

HT 1 - The Perils of Cinder Claws

The Perils of Cinder Claws



Two Yuletide Adventures
by Daniel J. Bishop



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THE PERILS OF CINDER CLAWS

A TWO-PART COLLECTION OF YULETIDE MAYHEM CHARACTER LEVELS 1-3

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A Tale of Madness

On October 18th, 2013 Daniel sent me an email to see if I had any interest in publishing a pair of Christmas-themed DCC adventures. Daniel had previously released one of the modules called *The Thing in the Chimney* last year with the help of Bygrinstow on art duties. The goal we set at the time was to have the two-part document together containing *The Thing in the Chimney* with its sequel *The Nexus of Yule* by mid-November. This would allow us to get the adventure approved and into Print-On-Demand by the Christmas season.

That did not happen. Sometimes in publishing there are just some deadlines that cannot be met. It happens to us all, heck Stefen and Perry's *Lovecraft Fantasy* for the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* was originally scheduled for Halloween of 2011. Yikes!

Although we won't have this available for Print-On-Demand for the Christmas season this year it will be available in the new year. Though we are later out of the gate than either Daniel, Perry, or I would have liked we are still pleased to present *The Thing in the Chimney* and *The Nexus of Yule* for your enjoyment this Christmas season.

- Mark Gedak, Purple Duck Games.

The Thing in the Chimney

A Yuletide Adventure by Daniel J. Bishop

Suitable for 16, 1st level characters, 6-8, 2nd level characters, 3-6, 3rd level characters, or 1-2, 4th level characters.

Have fun, and happy holidays!

Starting the Adventure

At the waning of every year, as the sun grows closer to the horizon, and spends less time in the sky, there comes a time of terrible cold and deep snow to the lands of the north. The world waits with hushed breath for this, the longest night of the year, to be over. Soon, the sun will begin to climb higher each day, and the days grow longer. Although long stretches of cold weather are yet to come, this is the night in which winter's back is broken. After tonight, the world turns slowly back to warmth and light.

But that is after tonight.

You find yourselves in a great hall, at least 120 feet long and 60 feet wide, with a roaring blaze in the fireplace at one end. The great fire, the heart of which is a huge log some 50 feet in length, lights the hall with flickering light and dancing shadows. The shadows are even darker on the far end of the hall, where at least 40 feet are given over to fir trees growing from the floor of the hall. Indeed, the floor in that direction is covered with a thick carpet of pine needles. Between the fireplace and the trees, the hall is filled with wooden benches and tables, and what appear to be the remains of a lavish meal of roast venison, stuffed goose, pastries, and various vegetables. The room is hot from the fire. The smells of wood burning, combined with the scent of spruce and balsam and of savoury things to eat, fill the air.

The room itself vaults to a height of 60 feet with huge wooden rafters, at least a foot and a half square, crossing the expanse at about 20 feet. This is a huge space indeed. The walls are of roughly cut and worked stone, covered in places with tapestries depicting vast polar expanses. The floors are made of flagstones. Six archways are visible,

three in each of the long walls, and roughly equidistant – two of the archways lead out through the wooded area, one from each wall. Each archway is about 8 feet wide, and vaults to a height of 12 feet.

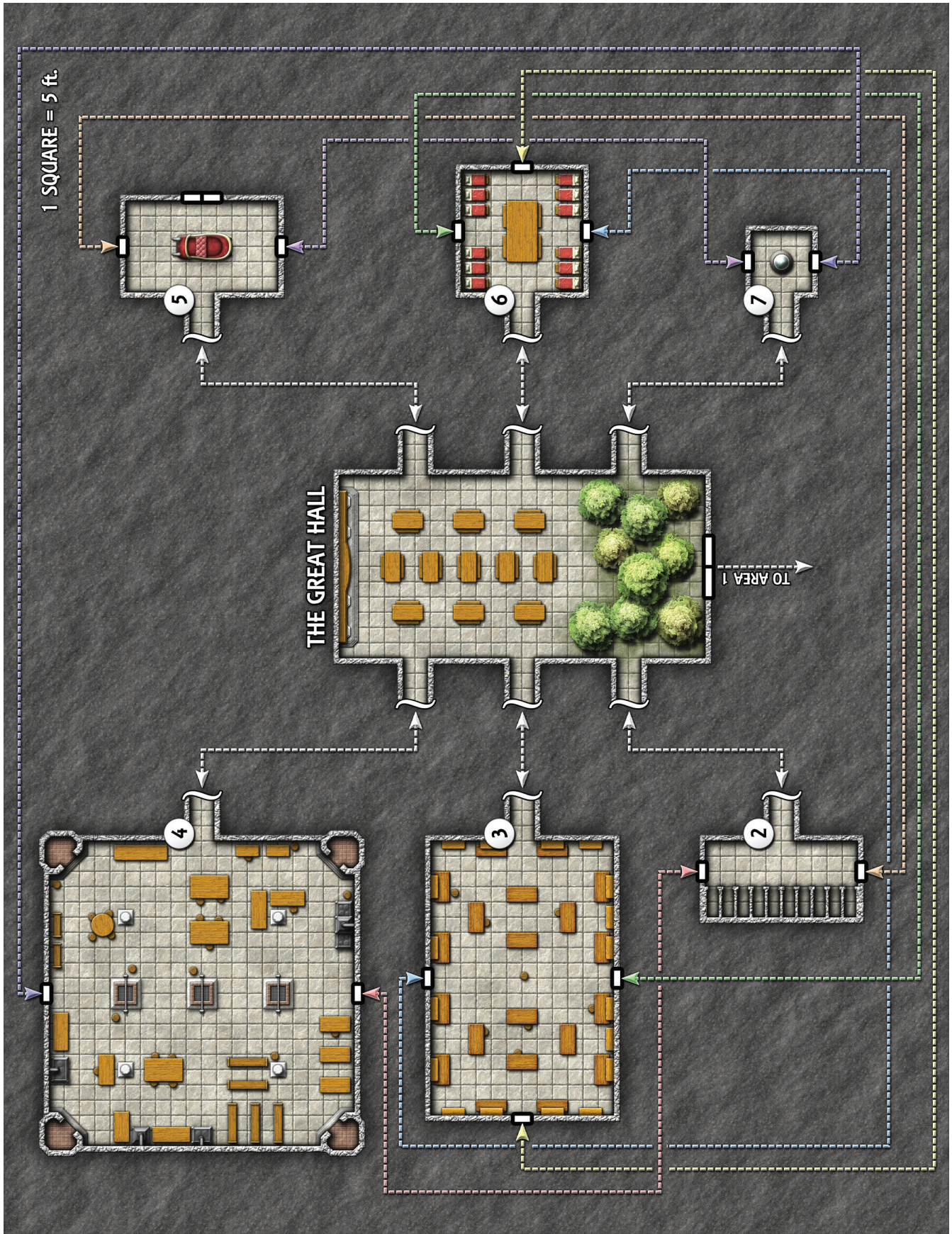
Characters approaching the fireplace discover that it is uncomfortably hot due to the vast log and other pieces of wood burning within it. Holly and mistletoe have been strung along the fireplace stones, but they are shrivelled from the heat. A number of stockings hang from the bricks – one for each character. They even have the character's names stitched into them with black thread. If asked, these stockings have an equal chance of being red, green, yellow, and black. If a character takes his stocking now, it is not replaced later (see **What's In My Stocking?**). These stockings are currently empty.

Characters examining the tables will be able to easily pick a meal from what is left. It seems not long abandoned, and is still good to eat. The meal was served on trenchers – bread cut to act as plates – and seems to have served about 100 people. The only utensils are forks and spoons – there are no knives – and these are made of bronze. They are worth about 5 cp each, but only 97 spoons and 89 forks can be recovered.

Anyone picking through the remains of the meal has a 1 in 5 chance of discovering an **ancient petrified fruitcake** on a wooden platter among the rest of the food. A mithral dagger lies on the platter near it, and it is sharp enough to cut the fruitcake, as is any magical blade. The fruitcake is currently whole.

The fruitcake lies dreaming about distant planes, and is at first not aware of the characters. However, as it slowly becomes aware of them, it begins to exert a strong, alcohol-soaked odour of candied cherries and rum. Creatures who are within 10 feet of the fruitcake are enticed to eat it, and must roll a Will save (DC 10) to avoid cutting off, and consuming, a slice. If other characters attempt to stop him, he must succeed in another Will save (DC 15) to avoid becoming violent – even slaying his friends to obtain and eat the fruitcake. Once a character has tasted the fruitcake, he will struggle to consume the whole thing, and there is no save. Until the fruitcake is destroyed (throwing it in the fire will do so in 1d3 rounds) or consumed by another, the character will do all in his power to eat the

The Thing in the Chimney (GM's Map)



fruitcake. Because of its state, eating the fruitcake is not easy, and requires three DC 10 Stamina checks to get the whole thing down.

Once ingested, the ancient fruitcake never leaves the character's system, leaving him feeling always as though there is a lead weight within his stomach. The character permanently loses 1d3 points of Agility as a result. Further, the fruitcake talks to him from time to time, suggesting courses of action that further its own alien agenda. And the Chaotic fruitcake does have an evil agenda, never doubt it. Only direct intervention of a patron or deity can remove the fruitcake, and only a very hot fire can destroy it.

If a character fails to follow the fruitcake's suggestions, the fruitcake has the ability to send shooting cramps through the character's stomach and abdomen once every week. This inflicts 1d4 points of temporary Strength and 1d6 points of temporary Agility damage. The fruitcake will usually wait until a moment when the character will be truly punished for this mistake – if the character dies, the fruitcake is not usually destroyed, but begins the task of luring another agent as soon as the character's corpse has become desiccated enough to reveal it once more.

The fruitcake can cast three spells for the character that eats it, but each of these spells can be cast only once each week. The spells are cast with a +6 modifier, and because they are cast by the fruitcake, the character need not be able to speak, use his hands, or even concentrate. The fruitcake, not the character, chooses all variables. Otherwise, any effect that would normally benefit the caster also benefits the character. The fruitcake will use, or withdraw, this spell use, depending upon how well the character has followed its direction. The three spells are: cure paralysis, magic shield, and neutralize poison or disease.

If multiple characters eat the fruitcake, the Agility loss and spells are split between them, depending upon how much they have eaten. The one who takes the greatest penalty should also gain the most benefit, and be talked to by the fruitcake the most. A partial bit of fruitcake causes proportionately lesser cramps as well.

Characters who examine the trees note that they are covered with strands of glistening silver material, and

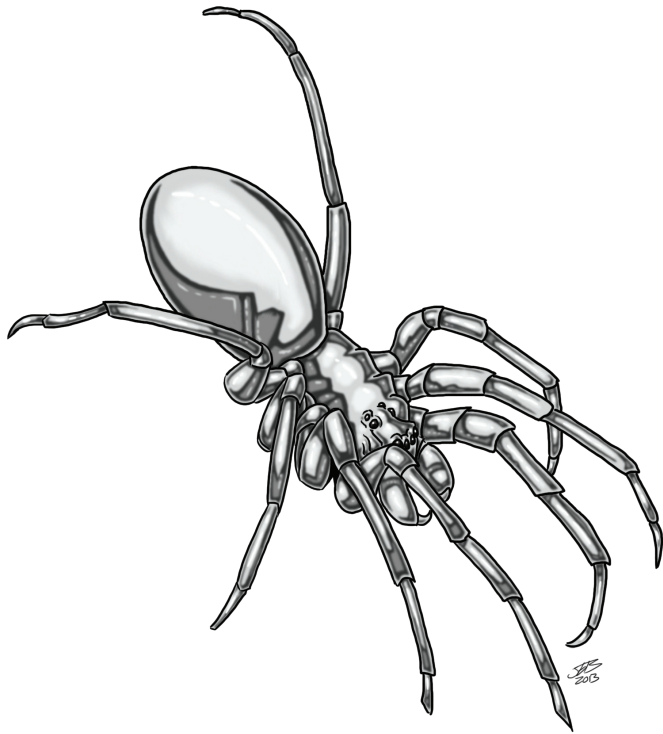
hung with shiny balls of red, green, and yellow material. They can also see a large set of wooden double doors at the far end of the hall, beyond the trees. The trees are too tightly packed to simply skirt the walls and avoid them. If a character digs beneath the pine needles, he will discover that the trees are actually growing out of the floor.

The silver material is slightly sticky to the touch. The shiny balls have a leathery consistency, and require some work to cut open – they are the egg sacks of the tinsel spiders that live among the trees. If one is cut open, roll 1d3. On a 1-2, there is just a mass of eggs inside. On a 3, a swarm of tiny silver spiders goes skittering out of the egg and into the character's sleeve (and hence clothing). If the player states immediately that he will drop the egg sack, he gains a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid getting spiders under his clothing. Although there is no mechanical effect to this, the players need not be told that.

Hiding among the trees are five **tinsel spiders**, silvery arachnids about the size of a cat. The silvery material is a form of web; the spiders can feel it vibrate, and know when things move among the trees. Unless the PCs take strong precautions, each spider is likely to attack first from surprise, as it is well camouflaged among the tinsel and the pine boughs. The targeted PC may be given a Luck check, if he is being cautious, to avoid surprise. The initial attack is with a single spider. Thereafter, 1d3-1 spiders attack each round, until all five are in the combat. Slain and abandoned characters are wound in tinsel for later consumption.

The poison of the tinsel spiders is mild – Fort DC 10, or take 1 point of Strength, Agility, or Stamina damage (equal chance of each). When a tinsel spider is slain, it explodes into a shower of sticky silver glop that quickly hardens over any weapon used to slay it, rendering it useless until the glop can be dissolved in strong alcohol. The slayer must make a DC 10 Reflex save, or some of the glop gets on him, reducing his Agility by 1 until he can wash it off with strong alcohol.

Tinsel spiders (5): Init +2; Atk bite +0 melee (1 plus poison); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 5, 5, 3, 14, 15 ; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP tinsel web, poison, silver glop; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will –2; AL N.



Tinsel Spiders

The double doors are massive wooden affairs, each door being 10 feet across and 15 feet high. They can only be opened or closed with a DC 25 Strength check, but up to four characters can push on a single door. Each additional character adds his Strength modifier, or a +1 bonus, whichever is higher.

Each of the smaller archways leads to a passage 8 feet wide and vaulted to a height of 12 feet. Each of these passages goes 120 feet before opening into a larger space. Any attempt at mapping should quickly discover that these spaces should overlap – the normal laws of physics do not apply. The judge is encouraged to print the map out in colour, so that the colouring of the doors helps to determine which door connects to which area. In addition, each door is marked with a letter code, and is the same door with the corresponding letter on the map, despite the different locations of the symbols. The overview map is not to scale as a result of these peculiarities.

If any character has the ability to determine direction, no matter which direction the character faces seems to be south.

Encounter Areas

1. The Polar Waste: *As soon as the door is opened, a freezing cold wind blows into the great hall. Beyond, coruscating sheets of coloured light dimly illuminate a snow-swept landscape whose icy hills and ridges seem to hint at uncanny things buried beneath. Although you cannot determine exactly what may be frozen and buried beneath, you have a strong sense that, should this polar land ever thaw, what was revealed would drive those who viewed it mad. The stars are like crystals of ice in the sky. As far as you can see, there is nothing here but ice, snow, and wind. Even in the few moments you have looked out, a foot of snow has drifted into the opening of the hall, and your hair has become frosted. Without shelter, you would quickly freeze to death out here.*

There is a 4 in 6 chance that torches are blown out, and a 2 in 6 chance for lanterns.

Anyone who steps outside to look will discover that the doors stand in the middle of empty air – there is no sign of the Hall from without. With the doors closed, there is no way to find the Hall, or to escape the freezing cold. Every minute spent out here causes 1d6 Stamina damage, without any save. If the characters are lucky, the ice bears will not find them first.

Pulling the doors closed is harder than opening them, and requires a DC 30 Strength check. Worse, only two characters can aid with the massive handles on any one door (unless the group thinks to use a rope as a pull). Up to four characters outside can help, but they will be trapped once the doors are closed. There is only a 25% chance if the door is re-opened that the door opens in the same spot – otherwise it is 1d10 miles away.

If the door is left open, snow drifts into the Hall, eventually creating a drift up to 5 feet deep beneath the trees, and with lesser drifts extending up to halfway into the Hall, where the heat from the fireplace melts the snow into messy puddles. If this is allowed to occur, two **snowmen** will also enter the Hall after the PCs exit it, and be waiting therein upon their return.

These evil snowmen appear as actual snowmen, with sharp branches for arms, corncob pipes, coal eyes and buttons, and carrot noses. They can hurl snowballs up to 30 feet away, which cause 1d3 points of damage

due to sheer cold. If the target does not make a DC 10 Fort save, he also suffers 1 point of Stamina damage due to cold. When a snowman is slain, its three snowballs burst into a spray of cold that causes 1d3 points of temporary Agility damage unless a DC 10 Fort save succeeds.

The snowmen are abnormally vulnerable to fire, taking four times the normal damage from heat-based attacks, and thus they cannot move past the snow drifts into the room. A snowman who dies due to fire damage does not burst into a spray of cold, either.

The hat of a snowman can be removed with a successful Mighty Deed. This causes the snowman to slow down (a cumulative -2 to initiative count each round). The snowman ceases to be animated when its initiative count reaches 0, unless it can recover its hat. Placing the hat back upon its head restores the snowman to its original initiative count. A snowman is not “slain” if it stops moving because of losing its hat, and does not burst.

Snowmen (2): Init +0; Atk scratch +0 melee (1d3) or snowball +3 ranged (1d3 cold plus possible Stamina damage); AC 8; HD 4d8; hp 21, 10; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP snowballs, burst, fire vulnerability, hat; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +6; AL C.

2. Reindeer Stalls: *This area is 25 feet wide and 60 feet long, with 10 stalls, similar to horse stalls, along one wall. Opposite that wall is an archway, 8 feet wide and vaulted to a height of 12 feet. At one end of the room is a wooden door painted red; at the other end is a wooden door painted orange. Hay is piled along the wall where there are no stalls, as well as two straw brooms and three wide shovels – not good for digging, but excellent for scooping up dung. A barrel of dung is in one corner, but the whole area could clearly use more work. Harness with silver bells hangs from hooks on the walls. Names are written over nine of the stalls in Elvish script, but you see no animals in any of the stalls, which are closed with doors that reach about 4 feet in height. There is a strong animal odour here.*

The elvish runes read: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Dunder, Blixem, and Rudolph. They are inhabited, but the inhabitants are not visible from outside the stalls because they are eight **tiny reindeer**,

each no larger than a medium-sized dog. Any one of them can leap over a stall door with a single move. If a stall door is opened, or their jingle bells are disturbed, they will come out to investigate. Each reindeer has a special power:

- **Dasher** can move at 60 feet speed once per 1d4 rounds. If he moves in this way and makes a successful attack, it does double damage.
- **Dancer and Prancer** both have a +4 bonus to AC and Reflex saves as they dance away from danger.
- **Vixen** is such a beautiful creature that others are loathe to target her with damaging spells or attacks. Unless a Will save (DC 10) is made, such actions are lost to indecision.
- **Comet** can flare, once per day, causing 1d6 damage to all targets in melee combat with him; if not in melee combat, he can attack a target up to 60 feet away, doing double damage +1d6 fire damage, if he hits.
- **Cupid** can cast *charm person*, with a +2 bonus to the spell check, once each day.
- **Dunder** is able to create a noise like thunder, once every 1d5 rounds. Fort DC 15 or be deafened for 1d8 rounds. On a roll of “1”, deafness lasts 1d6 hours and another save (Fort DC 10) must be made, or deafness is permanent.
- If **Blixem** is struck by a metal weapon, the attacker takes 1d4 points of electrical damage (Reflex DC 10 for half).
- A hideous red wart-like growth pulsates at the end of **Rudolph's** nose like a beating heart. It can flare once every 1d4 rounds, causing anyone in melee with Rudolph to be blinded for 1d6 rounds unless a DC 10 Fort or Reflexes save is made.

The reindeer are used to elves, and may not attack if an elf commands them otherwise. An elf who gives a command must succeed in a DC 15 Personality check to control the tiny reindeer.

There are ten sets of harness, each of which has jingle bells worth a total of 10 gp per set. Carrying these bells makes moving silently, or surprise, nigh impossible.

The red-painted door opens into Area 4, and the orange-painted door opens into Area 5.

Tiny reindeer (8): Init +3; Atk gore +1 melee (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 4 each; MV 40' or fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP by reindeer; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0; AL N.

3. The Sweatshop: Anyone approaching or listening at the door will hear the sound of many hammers tapping, the sound of sawing wood, and an occasional cough.

Here is a great room, some 60 feet wide by 90 feet long, filled with workbenches at which pale-skinned elves are working – sawing, hammering, painting, and otherwise crafting many thousands of toys. There are dozens of these elves here – male, female, young, old, children. All are working so hard that they do not pay you more than a glance...many are probably not even aware of you. Shelves around the room contain pieces of wood, buckets of paint, and other supplies. Other shelves contain festive-looking finished toys: nutcrackers, pull ducks, stick-horses, toy soldiers, dolls, and more. Leading into or out of the room are an archway, 8 feet wide and arched to a height of 12 feet, a wooden door painted yellow opposite the arch, and two other wooden doors, painted green and blue, in the centre of the other two walls.

There are 46 elves working in here; all non-combatants. Indeed, they have almost no spirit left, and will not leave even if rescued. PC losses can be replaced here, if the judge desires, by elf toymakers. (The judge may determine that one is actually trained as an elf dentist, if he so desires.) The PCs can take any tools, toys, or supplies they need, so long as they do not disturb the toymakers. Any interference in the actual production of toys results in the arrival of 2d6 **elf guards** from Area 6 in 1d3+2 rounds.

An elf PC who enters this area is affected by a magical compulsion to take a seat and begin making toys (DC 10 Will resists). An elf who fails this save must be bodily dragged from the room, and this counts as a disturbance of the toymakers. An elf need only make this save once, and he is forever immune. If the elf fails this save, though, the compulsion automatically comes back each time the elf enters this area.

All doors in this room lead to Area 6.

4. The Kitchens: A strong smell of good cooking wafts down the corridor leading to this room.

This area is an enormous kitchen and pantry, lit by many torches arranged around the spacious walls. Open fires, ovens, and great roasting pits are ablaze with flame. Huge oxen, deer, and something that might be a giant bipedal reptile with tiny forelegs turn on spits. There are cast iron ovens large enough for a man to crawl inside and shut the door. Pies are in ovens are along marble counters to cool – mincemeat, apple, and plum. Vegetables steam or are broiled. Cookies on baking sheets are being decorated near great ewers of milk. Soups and stews simmer away. The entire area, some 100 feet to a side, is filled with the sights, sounds, and smells of cooking. The cooks themselves look like short, wizened elves, each no larger than a half-ling – there are perhaps 50 cooks working in this room.

There are three apparent entrances and exits. One is an archway, 8 feet wide and vaulted to a height of 12 feet. The others are two wooden doors, one painted red and the other indigo.

This area is filled with cooking utensils of various types – pots, pans, spits, tongs, forks, etc. – many of which are made of iron. Elves entering this room therefore feel uncomfortable, and if they remain here longer than a minute or so, they take 1 hp of damage.

So long as they do not disturb the cooks, characters can pick up any amount of food, or any cooking utensil, here that they might desire. Attacking or hindering the cooks in any way activates their defenders – 12 **gingerbread men** and six **sugar plum faeries**. The cooks are non-combatants, AC 8 and 1 hp each.

The gingerbread men are only about 6 inches tall, but each can leap 10 feet in any direction, and each carries a hot iron needle that does 1 hp damage. Moreover, they are extremely fast and hard to hit – so fast that they can move through combat without provoking an attack.

There are 10 ewers of milk in the room, though, and any one of these may be used to make a splash attack against a gingerbread man that succeeds if it hits AC 10, and kills the gingerbread man. If only a partial ewer is used, the gingerbread man is instead slowed to 30' movement, and can be hit thereafter with a +4

bonus to the attack roll. If this occurs, the gingerbread man loses its leap ability and provokes attacks when it moves like normal.

The sugar plum faeries are also 6 inches tall, and they can throw hard sugar plums at a range of 15 feet. In addition, should a sugar plum faerie come into melee range with an opponent, it can attempt to shrink down to a minute size, enter his sinus cavities, and dance in his head. The sugar plum faerie need only make an attack against AC 10 (12 with a helmet, more if the nose is otherwise well protected). Thereafter, the target must make a Will or Fort save (DC 10) every round to act due to the agony of this dancing. A sugar plum faerie can do this 1d5 rounds before being expelled by a violent sneeze. The sneeze prevents the target from either moving or attacking (but not both) during the round that the faerie is expelled. The faerie comes to rest 1d4 x 5 feet away. In the kitchen, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the faerie comes into contact with a hot surface, and is destroyed.

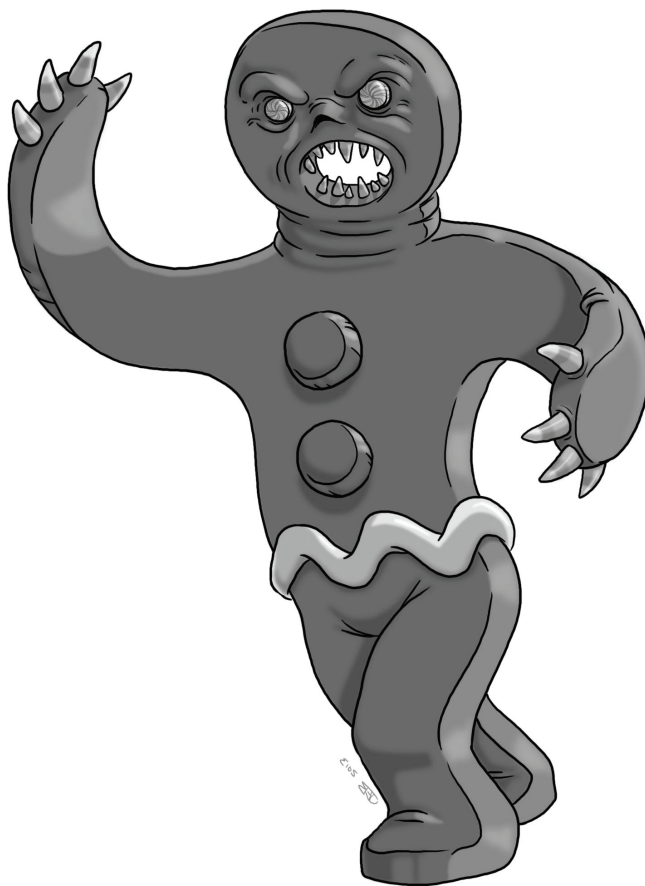
Due to the many hot surfaces, the cooks rushing about and getting in the way, and the antics of the tiny opponents, any creature larger than a halfling must succeed on a DC 5 Reflex save each round or come into contact with a hot or sharp surface (or a hot, sharp surface), taking 1 point of damage. The character's Luck modifier counts toward this save.

The red door goes to Area 2, and the indigo door goes to Area 7.

Gingerbread men (12): Init +6; Atk needle +0 melee (1); AC 16; HD 1 hp; MV 60' or leap 10'; Act 1d20; SP move through combat, milk vulnerability; SV Fort -8, Ref +8, Will +0; AL N.

Sugar plum faeries (6): Init +4; Atk sugar plum +2 ranged (1); AC 12; HD 1 hp; MV 5' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP dance in head; SV Fort -4, Ref +4, Will +3; AL C.

5. The Red and Gold Sleigh: *This chamber is about 50 feet by 30 feet, and vaulted to a height of 20 feet. It is dominated by a large red and gold sleigh, some 20 feet long and 8 feet wide. The sleigh is a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, with silver runners and enamelled wooden sides. Its comfortable-looking seats are upholstered with*



Gingerbread Men

plush velvet cushions, also in red and gold. There are four entrances or exits to this room: an archway 8 feet wide and vaulted to 12 feet in height, a large set of double doors opposite the arch, a wooden door painted orange, and a wooden door painted with a violet hue.

If the tiny reindeer in Area 2 are harnessed to this magical sleigh, it can transport characters riding it almost anywhere in the world in a fraction of a second. Doing so requires a minimum team of eight, though, so if more than one tiny reindeer is slain, the sleigh is useless.

Within the sleigh, on the driver's seat, is a long whip, known as the **cintercrop**. This +1 weapon can do 1d3 points of temporary damage to any creature it hits, and can hit a creature as far as 15 feet away. If it misses its target, it might hit a friendly target in melee with it, as though it were a missile weapon. Anyone who holds it in his hand has absolute command over the tiny reindeer in Area 2, but gains a strong craving for sweets and milk. Given the opportunity to have anything sweet – including the ancient fruitcake in the starting

area, the character must make a DC 20 Will save to resist. This is in addition to any save the item might require. This save must be made each time a new sweet is presented, regardless of other considerations (such as combat), so long as the bearer is not directly attacked. Anyone who bears the whip for more than a season will develop a long white beard. Anyone who bears the whip for more than a year will also develop a fat little belly that shakes when he laughs, like a bowlful of jelly.

In the back of the sleigh is an **enormous bag of holding**, that can easily hold up to 5,000 pounds of material. The bag appears to be made of red velvet with a gold drawstring. Regardless of what is put into it, it never weighs more than 50 pounds, but it is so bulky that it requires two hands to carry around. If an unprotected sharp object is placed in the bag, there is a 1 in 7 chance that it will rupture, and all of its contents will be lost to the void. The bag will then become a non-magical bag with a hole in it. If another extra-dimensional space is placed inside the bag, the bag forms a sucking vortex, drawing every object within 50 feet of it that weighs 500 pounds or less (Strength DC 20 resists) before it collapses in upon itself. Characters sucked in this way may not be lost forever – they may be spewed up on the shores of another time, or another world, or both, at the judge's discretion.

The orange door leads to Area 2. The violet door leads to Area 7.

The large double doors lead outside. Treat these exactly as the double doors in Area 1, except that there is already one **snowman** waiting outside with a ukulele, and it will come in as soon as the door is opened. The snowman cannot attack so long as it has its ukulele, but it can sing and play each round. All who hear its singing and playing (about silver, gold, tinsel, and decorated trees) must make a Will save (DC 10) each round, or take 1 point of Personality damage. The judge is encouraged to play appropriate holiday music. Only slaying the snowman, or a Mighty Deed, can separate it from its ukulele.

Snowman: Init +0; Atk scratch +0 melee (1d3) or snowball +3 ranged (1d3 cold plus possible Stamina damage); AC 8; HD 4d8; hp 25; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP singing and playing, snowballs, burst, fire vulnerability, hat; SV Fort +4, Ref –4, Will +6; AL C.

6. Elf Barracks: This room contains the 12 **elf guards** of the Cinder Claws. If the characters enter while the elves are still here (which will be the case unless they have been drawn to Area 3), the elves attack immediately.

This room is about 40 feet square, with wooden beams and rafters holding the ceiling aloft. The ceiling peaks in the centre of the room at a height of 20 feet. This is obviously the barracks of a dozen man-sized creatures, based on the meticulously carved wooden beds, each with its own beautifully carved footlocker. A dozen thick green cloaks hang off hooks on the walls. There is a long oak table with four cedar benches for seating, upon which are several leathern jacks. Wooden plates set on the table have a variety of meats, sweetmeats, fruit, candied fruit, and confections. Two large wooden barrels stand near the table, bound with copper hoops.

Four ways lead into or out of this room – an archway 8 feet wide and vaulted to a height of 12 feet, and three wooden doors. One, painted yellow, is opposite the arch. The other two are painted as well, one blue, and one green.

All of the doorways lead to the doors of the same colours in Area 3.

Examining the barrels shows that one contains hot mulled cider, while the other contains hot cocoa flavoured with peppermint. The leather jacks contain some amount of either fluid, favouring the cocoa by a small margin. Each footlocker contains three green jerkins, two pairs of light brown hose, a pair of green shoes with upturned toes, and a conical green felt hat with a pompom affixed to the top of it. Only the barrels are magical – they keep their contents hot and refilled so long as the barrels remain in this room.

The elf guards wear leather armour under green surcoats trimmed with white fur. Each wears a green felt hat, like those described above. Each has a bronze shortsword and bears a bronze-tipped spear. These soft bronze weapons are rendered useless on a critical hit.

Elf Guard



Elf guards (12): Init +2; Atk spear +0 melee (1d8) or short sword +0 melee (1d6) or spear +2 ranged (1d8); AC 14; HD 1d4; hp 2, 3, 1, 2, 1, 4, 4, 2, 3, 1, 3, 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', immune to sleep and paralysis; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

7. Scrying Chamber: This chamber is a mere 20 feet square – with an archway 8 feet wide and vaulted to a height of 12 feet in one wall, and two doors coloured indigo and violet centred one each on two of the other walls. This room is dominated by a gigantic snow globe, fully 5 feet in diameter, resting on an elaborately carved stand of ebony wood, inlaid with ivory and set with rubies. Near the stand is a lectern, upon which rests a thick scroll made of vellum, some two feet in width.

This magical **snow globe** allows the Cinder Claws to scry upon any creature in the world. All a character need do is place his hand upon the snow globe, speak the name of another creature he knows, and he will see the image of that creature. A creature can only be scryed upon once within 24 hours in this way. A creature within this adventure cannot be scryed upon.

If the creature is doing something nice, it gains +1 Luck. If doing something naughty, it is penalized by a –1 penalty to Luck. Roll on the following table to determine. A halfling's Lucky Charm may affect the outcome, but no other Luck can do so. The judge can determine the exact nature of any behaviour witnessed.

Roll 1d7	Lawful	Neutral	Chaotic
1	Something naughty	Something naughty	Something naughty
2	Something normal	Something normal	Something naughty
3	Something normal	Something normal	Something normal
4	Something normal	Something normal	Something normal
5	Something normal	Something normal	Something normal
6	Something nice	Something normal	Something normal
7	Something nice	Something nice	Something nice

The **magical scroll** contains a list of every creature in the multiverse, and whether or not they have been predominantly Naughty or Nice this year. A character can check his own rating, or that of his companions in this adventure, or even those of any other being he can specifically name, but otherwise there are too many names on this list, by far, to find anything of significance accidentally. Once a character's name has been checked, though, the information cannot be changed. If that character is in this adventure, the rating has an effect on the adventure's conclusion.

Use the following chart to determine overall rating. Luck cannot be used to affect this roll. Who can say with any certainty how the Cinder Claws comes to these determinations, anyway?

Roll 1d3	Lawful	Neutral	Chaotic
1	Naughty	Naughty	Naughty
2	Nice	Roll Again	Naughty
3	Nice	Nice	Nice

Neither snow globe nor scroll can be damaged or affected in any way by any mortal power. Nor can a mortal being remove either from this room. A being trying to do so simply cannot leave the room. On the other hand, there are 200 rubies on the stand, each worth 2d10 gp, which can be pried off and taken. Doing this has consequences to what might be found in the characters' stockings, however.

The violet door leads to Area 4, and the indigo door leads to Area 5.

Concluding the Adventure

When the PCs have been to each of the encounter areas from 2 to 7 (but not necessarily Area 1), and they again return to the Great Hall, they find it changed:

It is as though you have been gone for hours. The great hall is now deathly cold, the fire long gone out, with only cold ashes remaining in the fireplace. The meal has long since been cleared away. The wood hangs thick with icicles, and frost is in the pine needles beneath the frigid boughs. The high ceiling hangs with glittering icicles as well, some over 10 feet long and possessing dazzlingly sharp points. The stockings hung by the fireplace now clearly contain something within them.

From this point forward, there is no escape except through the fireplace. All corridors lead back directly to the great hall after 120 feet, appearing as though they were the corridor opposite. Worse, the corridors are now equally cold. Characters in other areas can reach the great hall, but once they reach it, they, too, are trapped. The double doors to the outside can be opened, but those take characters only to a cold waste where they will surely die.

Every minute (10 rounds) spent in this environment, characters must make a DC 10 Fort save or take 1 point of temporary Stamina damage. This damage can be restored with 10 minutes rest in a warm environment. A character can check his stocking in 1 round, once he has reached it, using the method below.

After 5 rounds, read or paraphrase the following:

You are startled by a pair of green, hairy hands – clawed hands – which drop out of the chimney at the end of long, flexible arms. They seem to have too many fingers. As

they skitter into the room, walking on those fingers, you realize that they are eight-fingered hands, but the green comes from gloves or fingered mittens they are wearing. Still, they are clawed, and they are fast, as they grope towards you.

The arms can extend to impossible lengths, allowing the hands to reach anywhere in the great hall or the corridors. They attack by clawing, but if they get a critical hit, in addition to any other effect they grab the target and begin drawing it toward the fireplace at a rate of 10' per round. Once at the fireplace, a character is drawn up in the next round. There is some crunching and chewing noises heard thereafter, and one of the character's boots drops down. That character will never be seen again. This can be prevented by slaying the hand, or by severing the arm with a Mighty Deed (3+, the Deed must do at least 5 points of damage with a sharp cutting weapon). Severing an arm does not prevent the claw from attacking, but it does prevent it from grabbing hold and drawing a character to the chimney.

When a hand is slain, it skitters back to the fireplace, and is drawn up the chimney. If anyone wants to attack it as it rushes past, let them. The hand is already defeated, and this serves no actual function, but it may be gratifying. If the PCs capture a hand, it has no effect on the next part of the encounter, but the Cinder Claws should be described as missing that hand.

Hands (2): Init +4; Atk claw +2 melee (1d3); AC 16; HD 1d6; hp 5, 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP blind-sight 60', grab; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +8; AL C.

Five rounds after the hands are defeated, read or paraphrase the following:

A great cloud of smoke and ashes come out of the chimney flue, followed by a long, long leg, red-clad and black-booted, spindly as an old stick. And another such leg. And another. And another. Then comes the first of the green-mittened claws, and the long, thin, eight-limbed creature pulls itself into the room. It is clad in a suit of soot-tarnished fur. Although it is skeletally thin, it has a fat round belly that quivers with each movement. Behind its bristly white beard are the eight eyes, the fangs and palps of an enormous spider. The eyes twinkle with merriment as they survey you, and the creature laughs deep in

its throat. The smoke from the fireplace encircles its head like a sinister halo or wreath.

Let the PCs each take a round of actions as the **Cinder Claws** pulls itself free from the chimney. Then normal combat may begin. Each round, roll 1d5, and include the appropriate special effect:

Roll 1d5	Effect
1	No effect.
2	The Cinder Claws laughs as a free action, Ho ho ho! It shakes the boughs of the trees, and the icicles tinkle above, but nothing else happens.
3	The Cinder Claws laughs as a free action, Ho ho ho!, causing 1d3 icicles to fall, targeting random characters. The Cinder Claws itself may be a target. Each icicle has a +3 bonus to hit, and does 1d6 damage on a successful attack. On a natural 20, the icicle does a critical hit rolling 1d8 on Table M.
4	As a free action, the Cinder Claws strews candy canes across the floor, 1d3 x 5 feet away from it. If a character is carrying the cinter-crop from Area 5, he must make a DC 20 Will save or spend the next 1d3 rounds scrabbling about the floor, gathering and eating the candy canes.
5	Everyone rolls a Luck check. The character with the lowest Luck who fails this check slips upon an icy patch and must make a DC 10 Reflex save or fall prone. The Cinder Claws must also make this check, and its Luck is 10 for this purpose.

The Cinder Claws has a poisonous bite (Fort DC 10 or 1d8 damage).

The Cinder Claws: Init +4; Atk claw +4 melee (1d3) or bite +0 melee (1d6 plus poison); AC 18; HD 8d10; hp 53; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP poison; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +10; AL C.

If the Cinder Claws is reduced to 0 hit points, or otherwise defeated, it lays its finger aside of its nose. It is then magically drawn to the chimney and up, up it goes. No mortal power can prevent its fleeing in this

way. It can do so even if its head is crushed or severed by a critical hit. The judge may decide to use the creature in a future Yule adventure, where it seeks its revenge, or may choose to have the Cinder Claws leave the PCs alone hereafter. Either way, once the Cinder Claws is up the chimney again, read or paraphrase the following:

As the creature is pulled up the chimney, a great curtain of ashes is drawn up behind it. They glint and shine like the auroras, and you can dimly see another land through the fireplace, behind the curtain of ash. If you are quick, you may be able to pass through the doorway while it remains. It is already starting to fade as you look.

Beyond this passage is the next adventure, or the main campaign location, as the judge desires.

If the players hesitate more than 60 seconds, or the characters more than 6 rounds, the gateway fades and the escape route is no more. The judge can warn them that the gate is fading further after 30 seconds (3 rounds), but should not give any further warnings.

If the characters miss this opportunity, they can only leave the great hall by the doors to the outside, and if the judge wishes them to have a chance surviving such an adventure, he will need to pen it himself, for in the author's campaign, such characters quickly freeze to death in the hall, or face death by snowman, ice bear, and hypothermia without. Unless the characters have powerful magic available to them, they are dead, and their bodies will never be recovered.

What's In My Stocking?

If a character has removed his stocking earlier, he has no stocking now.

To determine what is in a character's stocking, roll 1d16, and to determine what its properties are, roll 1d30. Neither of these rolls can be altered by Luck. The second roll is modified as follows:

Chaotic characters have a -4 penalty to the roll.

Lawful characters have a $+4$ bonus to the roll.

Characters deemed Naughty on the magical scroll in Area 7 have a -8 penalty to the roll.

Characters deemed Nice on the magical scroll in Area 7 have a $+4$ bonus to the roll.

Characters who pried off rubies from the snow globe stand in Area 7 have a -4 penalty to the roll.

The judge will have to adjudicate exactly what some of these results mean. For example, a crowbar with a $+1$ bonus might give an extra bonus to Strength checks using it, whereas a cursed crowbar with a -1 penalty might find its way into the character's hand during combat, and act as a -1 club. Use your imagination, and have fun with it!

Roll 1d16	Item
1	Goblin (as core rulebook, p. 417)
2	Rotten potato
3	Lump of coal
4	Candle
5	Crowbar
6	Carved wooden box
7	Book with leather covers
8	Mirror
9	Gloves
10	Hat
11	Dagger
12	Snow globe
13	Mace
14	Gem
15	Short sword
16	Longsword

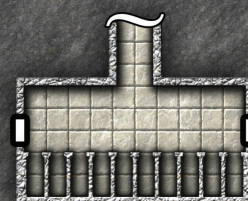
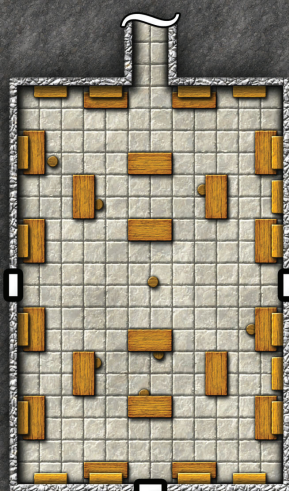
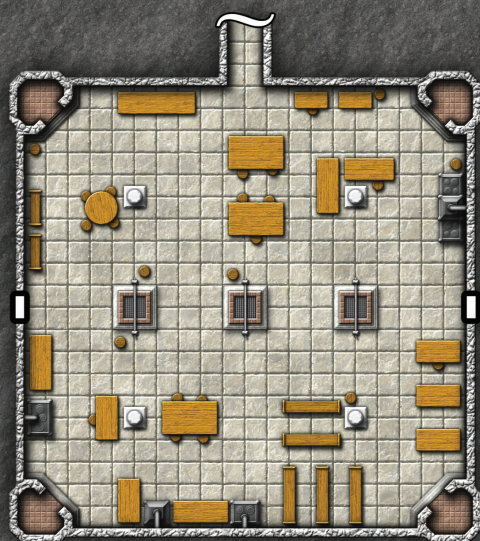
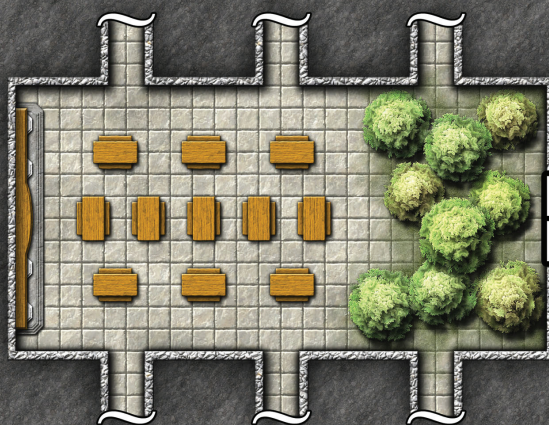
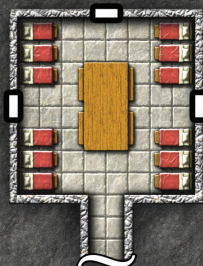
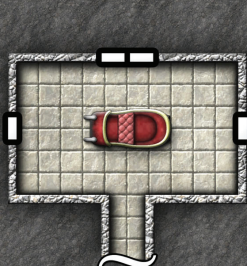
Roll 1d30	Properties
0 or less	Possessing it causes a -2 penalty to Luck, and it cannot be gotten rid of without a remove curse result of 20+
1	As above, but the penalty is only -1 to Luck.
2	The item is cursed, with a -2 penalty.
3	The item is cursed, with a -1 penalty.
4	The item is cursed, causing its owner $+1$ to Fumble rolls.
5	The item is cursed, causing its owner -1 to Critical rolls.
6	The item appears to be immensely valuable to the owner, but is in fact obviously substandard junk to everyone else.
7	The item attracts monsters.
8	The item attracts thieves.
9	The item makes the owner look stupid.
10-20	No special property.
21	The item makes the owner look good.
22	The item is worth twice as much as normal.
23	The item is worth three times as much as normal.
24	The item is worth four times as much as normal.
25	The item is worth 10 times as much as normal.
26	The item grants the owner a $+1$ bonus against a specific spell, or against a specific type of poison, creature, etc.
27	The item grants the owner a $+1$ bonus to one specific save category (determine randomly).
28	The item is worth 100 times as much as normal.
29	The item grants a $+1$ bonus.
30	The item grants a $+2$ bonus.
31	The item grants a $+1$ bonus on spell checks.

32	The item grants complete immunity against one specific spell.
33	The item grants a +1 bonus to AC when carried or worn.
34	The item grants a +2 bonus to AC when carried or worn.
35	The item grants +1d8 bonus hit points so long as it is possessed.
36	The item grants a +1 bonus to any one ability score (determine randomly).
37	The item grants a +2 bonus to any one ability score (determine randomly).
38	The item contains a spell.
39	The item contains the means to contact a powerful patron, for good or for ill, and can be used in lieu of a patron bond spell if the owner wishes to bond with that patron.
40+	The item grants a permanent ability to cast a single random 1st level wizard spell 1d3 times per day, with a +1d7 bonus.



Thing in the Chimney (Player's Map)

1 SQUARE = 5 ft.



The Nexus of Yule

A Yuletide Adventure by Daniel J. Bishop

A Dungeon Crawl Classics adventure suitable for four to eight 3rd level characters.

Have fun, and happy holidays!

Another Yuletide approaches. Although his powers ebb during the warmer months, with the colder days and longer nights, the Cinder Claws now has the arcane energies required to draw his victims into a tiny portion of the **Nexus of Yule**, an inter-dimensional web which allows the Cinder Claws to reach into an uncounted number of homes, all on a single night.

At the waning of every year, as the sun grows closer to the horizon, and spends less time in the sky, there comes a time of terrible cold and deep snow to the lands of the north. The world waits with hushed breath for this, the longest night of the year, to be over. Soon, the sun will begin to climb higher each day, and the days grow longer. Although long stretches of cold weather are yet to come, this is the night in which winter's back is broken. After tonight, the world turns slowly back to warmth and light.

But that is after tonight.

Starting the Adventure

The adventure starts wherever the characters may be. Entering the Cinder Claws' Nexus, they need not even be together – this adventure can draw characters from multiple worlds briefly into conjunction. Wherever the characters manage to escape from the Yuletide cold does not matter – inn, home, castle, and cave are all the same to the Cinder Claws. Adjust the starting text, below, if need be to account for very unusual circumstances.

It is the night prior to Yule, and the world slumbers quietly beneath a blanket of freshly fallen snow. It is uncertain how long you have been asleep – perhaps you really did not sleep at all – when the stillness of the night is broken by a great clatter arising from outside your chamber. There is a noise like prancing and pawing hooves moving across the ceiling, as though something were above. From outside the door, there is a groaning, wheezing noise that sounds like

the universe being pulled apart.

Beyond the chamber door, there is now only a tunnel of rough-hewn stones, mortared, and heading downward in a series of steeply spiraling stairs. If a character goes down the stairs far enough to lose sight of the door, returning is no longer possible – the stairs go up forever. On the other hand, no matter where the characters are, it takes only ten minutes to walk down the stairway into Area 1. Pace does not matter, so long as the character continues to move.

The entrance into **Area 1** leads from many different locations, and all the PCs arrive through the same archway, each arriving 1d5 rounds after the last (unless they were in the same chamber initially, and leave together, in which case they arrive in whatever “marching order” chosen to go down the stairs). The entrance only leads to the infinite staircase, however. Once committed, characters cannot escape by retracing their steps.

The Nexus of Yule

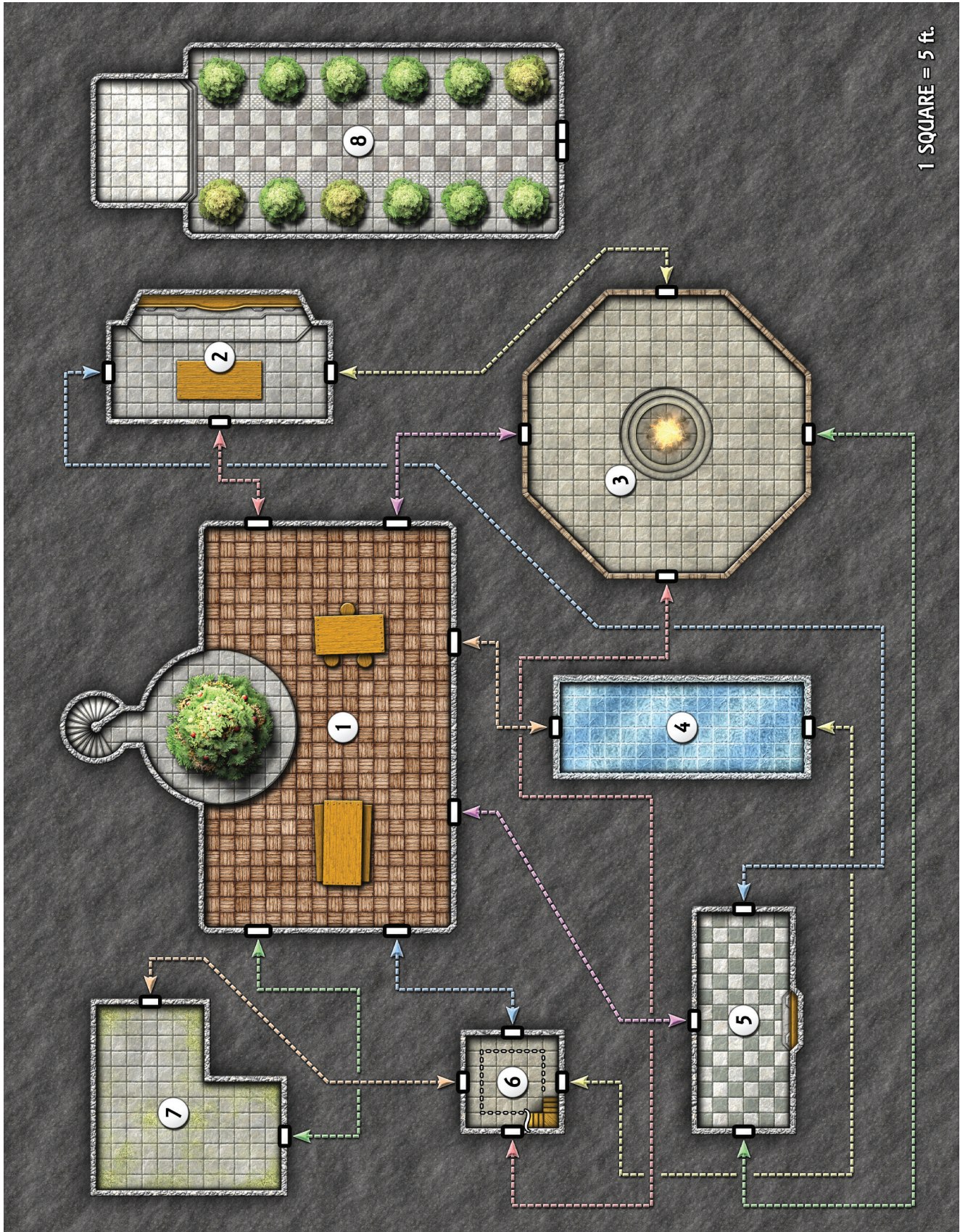
The Nexus of Yule is a supernatural conjoining of billions of different places across thousands of planes, of which the PCs experience only an infinitesimal fraction. Each location is part of a different world from that before it, and if the judge so desires other adventures can be set upon that world.

Because each area represents a different world, walls may be made of different materials, and players may attempt to escape the Nexus by trying to dig or tunnel their way through walls made of wood or ice. If the judge wishes to do the work of populating these worlds – perhaps on the fly – this will work. Otherwise, the new hole joins to a door chosen by the judge as a one-way portal.

Although beings on these worlds may use the doors normally, for the PCs things are not so simple. When moving from area to area within the Nexus of Yule, there is no opportunity to be coy – nothing can be seen beyond the door until a character commits to passing through, and then transit is instantaneous. In some cases, the door one enters from is very different on the other side.

If the judge desires, unresolved encounters can follow the PCs into the Nexus as the adventure progresses, so

The Nexus of Yule (GM's Map)



that previously-explored areas become a hodge-podge of creatures which can be encountered anywhere. There is nothing wrong with having carnivorous cows attack the Ratfields in the Hall of Ice, or having the figgy pudding chasing the PCs, turning up repeatedly as they move through the Nexus, until it is finally destroyed. In fact, this sort of mayhem might make the adventure more fun!

No door leads directly to **Area 8** until the characters have had a chance to explore the Nexus, and the judge determines that they are ready for the final encounter. Once that point occurs, all doors in the Nexus lead to **Area 8** – including the door to **Area 8** itself!

Encounter Areas

1. Ratfields and McCrackers: *Beyond the archway, you can see a round platform, 50 feet in diameter, from the center of which grows a huge conifer, its bole some 15 feet in diameter at the ground. The tree is so tall that you cannot see where it ends – the nearest branches are at least 20 feet over your head! The tree is decorated with enormous glass balls, lit candles larger than a tall man, green and red garlands thicker than your torso, and strings of popped corn whose kernels are easily the size of your head. The whole tree glows softly, illuminating both the platform and dimly revealing the massive chamber beyond.*

The platform extends more than halfway into a room 130 feet wide and 80 feet deep, its ceiling lost in darkness above. This room contains what appears to be enormous furniture, as if built for giants four times the height of normal folk. It is shadowy and dim, and the flickering candlelight of the enormous tree creates the impression of movement in the darkness below. There is a 10 foot drop from the platform to the distant wooden floor.

This chamber is the battleground between the Ratfields and the McCrackers. The Ratfields occupy the area to the east of the platform and the McCrackers the area to the west. The area directly south of the platform is disputed.

The **Ratfields** are semi-human rats with dark shaggy fur, red eyes, and clad in rough homespun garments. Their leader, **King George**, is larger and wears a golden crown (worth 75 gp) and ruined finery, but is otherwise the same. They fight using claws and teeth or

spears. Their bite can cause a nasty disease (Fort DC 12 or suffer 1d3 Stamina plus 1d3 Stamina each day that a DC 10 Fort save is failed; the disease is cured if three saves in a row succeed).

The **McCrackers** are wooden humanoids with alarming large teeth, dressed in military uniforms with long coattails. They use flintlock rifles affixed with bayonets – the bayonets are treated as spears when affixed, or as daggers when removed. The rifles themselves do not fire – examination shows that they are merely wooden props. Being made of wood, they have 5 points of damage resistance from mundane weapons, but take an extra 1d6 damage from fire attacks. Note that if they are burned, the furnishings (and floor!) in this room may be lit aflame as well, potentially causing the PCs much hardship. Their leader, **Prince John**, is made of flesh (with rogued cheeks to look like the other McCrackers), and is armed with a saber (treat as a long-sword).

Any characters moving into the main chamber will encounter a group of 2d6 Ratfields or McCrackers, depending upon where they go. In the central region, roll 1d5. On a roll of 1-2, Ratfields are encountered, on a roll of 4-5, McCrackers. On a roll of 3, both are encountered, either engaged in a skirmish or about to be. The PCs must quickly choose sides (“Be you a Ratfield or a McCracker?”) or be declared the enemy of both. If either King George or Prince John is slain, his remaining followers flee the chamber, using whatever doorways are closest to them, and are seen no more. Depending upon the side chosen by the PCs, this either makes the chamber safe for them or more dangerous.

The furniture in this room is enormous, offering many dark places to hide. Climbing any given piece of furniture ranges in DC from DC 10 to 15 (judge determines, or roll 1d6+9). The doors appear from this direction like stylized mouse holes showing only darkness beyond. Any who enters passes into the connected room, just beyond the now-open door in the new chamber. If the five-foot-thick wooden floor is burned or hacked through (requiring at least 120 points of damage), beneath is a 10 foot drop to another wooden floor, and beneath that is packed earth.

Some characters may wish to climb into the giant tree.

It takes a DC 15 Climb check to reach the branches, but thereafter, only a DC 10 check is required to reach the next 10 feet. Should a character fall, for every 10 feet fallen where the tree has branches, he may attempt a DC 10 Reflex save to arrest his fall (taking damage only for the actual distance fallen). The tree is 120 feet high.

It is, of course, inhabited. Dozens of **golden angels** flutter among the branches, ready to expel intruders. Whenever they strike a character, that person must make a Reflex save or Climb check (whichever is better), with a DC equal to 10 plus the damage done, or fall from the tree. A typical encounter is with 1d5-1 angels, and occurs with a 1 in 3 chance per 10 feet climbed in the branches. Characters reaching the top discover a **glowing golden angel** fully twelve feet tall atop the tree. A character who reaches this lofty pinnacle is blessed by the angel, and gains three boons: (1) he is no longer attacked by the other angels in the tree, (2) he gains the ability to reroll a single die three times during the adventure, and (3) he permanently gains 1 point of Luck. The glowing golden angel is immune to anything that the PCs are able to do, and if attacked will strike with a ray of light that automati-

cally hits and does 1d16 damage.

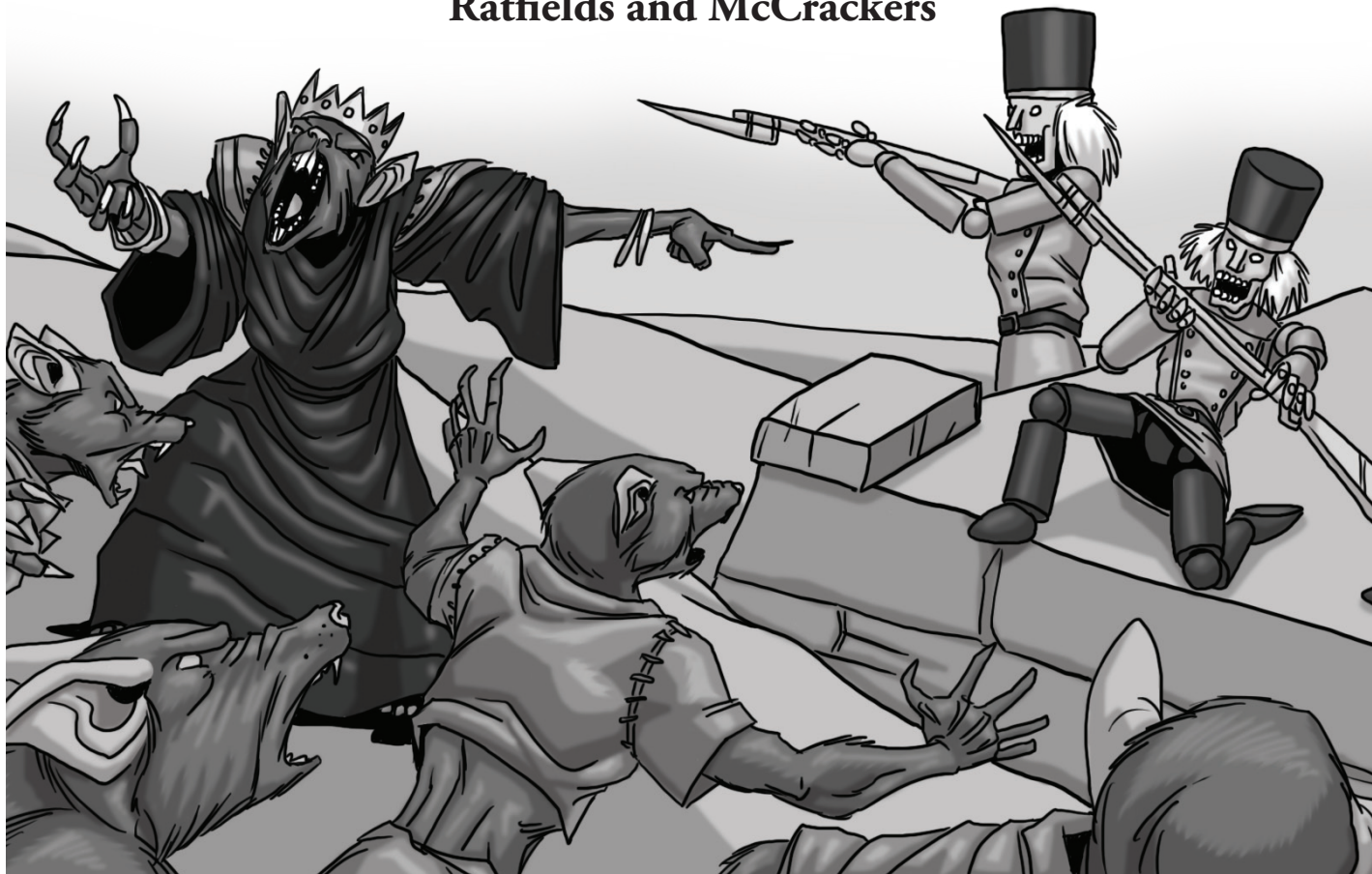
Ratfields (25): Init +3; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 plus disease) or claw +3 melee (1d4) or spear +2 melee (1d8); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30' or climb 10'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 120', disease; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

King George: Init +1; Atk bite +2 melee (1d5 plus disease) or claw +5 melee (1d4) or spear +3 melee (1d8); AC 14; HD 5d8; hp 14; MV 30' or climb 10'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 120', disease; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +6; AL C.

McCrackers (15): Init +0; Atk bite +2 melee (1d6) or bayonet +4 melee (1d8 affixed or 1d4); AC 12; HD 3d6; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP Damage resistance 5, fire vulnerability; SV Fort +8, Ref +0, Will +2; AL L.

Prince John: Init +4; Atk saber +5 melee (1d8+2); AC 12; HD 7d10; hp 46; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +8; AL L.

Ratfields and McCrackers



Golden angels (36): Init +3; Atk hand +2 melee (1d3) or halo +0 ranged (1d3); AC 15; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV 30' or fly 30'; SP knock from tree; SV Fort +0, Ref +5; Will +3; AL L.

2. Pudding and Fruitcake: *This room is 70 feet long and 30 feet wide, with an extension in one direction that gives way to an enormous fireplace fully 50 feet long and 10 feet deep. Burning within are the embers of an enormous log, as well as other coals and bits of fuel. A long, wide table fills much of the hall, with the remains of a yuletide feast left sitting upon it. Near the fireplace, on a stone lip extending 5 feet into the room, is a plate containing several cookies and a large glass of milk. Stockings hang over the mantle, marked by strange runes that you cannot read.*

There is enough food left on the table to feed at least 20 characters, but some of the items are very strange. There is a half-eaten pudding, for example, which seems to change colors when no one is looking. One covered platter holds a smaller covered platter, which holds another covered platter, and so on, until the final tiny platter contains nothing more than a half-eaten strawberry. Anyone who examines the platters closely will note tiny footprints in each. Likewise, there is a roast of succulent meat that, although possessing two legs, seems to have no bones within it.

There is also a **figgy pudding** in a silver bowl 5 feet in diameter. If disturbed, or if the characters spend several minutes in this room, the figgy pudding attacks. In addition to attacking with pseudopods, it can shoot a glob of pudding up to 15' or a stream of figs up to 30'. Anyone struck by a pudding glob must make a DC 15 Reflex save or be stuck in place until a DC 10 Strength check (using an Action Die) succeeds. Anyone struck by the figs must make a DC 15 Fort save or be knocked prone. The figgy pudding has a high alcohol content, and takes double damage from fire (automatically being set alight for 1d6 additional points of damage per round, but doing 1d6 additional damage with its own attacks during this time). If defeated, it is delicious. The first character who dares to eat it gains a permanent bonus of +1d4 hit points.

Anyone picking through the remains of the meal has a 1 in 5 chance of discovering an **ancient petrified fruitcake** on a wooden platter among the rest of the

food. A mithral dagger lies on the platter near it, and it is sharp enough to cut the fruitcake. This is the same ancient fruitcake that was encountered in *The Thing in the Chimney*, returned again (as fruitcakes always do) unless it was eaten by a PC in that adventure (in which case it will not be found here). Even if destroyed previously, it somehow returns. Fruitcake is very difficult to get rid of. See page 3 for details.

There are five cookies on the plate. They, and the milk, have been left as offerings for the Cinder Claws. Each **cookie**, if eaten, heals 1 die of damage and confers 1 point of Stamina for the duration of the adventure. Drinking 1/3rd of the **milk** confers 1 point of Strength for the duration of the adventure; up to three characters may so benefit, a character can gain +3 Strength, etc. However, each character who consumes any part of the offerings must roll 1d3, and that character **permanently** loses the result in points of Luck.

There are a number of stockings equal to the number of players present. They are currently empty. If the characters use comprehend languages, a thief's Read Languages ability (DC 15), or some other means, the runes on the stockings can be discovered to spell out the players' (not characters') names.

Figgy pudding: Init (always last); Atk pseudopod +4 melee (1d4) or glob +4 ranged (1d3 plus sticking) or figs +4 ranged (1d5 plus knock prone); AC 10; HD 3d8; hp 11; SP half damage from slicing and piercing weapons, stick with glob, knock prone with figs; SV Fort +6, Ref -8, Will -6; AL N.

3. The Empara: *This is a large, octagonal room fully 90 feet across, with four doors. The polished wooden walls rise 10 feet before the ceiling begins to narrow, meeting in an opening far, far overhead, beneath a 30-foot diameter fire pit in the middle of the chamber. A bonfire blazes in the pit, sending sparks and smoke to the hole far above. The walls are liberally decked with boughs of holly and festooned with tangles of ivy, up to where they begin to slant up towards the smoke hole. Behind the scent of greenery and woodsmoke, you can detect something sweet-smelling that makes your stomachs rumble.*

After the players have been in this chamber for a few rounds, read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly one of the doors opens, and you catch a momentary glimpse of a fantastic land beyond – almost a wonderland of snowy splendor. Twelve beings wrapped in red cloaks lined with green fur enter the room, laughing and jesting with each other. At first they do not see you, but when they do, horror appears on their delicate faces. Six are men and six women, creatures only 5 feet high, with golden skin and silver eyes. The men hold long hooked poles, striped red and white, which are quickly revealed to be potential weapons. They are clearly terrified of you, but they smell of them makes your mouths water, as though they were made of the very essence of delicious food.

These creatures are the **empara**, and the language that they speak is a form of the angelic (celestial) tongue. They know humans as **pala'ku** – horrible monsters which devour their kind. If the PCs can communicate, they can avert combat, but only by leaving immediately. If they enter this room again, the empara, already rattled by their first appearance, will attack immediately.

The **male empara** are armed with six-foot long hard candy canes, which they can use as staffs. In addition, with any successful hit, a male empara can attempt one of the following:

- **Trip:** The target must succeed on a DC 10 Reflex save or be knocked prone.
- **Pull:** The target must succeed on a DC 10 Strength check or be moved 5 feet in any direction chosen by the empara. This ability may be used to force characters into the central hearth for 1d6 damage and a DC 10 Reflex save to avoid being set alight.
- **Disarm:** The target must succeed on a DC 10 Reflex save or be disarmed. His weapon flies 1d6+5 feet away.

The **female empara** do not attack directly, but sing. So long as a single female empara is singing, any PC within 5 feet of the walls (including those attempting to move through the doors) must succeed in a DC 10 Reflex save or be held by the ivy on the walls for one round. If the roll is 5 or less, the character is held in place, and must succeed on a DC 10 Reflex save (using an Action Die) to break free. Finally, if the roll is a natural “1”, the character is fully entangled, and can take no action except attempting to break free with a

DC 15 Strength check.

When an empara is killed, its **soul** oozes out of the wound into a puddle of amber golden liquid that smells and tastes like ambrosia. PCs must make a DC 5 Will check or immediately drop everything in a mad scramble to lap up the soul before it evaporates in 1 round. Multiple characters trying to lap up the same soul contest by rolling the highest d20 + Luck modifier to determine who succeeds. A character who laps up an empara soul gains a permanent increase of 1d4 hp. Lawful characters, however, also permanently lose 1 point of Luck, and clerics gain +5 disapproval if Lawful and +2 if Neutral per empara soul consumed.

The cloaks worn by the empara are very warm, although short, and will fetch up to 25 gp each. PCs wielding the candy canes of the male empara may attempt Mighty Deeds to accomplish the same maneuvers that the empara naturally perform.

Empara males (6): Init +4; Atk candy cane +3 melee (1d4 plus special); AC 10; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; SP candy cane maneuvers, ambrosial soul; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2; AL L.

Empara females (6): Init +6; Atk none; AC 12; HD 2d6; hp 7 each; SP singing, ambrosial soul; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +3; AL L.

4. The Hall of Ice: *The door opens onto a frigid hall, some 30 feet wide and 80 feet long, the entire length covered and lit by softly glowing ice, which shimmers with colors like the aurora borealis. The floor is polished, slick and bright. The walls are mirror-like, showing distorted reflections and images of all in this room. The ceiling is covered with jagged spears and stalactites of ice, some larger than a man, a good 30 feet overhead. There is a door in the center of the far wall.*

Characters moving at more than half speed in this room must make a Reflex save (DC 10 if walking or DC 15 if running) to avoid falling down. The cold is so great that each round spent within the room requires a DC 5 Fort save to avoid taking 1 point of damage from Strength, Stamina, or Agility (determine randomly). Other than that, there are no hazards here. The ice creaks ominously as characters cross the hall, however, implying a threat that does not materialize.

5. Grendel's Christmas: *This room is 30 feet by 70 feet in size, lit by a huge log burning in a stone fireplace along one of the long walls. There is a door in the center of each short wall, as well as the wall without the fireplace. Despite the fierce-looking flames, it is cold and dimly lit here, and the heavy log walls are cold. A band of ten rough-looking men sleep near to the fireplace, huddled in wool blankets and furs. They have weapons near to hand – hand axes, short swords, and shields – but they are snoring now.*

The sleeping men are in dread of the dark ogre-troll **Grendel**, which comes from time to time into their hall to eat humans. Although they do not speak any language known to the PCs, they call themselves the **Skagaart**, and their leader is named **Bulwarg**.

The PCs can pass through this room without waking anyone with a successful Sneak check (DC 5) for Thieves, or a DC 10 Agility check for others. There is a 50% chance that Grendel will break through a door each time the PCs are in this room, until the monster is slain. In this case, it takes only a round for the groggy warriors to become fully alert. If discovered in this room, the PCs' immediate actions determine whether they are considered friends or foes.

Grendel is immensely strong, gaining a +6 bonus to any Strength check. The monster reduces all damage by 5 points, regardless of the source, and regenerates 1d5 hp at the end of every round so long as he lives. He appears as a 10-foot tall, misshapen man-like figure, hairless and noisome-smelling. He rolls critical hits as a giant (G/1d4). Despite his height, he is almost skeletally thin.

When Grendel is defeated, a loud crack! is heard, and the walls begin warming at once. The fire blazes up, shedding far more heat and light, and the Skagaart give a ragged cheer. In this world, at least, the worst of the winter is over. The PCs may well find friends and allies here throughout the adventure, and are offered ale and smoked meats any time they return to this room. A smiling Skagaart warrior (Bulwarg if he lives) gives the PCs a **jeweled golden cup** worth 500 gp for its workmanship and materials. When given as a gift, any poison placed in the cup is partially neutralized, granting a +4 to any related saving throw. When stolen or taken as spoils, any liquid placed into the cup becomes



a poison (Fort DC 15, 1d3 Strength damage if successful, 2d3 Stamina damage per minute over the next 1d5 minutes if not), but only when drank from the cup.

Grendel: Init +0; Atk claw +8 melee (2d4+6) or bite +6 melee (1d6+6); AC 14; HD 8d10; hp 43; MV 30'; Act 1d24; SP infravision, crit on 20-24, regeneration, damage reduction 5; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +6; AL C.

Bulwarg: Init +4; Atk Handaxe +4 melee (1d6+2); AC 12; HD 4d12; hp 16; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP battle madness; SV Fort +4; Ref +3; Will +2; AL N. When wounded, Bulwarg gains +5 hp, and a +2 bonus to attacks, damage, and saves. 1 turn after the battle ends, he loses these bonuses (possibly reducing him to 0 hp, in which case he dies).

Skagaart (9): Init +2; Atk Handaxe or short sword +3 melee (1d6+2); AC 12; HD 2d12; hp 21, 12, 7, 13, 8, 19, 14, 20, 12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3; Ref +2; Will +0; AL N.

6. Silver Bells: *This room is 30 feet square, with an ornately carved wooden door in the center of each wall. Wooden steps are fitted into the rough walls, going around and upward to where a bell pull is attached to about 25 silver bells hanging from the ceiling. The bells seem to glow softly, reflecting the gentle moonlight coming in from slits in the upper walls, some 50 feet overhead.*

There are six spaces where steps are missing on the way upwards to the bells, with each gap becoming progressively larger as the height increases. These gaps are 1 foot across at 10 feet up, 2 feet across at 15 feet up, 3 feet across at 20 feet up, 4 feet across at 25 feet up, 5 feet across at 30 feet up, and 6 feet across at 40 feet up.

Once the PCs enter this room, all doors lead directly to the door in the opposite wall until the bells have been rung. Once the PCs have rung the bells once, they need not do so upon subsequent trips through this area (although they may continue to do so, as this is not obvious unless one tries to exit the room).

Climbing the stairs requires six Agility checks to get over the gaps: the DCs are 1, 4, 6, 9, 12, and 15 respectively. Failure indicates a fall, with damage of 1d6 per 10 feet as per the standard DCC rules. Any damage die that comes up “6” indicates a broken bone (dealing 1d4 points of Agility loss). Note that the first check cannot be failed unless the PC has a penalty due to low Agility.

The walls are made of rough mortared stone, and climbing requires two successful DC 8 checks for a thief; two failures in a row indicate a fall from 1d5 x 10 feet. The judge should not suggest this option if the players do not think of it.

Ringling a single bell has no effect, so hitting a bell with an arrow or other missile weapon (AC 12) has no effect. Players may come up with other methods to pull the bell cord, though, such as cantrip. Attacks that destroy the bell pull may well trap the characters in this chamber forever, unless they can somehow repair or replace it. Attacks that destroy the bells sever the room from the Nexus of Yule, and passing through the doors will deposit the PCs on a far plane or in some other place of the judge's choosing.

When the bell cord is pulled, the silver bells play the

Carol of the Bells. The first time this is played, Lawful characters heal 3 dice of healing, but Chaotic characters take 2d12 points of damage. An enterprising judge may well have a sound clip ready.

7. The Wrong Manger: *This area smells strongly of animal sweat and dung, although there is another smell beneath that, of precious resins and incense. The air is warm and dry, as though you were in a desert country, and you can see pieces of the night through knot-holes and gaps in the boards forming what appears to be a stone-flagged barn with straw strewn liberally about the floor. You can see three cows, half a dozen sheep with thick woolly coats, a goat, and a donkey. They glance your way with seeming disinterest.*

In this world, all of these **domestic animals** are carnivores, and will attack if approached. Unless the PCs are cautious, the animals will probably attack with surprise (although not all will necessarily attack in the surprise round). A Neutral cleric can Turn these animals with a successful check. A **cow** can only attempt to trample prone foes.

Around the corner are the remains of a little boy, mostly picked clean. A pair of small hand drums lies nearby, along with a flyer suggesting drum lessons as a way to stay warm and indoors this winter. Hidden within the hay are three small chests, one of which contains 5 20-lb ingots of gold (worth 150 gp each), one containing frankincense, and the final containing myrrh.

Carnivorous cows (3): Init -2; Atk butt +2 melee (1d6) or bite +0 melee (1d3) or trample +4 melee (2d6); AC 13; HD 3d8; hp 18, 9, 6; SV Fort +5, Ref -3, Will -4; AL N.

Flesh-eating sheep (6): Init -2; Atk butt +0 melee (1d3) or bite +0 melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 7, 7, 7, 12, 8; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will -4; AL N.

Hungry goat: Init +4; Atk butt +3 melee (1d5) or bite +2 melee (1d4); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 6; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +4; AL N.

Predatory donkey: Init +0; Atk kick +3 melee (2d4) or bite +0 melee (1d3); AC 12; HD 2d8+4; hp 15; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +8; AL N.

8. The Yuletide Throne: *When you pass through this door, you find yourself in a vast cold hall, fully 60 feet wide and more than 120 feet long. The doors behind you have become massive wooden double doors, gilded in gold and silver. A dozen great evergreen trees, each with a bole 5 feet in diameter and festooned with tinsel and flickering candles, flank the hall like pillars. Two eight-foot tall snowmen flank the doors as if they were guards, and two more flank the raised dais at the end of the hall – itself forty feet wide and thirty feet deep – upon which a creature like a horrible bearded spider, dressed in fur-trimmed red garments, squats. This being is easily 15 feet tall were it to rise. Between the tree-pillars, you can see a dozen green-clad elves standing ready, each armed with a wooden spear. The frost-rimed walls are 50 feet high, and the star-topped trees reach another 30 feet or so beyond that. There is no ceiling – the coruscating colors of the Northern Lights illuminate this place.*

Attempting to pass back out the double doors only leads back to this place. If the PCs take no hostile actions immediately, one of the closest elves steps forward and proclaims in a loud voice: *“Behold the Cinder Claws, First and Foremost of the Spirits of Yule. Go forward, mortal creatures, and make your obeisance!”*

The PCs may then go forward and speak with the Cinder Claws, attempt to fight their way out, or take some other action of their choosing. Whether or not the Cinder Claws really is the oldest or most powerful of the Spirits of Yule is up to the individual judge to decide, but he is angered by any suggestion that he is not. The Cinder Claws speaks with a creaking, hissing voice, that occasionally booms loudly, and intersperses his talk with jolly laughter.

“Mortal children, I have allowed you entry into the Nexus of Yule, that you may come before Me in the center of My web. Is it not delightful? Ho ho ho! It intersects worlds beyond count, and snares people beyond number, and all their celebrations bring power to Me!” The creature frowns. *“Yet not to Me alone, for others now traverse the Nexus, who would remake Yule into their own image, and who would steal My food from My web. And it is but one time of year, Ho ho ho!, when the sun wanes, that I feed. I would change these things. To do so, I need agents upon many worlds. Will you stand as My agents upon your own world? There are many gifts you may receive in return.*

Will you join with Me and keep Yuletide in your hearts all the year?”

Questions and Answers

The judge may use the following as a guideline to answering questions or objections raised by the PCs:

But you are a monster!

Judge not by appearances, children, for the web of worlds is vaster than you know. Were you not monsters in the eyes of the empara of the golden world? Did they not call you pala’ku, which is ghoulish in their tongue? How can you say that the creature Grendel was not like unto you, and the Skaagart not like unto the empara in his nostrils?

How would we serve you?

Many ways, some obvious and others obscure. Be My instruments in the world. Strike down false spirits who would usurp My position and My authority. Be My conduit to your world in the summer months, when elsewhere I would be barred. Carry My gifts to places I cannot go.

What gifts would we receive in return?

Ho, ho, ho! That would be telling! I cannot abide those who would seek to open My gifts before their time.

If the PCs have also played *The Thing in the Chimney*, he will add: *But (some of) you have had a taste of My generosity already, have you not?*

Why us?

Why not you? Ho ho ho! It is within My power to see the sleeping, and know the waking, to look into the hearts of all people and know the good and evil that they have done, Ho ho ho! And even that they have thought to do. Your actions have impressed Me. Your desire to better yourselves makes you juicy and sweet. Ho ho ho! You would do well for yourselves as My agents.

What happens if we refuse?

You will awaken in your beds, and live what remains of your lives for good or ill. Never again shall I summon you forth, unless you stand against My agents, and never again shall you receive ought from Me, save the enmity of spiders and a certain susceptibility to the cold. Ho ho ho! But why should you refuse? I am a better friend than I am a foe, and even My indifference is not good to bear.

What happens if we accept?

Doors shall open for you that would otherwise remain forever closed. Ho ho ho! You shall keep the Yuletide in your hearts all the year round. More than that I will not say. Ho ho ho! I despise those who wish to peek beneath the wrapping, and, if you become My agents, you will discover what gifts I bring soon enough! And if you do not, Ho ho ho!, it is my wish that you forever wonder what you have given away. For I am a generous Master, but not a kindly one!

When the Cinder Claws wills it (and immediately if combat breaks out) clouds start to form, and in 2d5 rounds it begins to snow. Once it is snowing, each PC must make a DC 10 Fort save each round or fall into an enchanted sleep from which they cannot be roused. No creature will harm a sleeping PC here. When all of the PCs have succumbed, they wake up in their own beds, wherever they began this adventure.

Combat

If combat breaks out, the **giant snowmen** can scratch with their branch arms or hurl snowballs up to 30 feet away, which cause 1d5 points of damage due to sheer cold. If the target does not make a DC 10 Fort save, he also suffers 1d3 point of Stamina damage due to cold. When a snowman is slain, its three snowballs burst into a spray of cold that causes 1d3 points of temporary Agility damage unless a DC 10 Fort save succeeds. The snowmen are abnormally vulnerable to fire, taking four times the normal damage from heat-based attacks. A snowman who dies due to fire damage does not burst into a spray of cold, either. These snowmen do not have hats as do their lesser kin in *The Thing in the Chimney*.

Snowmen (4): Init +0; Atk scratch +0 melee (1d5) or snowball +3 ranged (1d5 cold plus possible Stamina damage); AC 8; HD 6d8; hp 25 each; MV 20'; Act 2d20; SP snowballs, burst, fire vulnerability; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +8; AL C.

The **elf guards** wear leather armour under green surcoats trimmed with white fur. Each wears a green felt hat, like those described above. Each has a bronze shortsword and bears a bronze-tipped spear. These soft bronze weapons are rendered useless on a critical hit.

Elf guards (12): Init +3; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8) or short sword +2 melee (1d6) or spear +3 ranged

(1d8); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', immune to sleep and paralysis; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.

The **Cinder Claws** has a poisonous bite (Fort DC 10 or 1d8 damage each round until magically healed), and can cast the following spells with a +6 bonus to his spell checks: chill touch, frost hands (as flaming hands, but cold-based), magic missile (icicle manifestation), and shatter. If defeated, the Cinder Claws shoots around the room like a balloon whose air is being let out, as his body sags and empties of his spiritual substance. This takes 1d3 rounds, after which all of the PCs immediately appear in their bedchambers (asleep or awake, as they were when the Cinder Claws was defeated). No gifts are left (see **Concluding the Adventure**, below).

The Cinder Claws: Init +6; Atk claw +6 melee (1d3) or bite +2 melee (1d6 plus poison); AC 18; HD 10d10; hp 60; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP spells, poison; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +15; AL C.

Concluding the Adventure

How the adventure concludes depends upon how the PCs deal with the Cinder Claws. If combat doesn't occur, or if the Cinder Claws is not defeated, they all awaken in the same place they fell asleep. Characters who agree to become agents of the Cinder Claws find brightly-wrapped presents in their rooms. Characters who do not agree to become agents seem to be left alone, as the Cinder Claws promised, but have a hidden surprise lurking nearby. The judge should ask all the players what their characters do before adjudicating what occurs.

Characters who gain gifts have the gift tailored to their class. Some suggestions are given below, but the judge is encouraged to adjust these gifts to match the desires of the character involved, or invent wholly new gifts.

Additionally, someone will gain a **scroll of patron bond**, that allows bonding to the Cinder Claws with a minimum result of "12". Note that it is still possible to gain patron taint if a natural "1" is rolled, but the spell will also succeed at its minimum value. The scroll can be used seven times before turning to ice and melting away. The scroll will go to the character the judge deems most appropriate – an elf before a wizard, and

a Chaotic character before a Neutral or Lawful. If no wizard or elf accepts the Cinder Claws' offer, the scroll will be given to another character. Remember that, in Dungeon Crawl Classics, any character can attempt a spell check rolling 1d10, and the scroll cannot fail.

Depending upon alignment and deity, a cleric agreeing to be bonded to the Cinder Claws may encounter on-going Disapproval, or even a total loss of abilities until a new deity accepts the cleric.

Appropriate gifts might include:

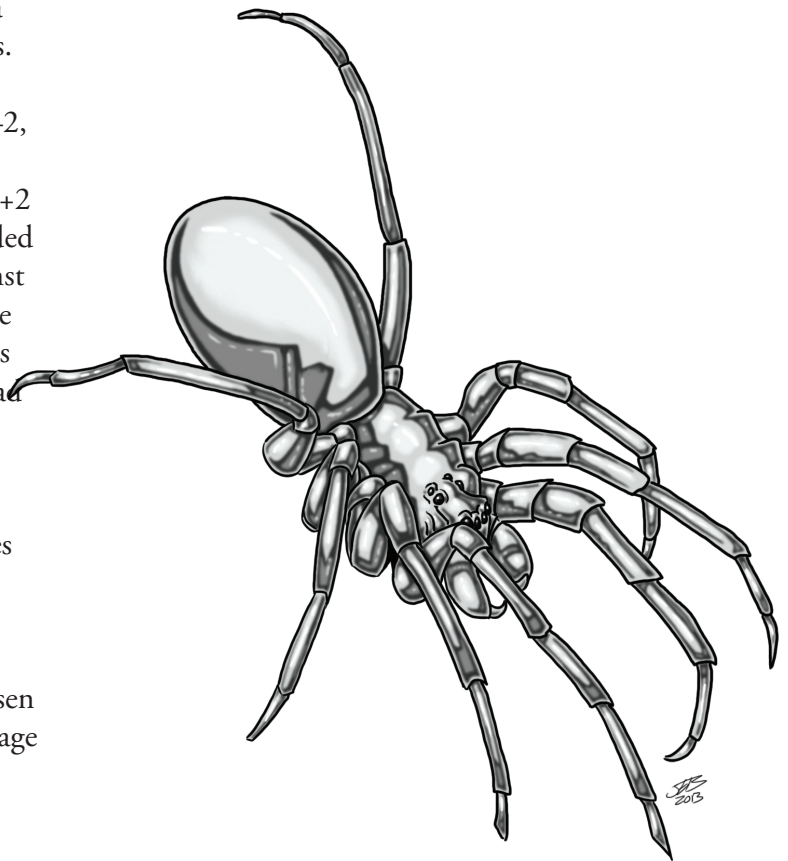
- For a cleric, the **horn of plenty**, which can cast food of the gods three times a week with a +8 bonus to the spell check, or the **sacrificial dagger**, an obsidian blade that can be used to sacrifice sentient beings to remove Disapproval – each Hit Die of creatures so sacrificed removes 1 point of Disapproval.
- For a thief, the **phantom cloak**, which adds a +5 bonus to Hide in Shadows checks, or the **slayer's talon**, a dagger that does 1d12 base damage on a backstab, and adds a +2 bonus to critical hit rolls.
- For a warrior or dwarf, a **suit of light chain** that adds +5 to AC, but has a check penalty of only –2, has no Speed penalty, and uses a d8 Fumble die. Alternatively, the **ring of Gawain**, which adds a +2 bonus to Initiative, and makes any weapon wielded by the wearer act as though it were magical against creatures which are not hit normally by mundane weapons. The weapons do not add to attack rolls or damage, but are otherwise treated as if they had a bonus equal to the user's level.
- For a wizard or elf, the **orb of decay**, a putrid greenish-gray orb 2 inches in diameter, which can add a +2 bonus to any spell check three times a week, but a sentient creature within 100', selected by the caster, permanently loses 2 points of Strength, Agility, or Stamina (equal chance of each) due to sudden rotting and decay. The chosen victim gains a DC 20 Will save to force the damage back onto the caster.
- For a halfling, 5 uses of **lucky pipeweed**, which, when smoked, grants the halfling 2d5 points of temporary Luck that must be used within 24 hours of being lost.

Characters that don't accept the Cinder Claws' offer

have either a fist-sized **poisonous spider** or a **venomous snake** hiding in their bedchambers (equal chance of each). If the character doesn't take precautions, these creatures attack by surprise. Because the PCs are probably separated when they awaken, they will need to deal with these threats individually.

Poisonous spider: Init +1; Atk bite +0 melee (1 plus poison); AC 12; HD 1d4; hp 3; MV 30' or climb 30'; Act 1d20; SP poison (Fort DC 12, 1d4 hp if successful or 3d4 hp + 1 Strength if failed); SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; AL N.

Venomous snake: Init +5; Atk bite +2 melee (1 plus poison); AC 16; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP poison (Fort DC 16, 1d3 Stamina if successful, 2d6 Stamina if failed); SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +0; AL N.



The Nexus of Yule (Player's Map)



Appendix: The Cinder Claws

The Cinder Claws is a Yuletide Spirit. He claims to be the oldest and most powerful of such spirits, but who is to know for certain? From his dwelling in a frozen wasteland in the far north (or on another plane) he comes forth each year at the winter solstice to bring questionable gifts to worry an already troubled world. What the Cinder Claws' goals are is difficult to discern. His gifts, even to those who oppose him, are not always bad. Sometimes they are wonderful. He is a force for Chaos though, an old evil spider who crouches in the center of a frozen web.

Those who would bond with the Cinder Claws must do so during the winter months in an area where evergreen trees, holly, mistletoe and similar plants which remain green in winter are either growing or have been brought in for decoration.

Invoke Patron check results:

12-13	Your plight has amused the Cinder Claws. For the next 1d5 rounds, you can climb walls with a +5 bonus at your full speed, and your bite has a toxin equal to tarantula venom (see p. 446 of the <i>core rule-book</i>).
14-17	The Cinder Claws helps to shield you from harm. For the next turn, you are surrounded by a blizzard of blowing snow and ice, with a radius 30' from your person. Within the blizzard, no creature can be targeted with a ranged attack, and melee weapons have a 50% miss chance. Creatures vulnerable to cold take 1d6 damage per round. There is a smell of eggnog and peppermint so long as the blizzard lasts.
18-19	The Cinder Claws sends you material aid – twelve elven guards come from the nearest chimney, hole, doorway, or other aperture that could connect to the Nexus of Yule. They fight or otherwise serve for up to 2 turns before returning to the Cinder Claws' realm. Dead elves melt as though they were made of snow. Elf guards (12): Init +3; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8) or short sword +2 melee (1d6) or spear +3 ranged (1d8); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 5 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP infravision 60', immune to sleep and paralysis; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.
20-23	The ground within 100' of where you stand becomes covered in slippery ice, and all surfaces within that radius are covered with rime. Any creature that attempts to move at more than half speed must make a Reflex save (DC 10) or fall prone. Any creature that attacks, or is struck by a successful attack, must also make a Reflex save (DC 15) or fall prone. You are immune to this effect. Moreover, all creatures within this radius take 1d6 damage at the beginning of each round due to the cold. You and your allies are immune to this damage. The ice and frost last for 1d3 + CL turns.
24-27	As 20-23, above, but your allies are also immune to the slippery conditions. Also, you may make a single ranged attack (using your Action Die) each round, attempting to strike any opponent within 100' with a ray of frost (+6 to hit, 3d6 damage, Fort DC 15 for half).
28-29	As 24-27, above, but the target of a successful ray attack must also succeed in a DC 20 Reflex save or any one non-magical metallic armor, shield, or weapon in the target's possession is shattered due to the extreme cold. You get to choose what is shattered on a failed save. In addition, the ray is now +8 to hit, does 3d8 damage, and required a DC 20 Fort save for half.
30-31	Choose one target each round for the next 4d14 rounds. The target must succeed in a DC 20 Fort or Will save, or be transformed (with all its non-magical equipment) into non-magical, non-animate snow. Magical effects, such as a reversed turn to stone spell, can restore the targets, but damage to their form due to melting, collapse, or reshaping the snow is retained when they are restored to flesh.
32+	The Cinder Claws instantaneously transport you and up to CL allies to his home in the far north. From there, he can move you to nearly any place in the cosmos, so long as it has a fireplace, doorway, or some other connection that can be reached through the Nexus of Yule. There is only a 50% chance that the Cinder Claws will send you where you ask to go.

Patron Taint: The Cinder Claws

When patron taint is indicated for the Cinder Claws, roll 1d6 on the table below. When a caster has acquired all six taints at all levels of effect, there is no need to continue rolling any more.

Roll	Result
1	Spidery Form: The caster gains some portion of the Cinder Claws' own spidery form. When this taint is first acquired, the caster grows six additional eyes upon his forehead, like shiny black buttons. When this taint is rolled a second time, the caster gains the ability to climb walls and other surfaces at his normal movement rate with a +5 bonus to checks, but also permanently loses 1 point of Personality. If rolled a third time, the caster gains a poisonous bite (Fort DC 12, 2d6 damage on a failed save) and permanently loses 1d3 points of Personality.
2	Sweet Temptation: The caster finds sweets irresistible, and must succeed in a Will save or consume any sugary confection he is offered. When this taint is first rolled, the DC is 10. When this taint is rolled a second time, the DC raises to 15. Finally, when this taint is rolled a third time, the DC raises to 20. Each time this taint is rolled, the character's overall weight begins to gradually rise until he has gained 5d10 pounds.
3	Delivery Service: The character must deliver a wrapped gift for the Cinder Claws. He must not open the gift, or pry as to what is inside, and he must not be observed leaving it for the intended target. When this taint is first rolled, the recipient is 2d10 miles from the character. When this taint is rolled a second time, the recipient is 4d20 miles away, and the gift is somewhat bulky or difficult to conceal. When this taint is rolled a third time, the recipient is 8d30 miles away, and the gift is bulky, difficult to conceal, or dangerous to carry (either because of what it is, or because of what else is seeking it).
4	Beard and Belly: When this taint is first rolled, the character grows a beard, or, if he already has a beard, it grows to twice its normal length. If cut, it grows back almost instantly. If rolled a second time, his belly becomes an obvious pot that jiggles like jelly. If rolled a third time, all of his hair turns snow white.
5	Frost and Fire: The caster resists damage from cold sources, but takes more damage from heat and fire. When this is first rolled, the caster subtracts 1d6 from any cold damage, but adds 1d6 to heat or fire damage. When this is rolled a second time, the amount is 2d6. When rolled a third time, it is 3d6.
6	Lord of Elves: Elves (including PC elves) find the caster difficult to disobey. When he gives an order to an elf, the caster may (but does not have to) require the elf to make a Will save in order to disobey. If the elf makes the Will save, he is immune to this effect for the next 24 hours. When this taint is first rolled, the DC is 10. When it is rolled a second time, the DC is 15. When rolled a third time, the DC is 20. Elves which make their save are aware that some power of this nature was used against them, and may react accordingly.

Patron Spells: The Cinder Claws

The Cinder Claws grants three unique spells, as follows. These spells are not detailed in this product, but can be devised by the judge as needed.

- Level 1: *Summon the Scions of Yule*
- Level 2: *Create Fortified Eggnog*
- Level 3: *Travel the Nexus of Yule*

Spellburn: The Cinder Claws

When a caster utilizes spellburn, roll 1d4 on the table below, or build off the ideas presented therein to create an event specific to your home campaign.

Roll	Spellburn Result
1	You become aware of a sprig of ethereal mistletoe hanging over your head. While you can move, it is difficult. This is expressed as Strength or Agility loss. Until you are kissed, the mistletoe does not begin to fade, and you cannot begin to heal the spellburn damage.
2	You can feel exactly as if you have consumed an enormous turkey dinner, followed by too much eggnog, cookies, and candies. This is expressed as Strength, Agility, or Stamina loss. Only when the spellburn is fully healed does the heartburn also end.
3	Ho ho ho! As a gift, the Cinder Claws gives you up to 10 points of spellburn for free! However, you are required to give a gift of equal value to the Cinder Claws within 10 days. It need not be spellburn, but if the gift is not of equal value, the Cinder Claws will take double the points from wherever he wills. The judge is the final arbiter on what is of equal value.
4	You gain insight into the Cinder Claws' "Naughty or Nice" list. Crushing guilt over your failings, or euphoria over your successes make you unable to focus completely upon the world around you. Take the spellburn damage from Personality.

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