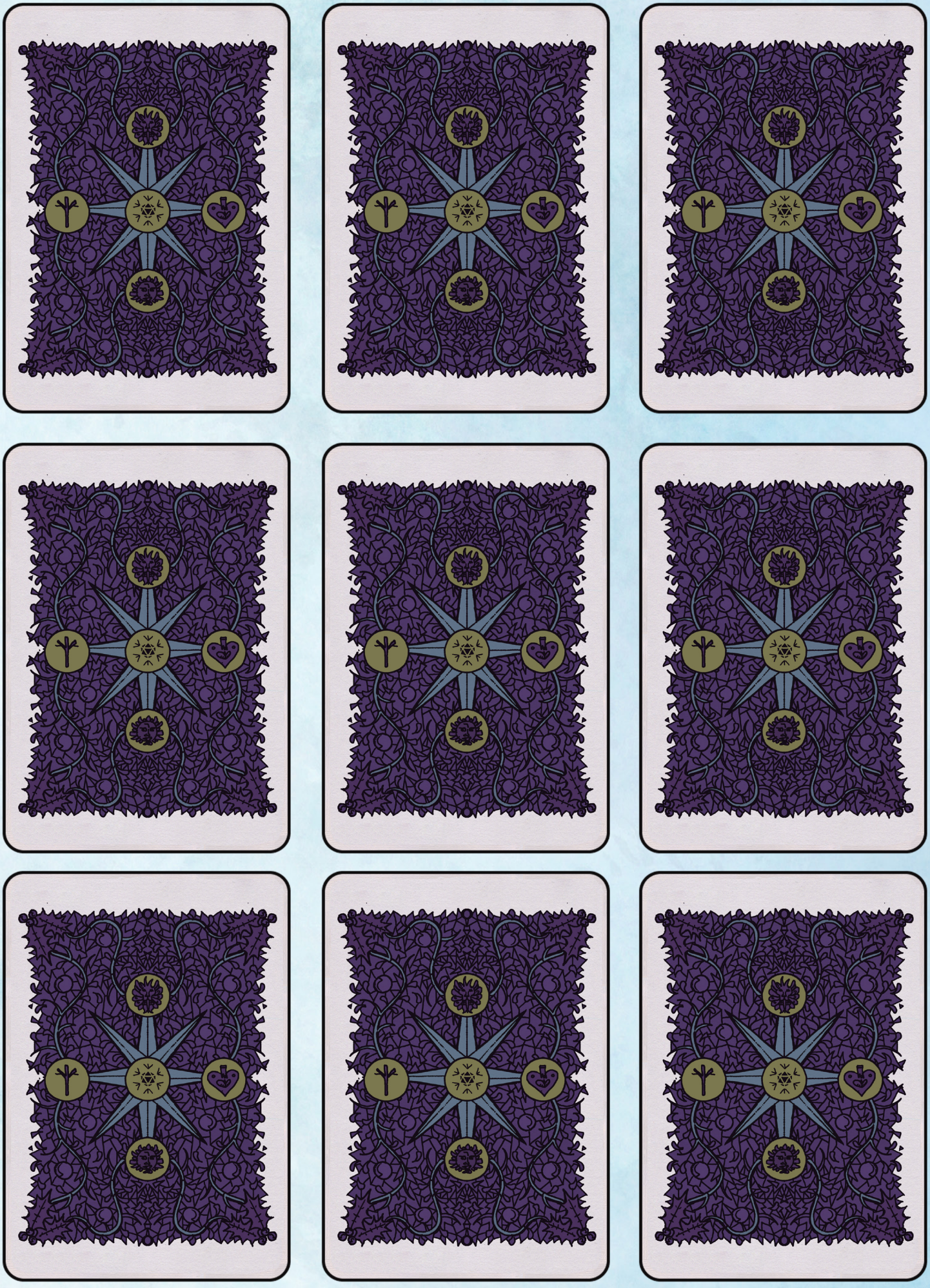

THE WISE MAN.












THE ANCIENT.

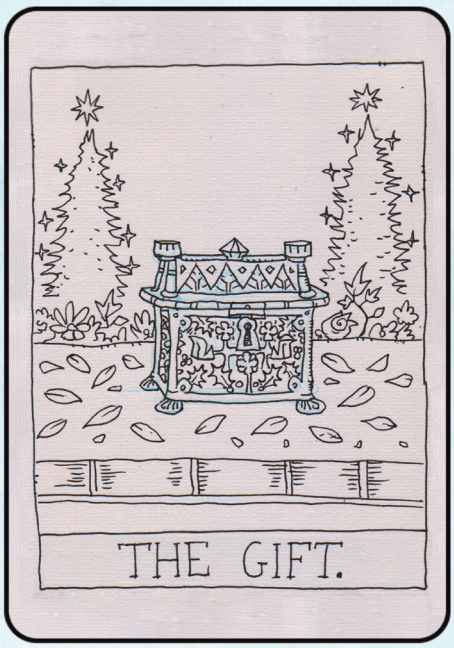

BLACK MIDWINTER


FEAST OF FOOLS.

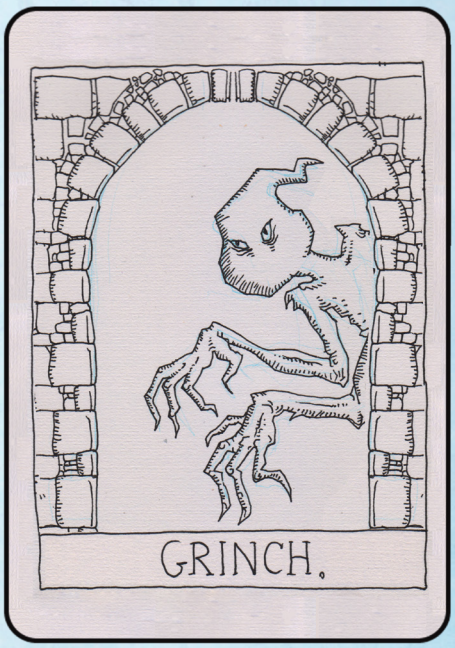

FESTIVE ASS.


FIRST FOOTER.

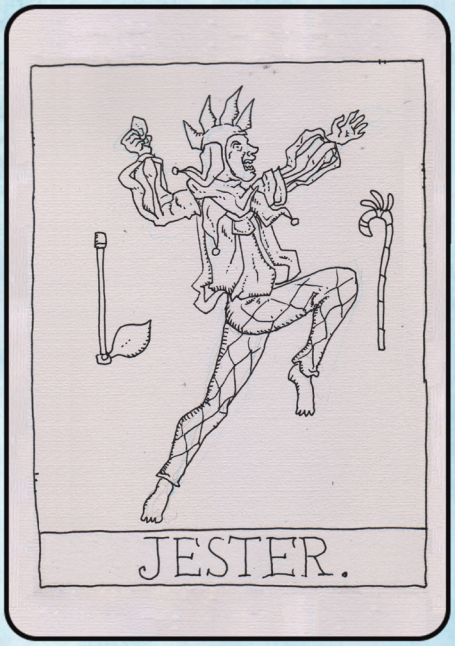

GHOSTS.


THE GIFT.

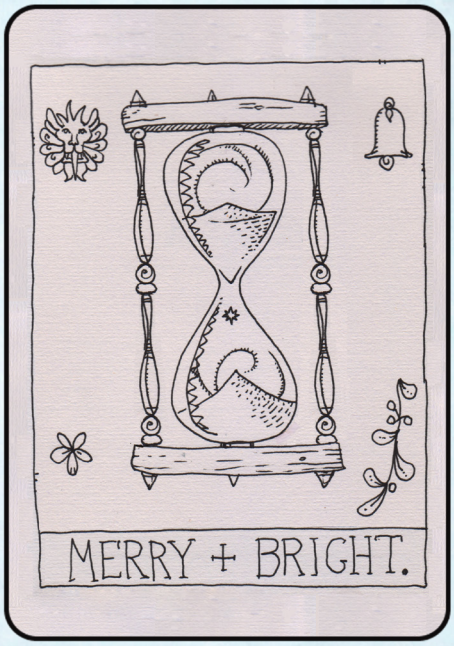

THE GREATER GIFT.


GRINCH.

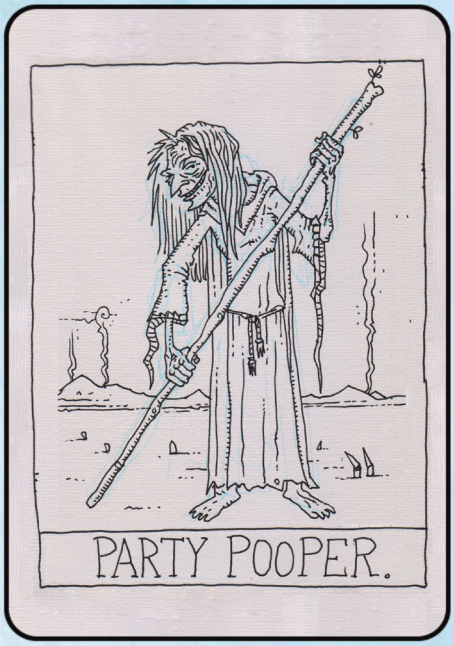

THE IDIOT.

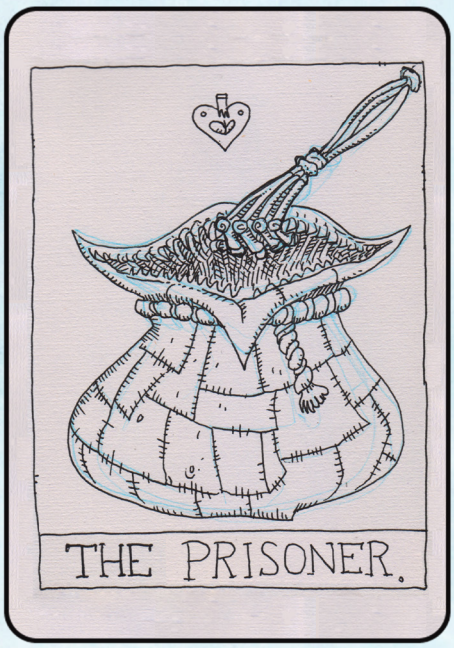

JESTER.


KRAMPUS.


MERRY + BRIGHT.


NORTHERN LIGHTS.


PARTY POOPER.


THE PRISONER.


REIGN.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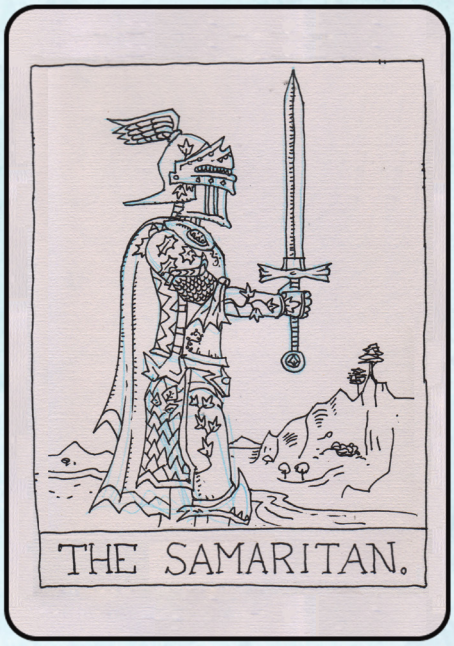
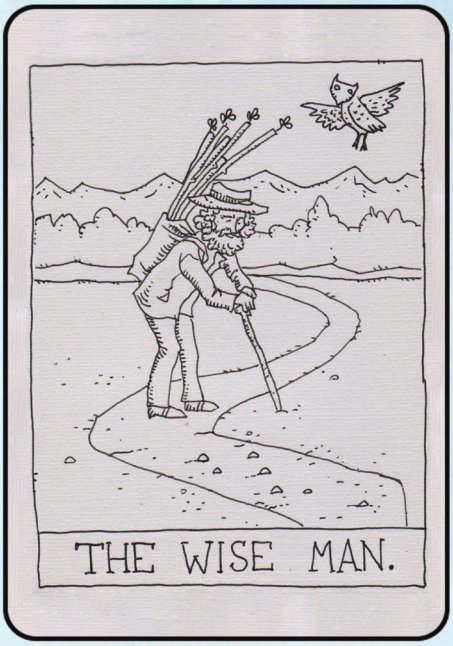

THE SAMARITAN.


FOLLOW THE STAR.


WINTER SUN.


WINTER WINE.

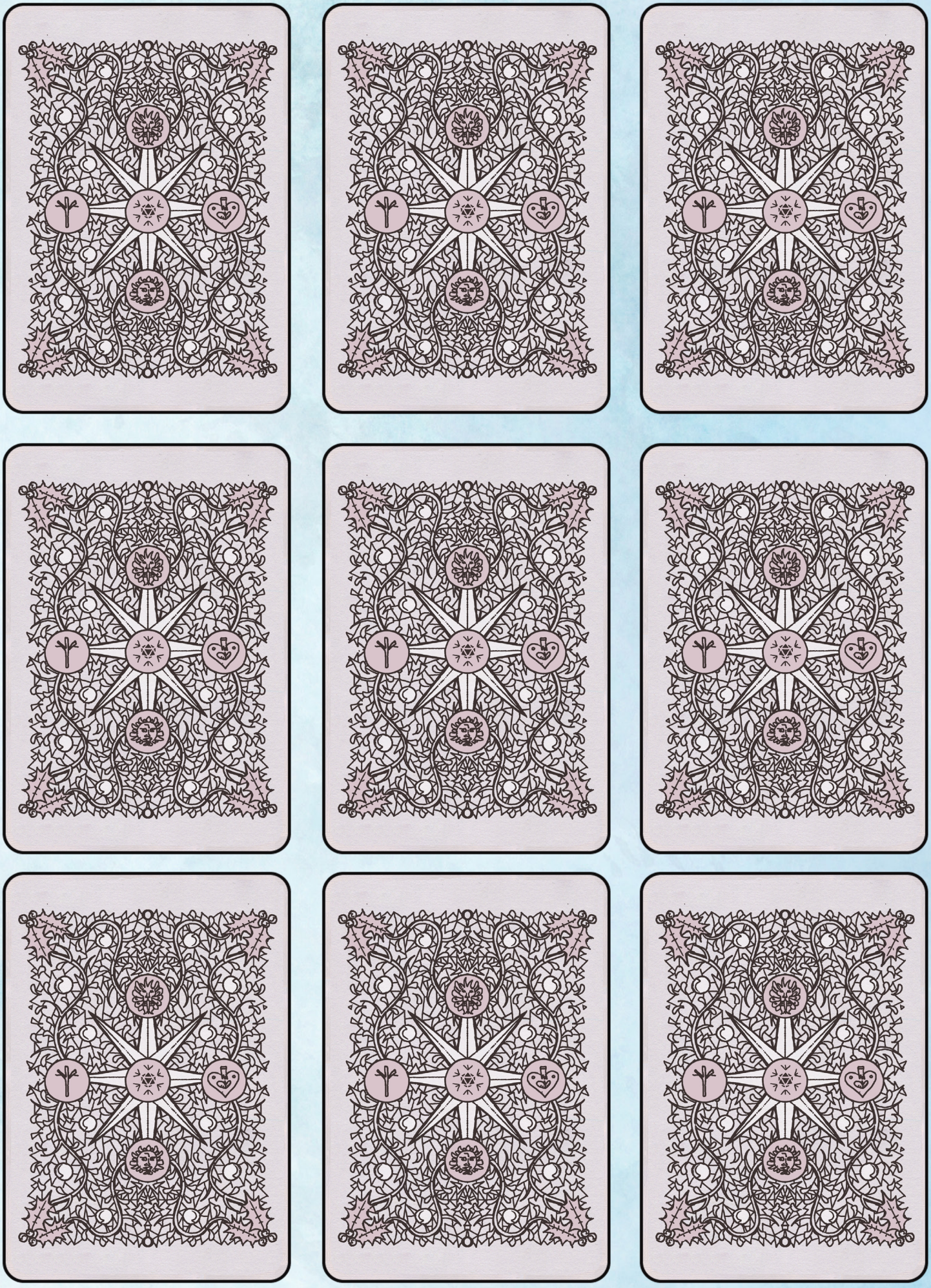

THE WISE MAN.











APPENDIX B

# NPCs & Monsters

## The Blizzard King

Long thought to be rumour or folklore, The Blizzard king is a large, Yeti like beast.

A particularly foul, abominable creature, this shaggy monster has made its home in the Northern Wastes. It has recently made attacks on travelling merchant caravans, occasionally dragging travellers and pack animals off, to be hung upside down in its ice cave home, for some reason.

It enjoys snowcones.

## The Blizzard King

*Large Monstrosity, Neutral Evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (Natural Armor)
**Hit Points** 76 (9d10+27)
**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 (+4) | 13(+1) | 16(+3) | 8(-1) | 9(-1) | 13(+1) |

**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +3
**Damage Resistances** cold
**Senses** Snowvision (like Darkvision but in Blizzards) 60 Ft.
**Languages** Yeti
**Challenge** 3

**Camouflage** If The Blizzard King is motionless in snow, it cannot be seen

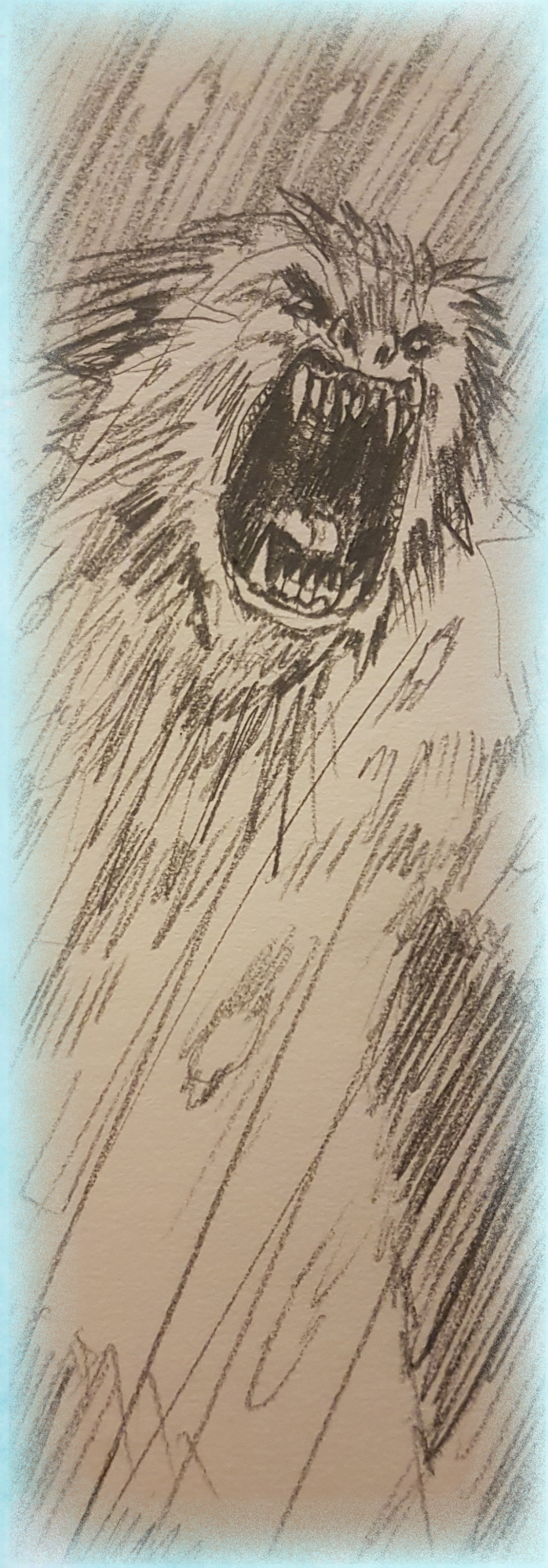
**Whiteout** The Blizzard King can take the Disengage or Hide action as a Bonus Action on each of his turns

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The Blizzard King makes two attacks, preferring his Bone Axe, but if he is separated from it, he will use his claws.

**Bone Axe** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8+4) slashing damage

**Claw** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12+4) bludgeoning damage



# Julbocken

Julbocken, The Goat of The Black Frost is an ancient, capricious nature spirit. Offerings are made to keep it from becoming belligerent, but with the townsfolk unable to appease him, it has come under the influence of Krampus.

The goat's origins go back to ancient Pagan festivals. While a popular theory is that the celebration of the goat is connected to worship of the Norse god Thor, who rode the sky in a chariot drawn by two goats.

The last sheaf of grain bundled in the harvest was credited with magical properties as the spirit of the harvest and saved for the Midwinter celebrations, called among other things Yule Goat. This connects to ancient beliefs where the Midwinter festival honors the god of the fertile sun and the harvest. This god, Devac Dazbog, was represented by a white goat, consequently the festivals always had a person dressed as a goat, often demanding offerings in the form of presents. A man-sized goat figure is known from ancient festivals, where it was led by a man dressed as Lord Midwinter, symbolizing his control over the darkness of the season.

## Julbocken

*Large Monstrosity, Neutral*

**Armor Class** 14 (Natural Armor)
**Hit Points** 76 (9d10+27)
**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 (+4) | 11(+0) | 16(+3) | 6(-2) | 16(+3) | 9(-1) |

**Skills** Perception +7
**Senses** Darkvision 60 Ft.
**Languages** Goat
**Challenge** 3

**Charge** If Julbocken moves at least 10 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore Attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 ft. away and knocked prone.

**Sure-footed** Julbocken has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throwsmade against effects that would knock it prone on snow or ice.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Julbocken makes one attack each with his club and his gore

**Club** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12+4) bludgeoning damage

**Gore** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8+4) piercing damage



# Krampus

Hailing from a realm resembling a twisted, Midwinter Celebration, perpetually in frozen winter night, Krampus is a malevolent fiend who, in times gone by, passed into the world during the Midwinter Season, driven by his hatred of the merriment of innocent folk.

No longer thought to be a real threat, Krampus has endured in Cratch Folklore as a boogeyman figure, used to scare children into behaving. It was Klain of Brulis that drove the fiend back to his home realm. This year he has become returned, because of Ebin's opening of The Casket of Midwinter.

Krampus' form is constantly shifting, but generally appears as a large, horned, animalistic humanoid. When he is present, the temperature drops noticeably, even in freezing weather, and a thin veil of chilly fog lightly obscures the immediate area, and snow may fall.

## Krampus

*Large Fey, Chaotic Evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (Natural Armor)
**Hit Points** 85 (10d8+40)
**Speed** 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 (+4) | 15(+2) | 16(+3) | 12(+1) | 12(+1) | 14(+2) |

**Saving Throws** Str +7, Wis +4, Cha +5
**Skills** Perception +7, Stealth +5, Acrobatics +5
**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical weapons, cold
**Senses** Darkvision 60 Ft.
**Languages** Goat, Common, Dwarvish, Infernal
**Challenge** 4



**Legendary Resistance (1/day)** If Krampus fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

**Sure-footed** Krampus has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone on ice.

## Actions

**Multiattack.** Krampus makes two attacks with his switch, or one each with his switch and his bag

**Switch** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12+4) bludgeoning damage

**Bag** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: The target must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom Saving Throw, or it is banished to the void within Krampus' Bag, ready to be transported to Krampus' Realm of Black Midwinter. The target is effectively paralysed, but may make a DC 13 Wisdom Saving Throw every round to escape the void. If successful, the target tumbles from the sack (this counts as movement, but the target may still take an action).

**Chilling Gaze** Krampus targets one creature he can see within 30ft. If the target can see Krampus, the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 10 (3d6) cold damage and then be paralysed for 1 minute, unless it is immune to cold damage. The target can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If the saving throw is successful, or the effect ends, the target is then immune to Krampus' Chilling Gaze for 1 hour.

## Legendary Actions

Krampus can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be taken at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Krampus regains legendary actions at the start of his turn.

**Switch** Krampus makes one attack with his switch.

**Bag** Krampus makes one attack with his bag.

**Frosty Step** Krampus can move up to his speed without provoking opportunity attacks

Note: you may feel that bringing in Krampus as the villain in a D&D adventure has become something of a cliche, and that as a character he is perhaps a little played out. If so, just give this creature a different name. It could be an existing boogeyman from your campaign, or you could choose a different but similar monster from folklore, such as one of the following:

**Belsnickel** (another West Germanic figure associated with the midwinter period)

**Perchta** (a female figure in West Germanic folklore whose procession (Perchtenlauf) occurs during the midwinter period)

**Namahage (**a demonlike being in Japanese folklore, portrayed by men wearing hefty ogre masks and traditional straw capes during a New Year's ritual)

**Koliada** (an ancient pre-Christian Slavic festival where participants wear masks and costumes and run around.)

# Snow Golem

Snowmen. You know what they look like.

Oh all right then. Ghastly constructs animated by the presence of Krampus, these golems favour ranged attacks with magical snowballs.

## Snow Golem

*Medium Construct, Neutral Evil*

**Armor Class** 11 (Natural Armor)
**Hit Points** 36 (8d8)
**Speed** 15 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 (+1) | 11(+0) | 13(+1) | 10(+0) | 10(+0) | 8(-1) |

**Skills**
**Damage Immunities** cold
**Damage Vulnerabilities** fire
**Senses** Snowvision 60 Ft.
**Languages** none
**Challenge** 1

**False Appearance**
While motionless, the Snow Golem is indistinguishable from a pile of snow (or three large snowballs piled one on top of the other).

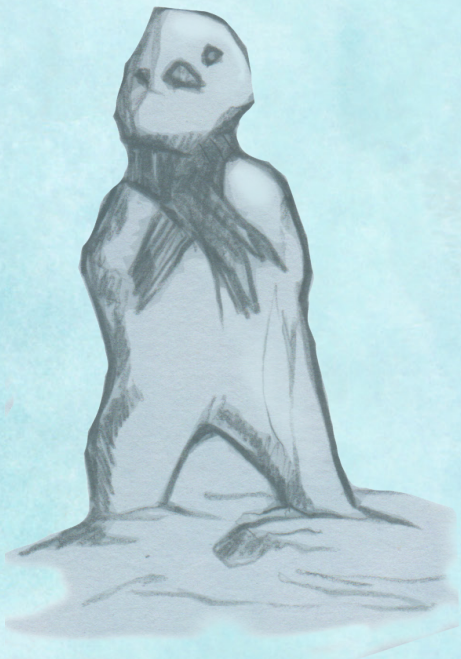
### Actions

**Multiattack.** The Snow Golem makes 2 attacks with its snowballs or 1 slam attack if a target is engaged

**Snowball** Missile Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 6 (2d4+1) cold damage

**Slam** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10+1) bludgeoning damage







# The Yule Lads

The Yule Lads (*jólasveinarnir*) are troublesome dwarven bandits that roam the land preying on isolated settlements. They particularly relish causing problems during The Midwinter Festival. They are not evil per se, just chaotic and mildly malevolent. They can often be banished by peculiarly obscure methods, each noted in their individual descriptions.

The Yule Lads are generally encountered one by one. This of course, means that, if an encounter turns into a combat, the Yule Lad will be seriously outmatched by most adventuring parties. They will retreat rather than get into a difficult fight. If they can make it to a door or window they can call out for one of their brothers as a Bonus Action. Depending on how challenging an encounter you want, you can have each Yule Lad calling out for another each round so that any number of them will show up. Roll on the table on page 6 to determine which of the Lads show up. It takes between 1-4 rounds for a new Lad to show up.

## Yule Lad

*Medium Humanoid (Dwarf), Chaotic Neutral*

**Armor Class** 13 (Leather Armor)
**Hit Points** 26 (4d8+4)
**Speed** 25 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 (+2) | 11(+0) | 14(+2) | 11(+0) | 10(+0) | 9(-1) |

**Skills** Perception +7
**Senses** Darkvision 60 Ft.
**Languages** Dwarvish, Yule Lads' Cant
**Challenge** 1

### Actions

**Club** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage

**Knife** Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage

**Stekkjastaur (Sheep-Cote Clod)**

*The first of them was Sheep-Cote Clod.*
*He came stiff as wood,*
*to prey upon the farmer's sheep*
*as far as he could.*

Sheep Cote Clod has Natural Barkskin, (AC15), but is hampered by his wooden peg leg (movement 15ft). He is terrified by, and vulnerable to, fire.



Sheep-Cote Clod

**Giljagaur (Gully Gawk)**

*The second was Gully Gawk,*
*gray his head and mien.*
*He snuck into the cow barn*
*from his craggy ravine.*

Gully Gawk is proficient at two things - stealing yak's milk and hiding. He has advantage on stealth rolls when he is able to hide without moving. He is sensitive to bright light, in the manner of a Drow or a Mogwai (He is at disadvantage in sunlight or its equivalent)

**Stúfur (Stubby)**

*Stubby was the third called,*
*a stunted little man,*
*who watched for every chance*
*to whisk off a pan.*

Unnaturally small, smaller even than a halfling, Stubby has advantage when attempting to escape from grappling. His movement is 20ft. He is terrified by beasts of medium size or larger.



Spoon Licker

Stubby

**Þvörusleikir (Spoon Licker)**

*The fourth was Spoon Licker;*
*like spindle he was thin.*
*He felt himself in clover*
*when the cook wasn't in.*

Spoon Licker can be identified by his unnaturally long tongue and emaciated frame. He has advantage on Acrobatics (Dexterity) checks. He has an hysterical phobia of salt, and will flee in terror if he tastes or sees more than a pinch.

**Pottasleikir (Pot Scraper)**

*Pot Scraper, the fifth one,*
*was a funny sort of chap.*
*When kids were given scrapings,*
*he´d come to the door and tap.*

Sporting unnaturally sharp claws, and an even longer tongue than Spoon Licker, Pot Scraper favours leftovers, and uses a (dirty) heavy iron pot in combat (bludgeoning damage 1d10+4). If vegetable peelings, bones, fat or any other food leftovers are present, Pot Scraper will be compelled to break off from whatever he is doing and cram them into his mouth.



Pot Scraper

Door Slammer



Sausage Swiper



**Askasleikir (Bowl Licker)**

*Bowl Licker, the sixth one,*
*was shockingly ill bred.*
*From underneath the bedsteads*
*he stuck his ugly head.*

Yet another of the licking Yule Lads, this foolish creature has got his head stuck in a large bowl. This gives him an AC of 14, but he is at disadvantage on attack rolls and perception checks. Not the sharpest weapon in the armoury, he can be easily tricked and distracted.

**Hurðaskellir (Door Slammer)**

*The seventh was Door Slammer,*
*a sorry, vulgar chap:*
*When people in the twilight*
*would take a little nap.*

Door Slammer - as his name would suggest - has the ability to cause any door to slam (as a bonus action). If more than one door is slammed simultaneously, all other creatures within a 50ft radius must make a DC15 constitution save, or take 1d8+1 sonic (thunder) damage (on a successful save, a character takes half damage). He is distressed by high pitched noises and will flee if he hears any.

**Skyrgámur (Skyr Gobbler)**

*Skyr Gobbler, the eighth,*
*was an awful stupid bloke.*
*He lambasted the skyr tub*
*till the lid on it broke*

This Yule Lad can be distracted by skyr - a type of yogurt favoured in these parts. He will usually be encountered gobbling skyr. If he becomes aware of any more skyr in the vicinity he will be compelled to eat it as quickly as possible. If this happens there is a 10% chance that he has already overindulged, and will become incapacitated (while projectile vomiting) - a surprising number of dwarves are lactose intolerant.

**Bjúgnakrækir (Sausage Swiper)**

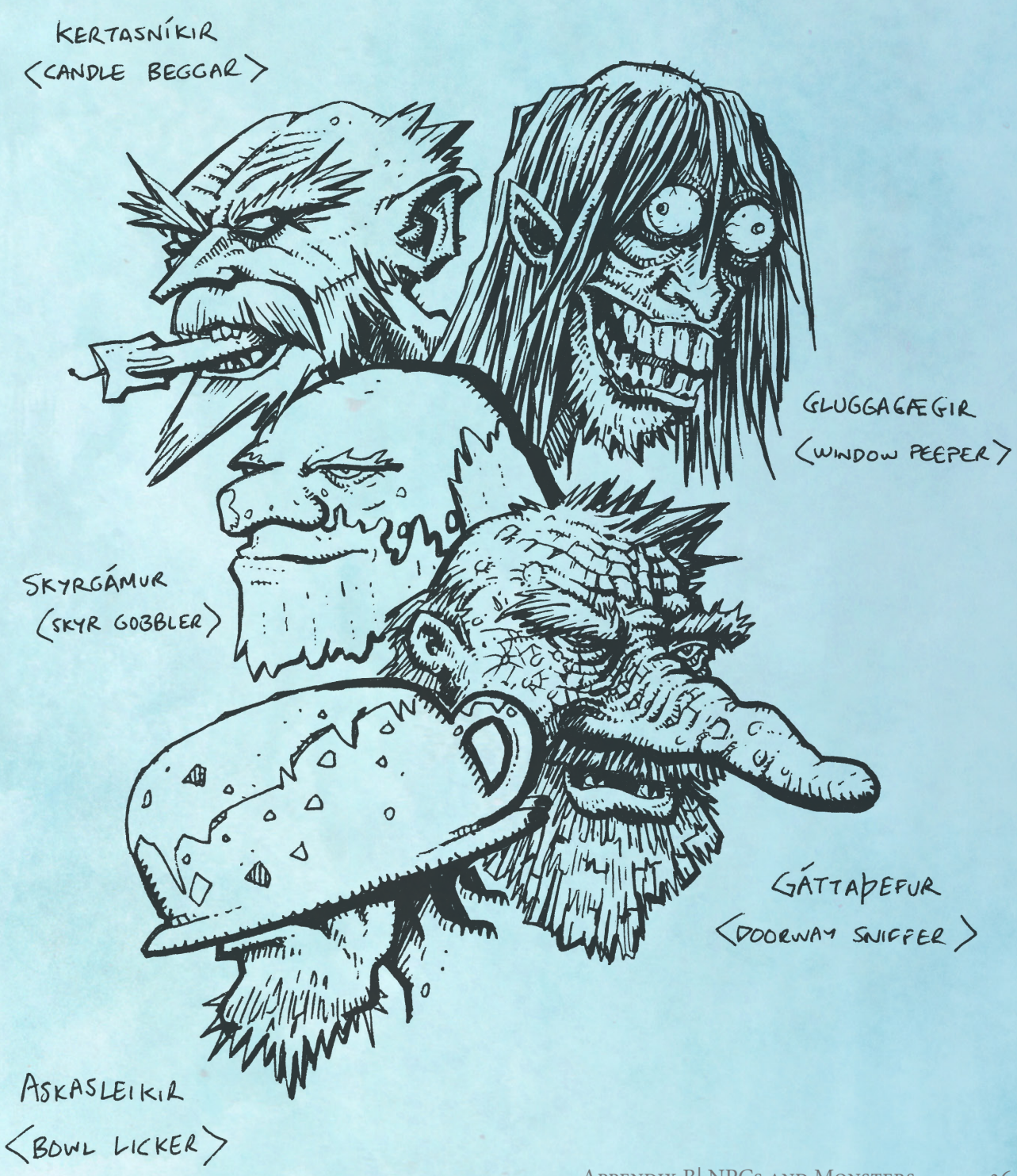
*The ninth was Sausage Swiper,*
*a shifty pilferer.*
*He climbed up to the rafters*
*and raided food from there.*

Can be easily distracted by food (particularly meat). He is immune to smoke/choking/asphyxiation due to his preference for hanging out where sausages are smoked. He hates fruit (or indeed anything healthy) and will flee at the sight of it.

**Gluggagægir (Window Peeper)**

*The tenth was Window Peeper,*
*a weird little twit,*
*who stepped up to the window*
*and stole a peek through it.*

Window Peeper has advantage on vision based perception. His eyes are sensitive, however, and exposure to dust, flour, salt or any other powder will send him into an unpredictable frenzy (See Barbarian in the PHB) and he'll flee.



**Gáttaþefur (Door Sniffer)**

*Eleventh was Door Sniffer,*
*a doltish lad and gross.*
*He never got a cold, yet had*
*a huge, sensitive nose.*

Has advantage on scent based perception. However, his presence can be easily detected (advantage on perception) due to his overpowering stench.

**Ketrókur (Meat Hook)**

*Meat Hook, the twelfth one,*
*his talent would display*
*as soon as he arrived*
*on Saint Thorlak's Day.*

Also known as The Butcher or Naughty Norbert Cleaverhook. He uses his hook in battle (Piercing Damage 1D8+4). He has a peculiar aversion to fish (Cratchfolk traditionally eat Skata, fermented skate fish on Midwinter's Eve), and he will flee if he can smell any.

**Kertasníkir (Candle Beggar)**

*The thirteenth was Candle Beggar*
*– 'twas cold, I believe,*
*if he was not the last*
*of the lot on M'winter's Eve.*

Candle Beggar secretes himself in darkened buildings. He can extinguish any small flame in the vicinity, and use his darkvision to attack blinded opponents. Like his brother Gully Gawk, he is sensitive to bright light, in the manner of a drow (He is at disadvantage in sunlight or its equivalent). In the darkness he may steal any small item from any character he comes into contact with (opposed check - Stealth vs character's perception, to become aware that the object has been taken)

Gully Gawk



Meat Hook

APPENDIX C:

# Secrets of Cratch

These secrets can scattered through the adventure and picked up at any point by the PCs.

### Heroes

Various folk heroes who protected Cratch through the years are celebrated in effigies above the doorways and windows of homes in the town

***Klain of Brulis***- more detailed info under his own section "KLAIN"

***Graswold Chase*** - A Trapper, who was obsessive in spreading Midwinter Cheer, at the cost of his home, family and livelihood.

***Axton Rand*** - A Hunter. He was known for inventing peculiar devices that none could operate but him.

***Kije The Golden Voiced***- The Bard, whose mystical song was used to enchant the great bell, and for whom the lake north of the town was named. He had an unfailing belief in The Spirit Of Midwinter, and repeatedly sang of his belief in Father Midwinter.

***Farkus Skut*** - A belligerent magic user, who was opposed to the Midwinter Festival, but nevertheless protected the town from bandits. Sometimes called The Green Pishogue (Wizard).

***Krum Holtz*** - An Elf Priest - wore a Star Necklace that allowed him to "see all things". Said to have assisted Father Midwinter on two of his three great adventures.

***Gwenn Krangle*** - Elven Sorceror and a one time companion of Father Midwinter. Said to have been imbued with the power of a Red and Green Dragon.

***Soke Thorn*** - A Ranger. Little is known of him.

***Sir Carn*** - A Paladin that fought under the device of the red and white stripes.

***Kellister The Quick***- Halfling Rogue, who outsmarted The Ogre Grila, and stole a wondrous sword "Frosticle" from her hoard. His descendents still live in Cratch, the family being headed by The Merchant Baron Holan Kellister.

***Kirrin Kellister*** - Ancestor of Kellister The Quick, and the only historic example of a Halfling Warlock.

***Lim The Feral*** - An Elven warrior, displaced from his home and raised by the Northern Barbarian Tribes. He eventually returned to his homeland, and was aided in reuniting with his family by Father Midwinter.

### Bell

The town was protected by The Solstice Bell which was rung through The Midwinter festival to keep angry spirits away during this time. The Bell was enchanted by a powerful bard adventurer.

### Casket

The town was also blessed by the Casket of Plenty. This was kept all year round and then opened on the Solstice when it provided food and wine, and good fortune for the coming year.

### Stolen

The Casket was taken and opened before the Solstice which Cursed the town. The evil spirit Krampus came and abducted the townsfolk. Only one is left- the boy who took the box.

### Klain

The people of Cratch celebrate their folk hero Klain of Brulis, and there is a great statue dedicated to him in the centre of the village. Sometimes called "The Dire Red". Klain freed the Tower of Kama-Tion from The Krampus and his gang. The ruins of Kama-Tion lie to the south of Cratch. The story is told in the Lay of Klain, also known as Under The Broadsword, which is known to every bard in the land. The broadsword Kiyaii, is held in The Shrine of Brulis.

Before he died, Klain and his two companions planted The Holy Wood, a small copse unravaged by the ice and frost of the north. The Casket of Midwinter was crafted from the wood of these enchanted trees. Despite this, many Cratchfolk say The Lay of Brulis with its themes of vengeance and extreme violence is not appropriate for the festival,

and also has nothing to do with the true meaning of Midwinter. Others, however maintain that The Lay of Brulis is undeniably a Midwinter story because it takes place at Midwinter.

### Goat

Julbocken, The Goat of The Black Frost is a capricious nature spirit that can help and hinder. Offerings are made to keep him from becoming belligerent, but with the townsfolk unable to appease him, he has come under the influence of Krampus.

### Lads

The Yule Lads are troublesome dwarven bandits that roam the land preying on isolated settlements. They particularly relish causing problems during The Midwinter Festival. They are not evil per se, just chaotic and mildly malevolent.

### Cat

The Midwinter Cat Cratch folklore states that every villager must put on a new piece of clothing for Midwinter or they will find themselves in mortal danger. An enormous black cat prowls on Midwinter Eve and eats anyone who doesn't follow this simple rule. This obnoxious feline is simple folklore told to small children to make them behave and wear their new socks.

### Krampus

In Cratch folklore, Krampus is a horned animalistic demon who, during Midwinter, punishes those who have misbehaved. He is said to carry a switch of thorny branches as a weapon, and a bag into which he bundles the souls of his victims.

APPENDIX D:

# Magic Items

These are Wondrous Items conferred by Deck of Merry Things card, or other means.
Depending on the character's class, they will receive the following magic items. There's nothing more unbalancing than an inappropriately powerful magic item, but, if you're running this adventure with one off characters, that's hardly a problem.

If you're running this adventure as part of your ongoing campaign, I admire your cojones. If that's the case you could just have the item(s) disappear into a cloud of of Post Festival Malaise, or have the true owner show up and demand its return, or it could spark the beginning of a new quest.

Feel free to mix it up a bit. For instance if the players decide they want to search the town in order to find The Shrine of Brulis, with enough good rolls (or even a 4E style skill challenge), they should be allowed to find it and retrieve the sword Kiyaii. If that has happened and a player draws a "Gift" card from the Deck of Merry Things, simply switch out the artefact for the next most suitable item. Or, y'know, just make something up (did I mention that this should be a one off?).

### Character Classes and Magic Items

Fighter - Kiyaii
Rogue - The Frosticle (Short Sword)
Bard - Cape of the Jolly Old Elf
Wizard (or Druid) - Holly Rod
Cleric - Star Necklace
Sorceror - Cloak of The Helper Elves
Ranger - Tinsel of Entanglement
Paladin - Candy Cane of Protection
Warlock (or Druid)- The Kissing Twig
Barbarian - The Axe of Lim

Monks are generally thought to have rejected material possessions, so they get no presents! Bad luck, Brother Jack!

Fighter

### Kiyaii - (Klain of Brulis)

Weapon (longsword), very rare (requires attunement)

When you hit with an attack using this magic sword, the target takes an extra 1d8 thunder damage. In addition, while you hold the sword, you have resistance to thunder damage.

When you draw this weapon, you can dispel any silence spells within 30 feet of you. This property can be used no more than once per hour.

Rogue

### The Frosticle - (Kellister The Quick)

Weapon (shortsword), very rare (requires attunement)

When you hit with an attack using this magic sword, the target takes an extra 1d6 cold damage. In addition, while you hold the sword, you have resistance to fire damage.

In freezing temperatures, the blade sheds bright blue light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

When you draw this weapon, you can extinguish all nonmagical flames within 30 feet of you. This property can be used no more than once per hour.

### Candy Cane of Protection - (Sir Carn)

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

If you hold this Candy Cane in your hand for 1 round, an inscription appears on its surface revealing its magical nature. It provides two benefits while it is on your person:

You have advantage on saving throws against spells.
The Cane has 12 charges. If you fail a saving throw against a necromancy spell or a harmful effect originating from an undead creature, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge and turn the failed save into a successful one. The Cane crumbles into (delicious) powder and is destroyed when its last charge is expended.

### Cape of the Jolly Old Elf - (Kije)

(Red, white fur trim)

Wondrous item, rare

This cape smells faintly of pine needles and cinnamon. While wearing it, you can use it to cast the Dimension Door spell as an action. This property of the cape can't be used again until the next dawn.

The spell is limited to transporting the character through roofs and ceilings, either into or out of a building.

When you disappear, you leave behind a cloud of frost, and you appear in a similar cloud of frost at your destination. The frost lightly obscures the space you left and the space you appear in, and it dissipates at the end of your next turn. A light or stronger wind disperses the frost.

### Holly Rod - (Farkus Skut)

Rod, rare (requires attunement)
Made by the drow, this rod is a magic weapon that ends in three sprigs of holly. While holding the rod, you can use an action to direct each sprig to attack a creature you can see within 15 feet of you. Each tentacle makes a melee attack roll with a +9 bonus. On a hit, the tentacle deals 1d6 piercing damage. If you hit a target with all three sprigs , it must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature's speed is halved, it has disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws, and it can't use reactions for 1 minute.
Moreover, on each of its turns, it can take either an action or a bonus action, but not both. At the end of each of its turns, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

### Star Necklace - (Krum Holtz)

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

While wearing this necklace, you can see normally in any light conditions (except complete darkness), and you have advantage on saving throws made against blinding effects.

### Cloak of The Helper Elves - (Gwenn Krangle)

Green, white trim

While you wear this cloak with its hood up, Wisdom (Perception) checks made to see you have disadvantage, and you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide, as the cloak's color shifts to camouflage you. If you do this in a snowy environment, you become impossible to see, as long as you stay still. Pulling the hood up or down requires an action.

### The Axe of Lim The Feral

This ancient axe, seemingly crafted from ice, is unnaturally sharp, and gives +1 to attack and damage. If it is taken south, away from the mountains and arctic temperatures it will become blunted (-1 to attack and damage)

### Tinsel of Entanglement - (Soke Thorn)

This tinsel rope is 30 feet long and weighs 1 pound. If you hold one end of the tinsel and use an action to speak its Command Word ("Lametta"), the other end darts forward to Entangle a creature you can see within 20 feet of you. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or become Restrained. The restrained creature is compelled to sing cheerful Midwinter Carols for as long as it is held, if it is capable of speech.

You can release the creature by using a Bonus Action to speak a second Command Word ("Radabuff"). A target Restrained by the tinsel can use an action to make a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity check (target's choice). On a success, the creature is no longer Restrained.

The tinsel has AC 20 and 20 hit points. It regains 1 hit point every 5 minutes as long as it has at least 1 hit point. If the tinsel drops to 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

### The Kissing Twig - (Kirrin Kellister)

Rod, rare (requires attunement)

This rod appears as a twig of mistletoe. If you are a spellcaster, the rod can be used to cast the following spells: Friends (1 charge), Charm Person (3 charges), Suggestion (5 charges), Dominate Person (10 Charges). The spells require no verbal or somatic components, but the target must be kissed by the caster, while the rod is held above their head.

A newly found rod has 1d10+3 charges. Every night it regains 1d8 charges. A rod that reaches 0 charges becomes nonmagical, and sprouts hard thorns.

APPENDIX E

# Boxed Text

As is traditional, boxed text is provided in this adventure. It looks good. However, I personally find that reading out blocks of narrative with your face stuck in the book takes away from interaction with your players. I'm pretty sure the players switch off too. your mileage may vary, of course, but, as an alternative, in this section I will provide a pared down version of the boxed text from the main body of the adventure.

Obviously, you can read the full description first, and then describe it as you remember it, or imagined it. That'll probably sound a lot better than you reading out my words (I'll be honest, I don't talk like this is real life).

Think of these notes more as an aide memoire, to glance at as you actually describe the location or situation to your players. Give it a go, at any rate, and if it goes tits up you can blame me, and go back to the traditional way.

## Chapter 1: Snowbound

***Intro***
In the land of The Yeti.
Hunting The Blizzard King
You are cold, tired and hungry.

***Encounter With The Blizzard King***
A terrible wind rises - snowstorm
Off the trail
Blizzard King attacks with a great axe

***End Encounter***
Beast disengages
The storm subsides

***Midwinter's Ghost***
The night is drawing in.
A tall figure, black robes and chains.
Points to town

## Chapter 2: Cratch, The Forgotten Town

***Archway***
Great stone archway.
Cratch is legible.
Frozen over carved letters

***Song***
Midwinter's heart a song to sing
Lakeside watch a bell to ring
Solstice time return from roam
All kept safe within each home

***Statue of The Goat***
Carved wooden goat stood on its hind legs.
Runes read Julbocken (a DC13 Arcana check= The Goat of The Black Frost)

***Cratch description***
Empty and abandoned.
Decorated for the Midwinter Festival.
Silence.
Snow blankets every surface.
Snow effigies.
Light glimmers from Meadhall

***Statue of The Hero***
A stone statue of a barbarian warrior - dedicated to Klain of Brulis.

## Chapter 3: Fire and Wine

***Enter Meadhall***
Largest building in Cratch.
Smells of food, fire and wine.
Banquet laid out along the long table.
Otherwise the hall is empty.

***Father Midwinter Appears***
Suddenly a large figure is watching you.
"you have eaten well but I have a greater gift"
-or-
"No matter. I have a much greater gift"

***Father Midwinter Disappears***
Go north, to Kije Lake.
"a boy awaits a salvation"
Disappears in a cloud of snow.

## Chapter 4: Don't Let The Bells End

***Kije Lake Description***
Fisherman's shacks, and small piers
More snow effigies.
North shore watch tower.
A figure sits at the centre of the ice.
Everything encased in a layer of ice.

***Ebin***
A boy, in shabby clothes.
Mesmerized by shards of ice.
They spell out WIND MERIT.

The boy either cannot hear you, or chooses not to respond.

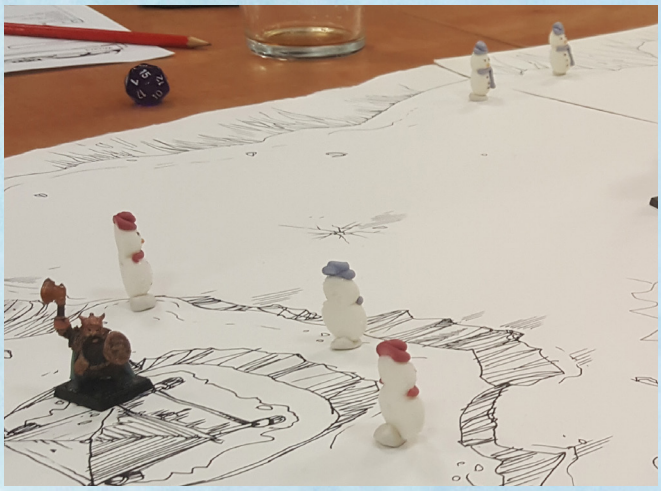
APPENDIX F

# Acknowledgements

Thanks to my players that playtested this adventure, Olga, Eugene, Sam, Chris, Henry and Charlie. This adventure was suggested by a Christmas themed scenario published in *Imagine Magazine* Issue 21, back in December 1984, *For Whom The Bell Jingles* by P. Howard, G. Baker, and L. King. The title was just too good not to use.

As I mentioned elsewhere, to set this adventure apart from your usual game, you might want to serve mulled wine, egg nog, or any other festive beverage. Mince pies and pretzels in the shape of Fir Trees are readily available at this time of year. If you use miniatures, a good trick is to buy some sugar snowman cake decorations, which are perfectly in 25mm scale, so they're ideal to represent those nasty Snow Golems. You can let your players eat them when they dispatch the monster, too.

Perhaps hand out gifts, or encourage your players to give you stuff (note: I tried this and it didn't work!). Christmas music on the playlist can help - I particularly enjoy Victor Hely Hutchinson's *Carol Symphony*, but that's solely due to the fact that they used it in *The Box of Delights* TV series. As you can no doubt tell, the adventure is not intended to be particularly serious, (we did it as light relief from our ongoing *Curse of Strahd* campaign). I'm sure you have spotted all the not terribly subtle references contained within, but however you choose to play it, I hope you have as much fun as we did.



Finally, in the interest of embarrassing myself, here's a picture of me running the game in a stupid hat and beard (using my best Brian Blessed voice to personify Father Midwinter).

