



GUESS WHO'S COMING  
TO DONNER







# Guess Who's Coming To Donner

JOHN GOFF

SAVAGE WORLDS BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

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# Guess Who's Coming To Donner

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Howdy, Marshal! Grab a spot here by the cookfire and sit a spell. We've got a tale for you to serve up for your posse that deals with somewhat unusual culinary practices. This twisted little tale should be playable in a single night's session, so you can plug it into an existing campaign with little effort.

We don't want to limit the fun to just one setting, either. Although we've written the adventure primarily from a Weird West standpoint, you can find notes in Setup on how to adapt it for a *Hell on Earth* campaign quickly and easily.

Funny how cannibalism transcends time and genre...

## The Story So Far

In the early 1840s, a land speculator named Lansford Hastings explored the West in search of new routes to California. During one of his expeditions, Hastings unknowingly stumbled upon an ancient site of power. There the barriers between reality and the Hunting Ground were very weak.

A particularly powerful manitou was strong enough to stretch the bonds placed on it by the Old Ones and seize a foothold in Hastings's mind. However, the shamans guarding the manitous prevented it from exerting its full influence. Instead of immediately possessing him, it could only whisper madness.

Hastings weathered the murmuring for years, but eventually succumbed to insanity. By late 1845, Lansford Hastings was guided completely by the manitou's desires.

## Recipe for Disaster

In early August, 1846, a group of settlers departed Ft. Bridger, Idaho. Led by George Donner, they were headed for California. Donner intended to follow a new route called the "Hastings Cutoff," which he'd learned of in a book titled *The Immigrant's Guide to Oregon and California*. This short cut, the book claimed, would shorten the trip by nearly four months. The book had been written by none other than Lansford Hastings.

Donner corresponded with Hastings and set up a meet at Ft. Bridger, so Hastings could guide them through the short cut. When the party arrived, it discovered Hastings had gone ahead. The man promised to leave markers along the way, and link up with them prior to entering the Sierra Nevadas.

Hastings had no such intentions. The Donner party was unknowingly following a monster to its den.

## Tenderizers

The route became steadily more difficult and dangerous. Hastings' directions were deliberately inaccurate and Indian attacks



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plagued the settlers as they crossed Utah. Finally, in October, far behind schedule, they reached the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas.

The Donner party began its final push on October 23. By all rights, there should have been plenty of time to clear the high mountains before the snows began to fall. Unfortunately, Hastings had been shadowing the party throughout its journey and the manitou had drawn strength from the suffering and fears of the settlers. Finally, the manitou flexed its true power.

Winter came to the Sierras almost a month early.

On October 29, the Donner party was trapped near the top of the region known as Truckee Pass. There they made camp near a small lake, in cabins built by earlier pioneers.

## The Cupboard Was Bare...

The party's food, already decimated by the disastrous trip, soon dwindled to nothing. The first death from starvation occurred on December 15. By January, even the strongest pioneer was near death. Hastings prowled the woods nearby to savor the terror and despair.

Then the final horror was released—the spirit of a wendigo.

The settlers, most already half mad with hunger, were easy prey for the beast. By the time the final rescue party reached the camp in April, 1847, it was a charnel house. The rescuers later spoke of kettles filled with skulls and corpses stripped of flesh. Of the 87 members of the Donner party, 39 had died in the Truckee Pass.

The manitou, through Hastings, had reveled in the fear and horror for almost four months. It raised the Fear Level in Truckee Pass to near that of a Deadland. Lansford Hastings' mind snapped then as well. Although the manitou would wait nearly another 20 years for Raven and the Last Sons to completely free it, its bond with Hastings was now breakable only by death.

## The Second Course

Thirty years or so later, Truckee Pass is commonly called “Donner” Pass. Residents of nearby towns tell tales of ghosts and other creatures haunting the high pass. Few people venture into the region surrounding the old Donner campsite.

And so it would have continued, if not for the Great Rail Wars.

In late 1878, the Denver-Pacific railroad is a minor player in the transcontinental race, but it stands the best chance of reaching the California coast first. One last obstacle stands in its way—the Sierra Nevada range. The company's surveyors have determined the best route over the mountains lies through Donner Pass.

In an effort to ensure rapid completion of its railway, the company has kept a crew working into early winter. Just over a week ago, the company's clearing crew reached the edge of Donner Lake.

## Hastings Returns

Over the years, Hastings has degenerated into a unique and terrible abomination similar in many ways to a wendigo, but in some ways far more powerful. The thing has felt a strong attachment to the area, and this winter it returned to the old camp to relive the horror it caused.

Lairing in one of the cabins a short distance from the lake, the abomination sensed the arrival of the rail crew. Freed and much more powerful, it swiftly descended on the workmen. In less than a day the men were corrupted into a pack of ghouls, feeding on themselves.

Donner Lake and much of the surrounding area are fully under the sway of the monster. Every living being within five miles of Hastings' lair is consumed with a terrible hunger for human flesh. Newcomers entering the area soon suffer the same hideous craving.



Oddly enough, the Pass holds the only method for defeating the abomination as well. It has fed on pain and terror so long that the Hastings thing is virtually invulnerable—with one exception. Just as the stories claim, the spirits of the Donner party victims haunt the area around the pass, seeking revenge for their torment. They alone have the power to destroy the monstrosity.

Hastings is aware of this and has built a simple—but effective—defense against the ghosts. Outside its cabin is a tree from which hang numerous bottles. It uses these bottles to trap the spirits of the victims and hold them.

## The Setup

Local Denver-Pacific supervisors have lost contact with 25 men who were working in the Donner Pass region. The last report the foreman made over a week ago indicated that the crew had reached Donner Lake. The foreman was supposed to send an update every three days. He's now two reports behind. The company believes that outlaws, another rail gang, or just plain bad weather has trapped the men in the high mountains.

It has no inkling as to the true fate of its employees.

The railroad's branch office in the boomtown of Virginia City, Nevada, has hired the posse as a relief party. The posse is to lead a small mule train carrying supplies into the Sierras. They will be paid \$75 a person upon completion and return to Virginia City.

## Guess Who in Hell on Earth

*Guess Who's Coming to Donner* is very easy to translate over to *Hell on Earth*. Instead of a rail crew, the posse is searching for a lost group of Convoy outriders. They're not taking supplies, but instead just trying to track them down. The last place the group made contact was at a small trading post near Lake Tahoe (note that Virginia City is *not* a good

starting place in *Hell on Earth*!). The group was following a series of backwoods dirt roads to avoid the wreck-clogged main road.

A few other tweaks are necessary of course, such as changing the tents in the work camp to ruined vehicles, but the story works equally well in either setting!

## CHAPTER ONE: APPETIZERS

Unless you want to detail the trip from Virginia City, Marshal, the posse begins at a trader's cabin in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Although the adventure starts on October 30th, 1878, any late fall or early winter date works fine as well,

## Johnson's Trading Post

It is late evening when the heroes arrive. A light snow is beginning to fall. The Denver-Pacific arranged to have the relief supplies awaiting the posse at this cabin. Joshua Johnson, a one-time mountain man, owns the cabin. His main source of business lately is the railroad and its work crew, so he's anxious to see work resume.

There is a fair-sized porch at the front with a few benches. Johnson is waiting here when the heroes arrive. Wolf and bear skins are displayed on the wall. Johnson also has what appears to be wind chime made of bottles hanging on the porch.

He has prepared four mules to carry the supplies up the mountain trail. The goods consist almost entirely of foodstuffs such as bread, salted meat, and the like. Although the mules can be loaded in less than an hour, Johnson suggests the posse stay at his cabin because night will fall soon. He says,

*It ain't good practice to head up the trail in the dark—one misstep might break a leg. Temperature's dropping fast too.*



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## The Bottle Tree

If any posse member asks him about the bottles, Johnson says,

*I use it to keep the spirits outta my cabin. The bottles trap any ghost what comes too close. You can hear 'em moanin' sometimes if ya listen.*

Should anyone ask him about the ghosts, Johnson only says,

*I'll tell ya later.*

Skeptical heroes will notice that the "ghosts" only seem to moan when the wind is blowing.

## Inside the Cabin

The cabin is large, having a main room where Johnson conducts business and two smaller rooms in the back. It's heated by a large potbelly stove, and lit by two oil lamps. There is a musty smell emanating from a pile of furs in one corner of the front room.

In the front room, Johnson keeps his sale goods. He has a small selection of common items such as blankets, clothing, and basic tools. He also has a few firearms for sale (standard pistols and rifles) along with ammunition. He doesn't have any exotic items, such as dynamite or gizmos of any sort (save the ubiquitous Clockwork De-Moler).

Should the heroes feel they need any extra equipment (like winter coats!), he's more than happy to sell it to them.

Of the two rear rooms, one is a kitchen and the other a bedroom. There is nothing of interest in either room, except for an Indian headdress hanging in the bedroom. Should a posse member ask about it, Johnson says only that it's a Crow war bonnet.

## Ghost Stories

As night falls, Johnson prepares a rough stew for the posse along with some black coffee. After dinner, he tells them the story of the Donners.

Johnson knows nothing about Hastings' true nature, and only mentions him in passing. Mostly, he focuses on the "ghosts" that haunt the pass and forest near the summit. If the posse hasn't mentioned it before he explains the purpose of his "wind chimes." Any posse member can verify this with Knowledge (Occult) roll. This is a vital piece of information, but don't club the posse over the head with it.

## Headin' Out

When morning arrives, Johnson fixes a quick breakfast of bacon and biscuits. He tells the heroes the work camp lies about 15-20 miles to the west. Although the trail climbs steeply into the mountains, the crews have cleared the way and they should reach the work crew by mid- to late afternoon if they keep a good pace, even with the light snow from the night before.

Afterward, he sees the posse to the trailhead and wishes them luck.

## On the Trail

*Fear Level: 2*

Leaving Johnson's cabin, the trail winds through the forest less than mile and joins the railroad's cleared right-of-way. The trail runs parallel to the right-of-way to the work camp.





Last night's snowfall shrouds the evergreens, and most wildlife has sought shelter from the sudden winter cold. The fresh precipitation hides any evidence of other travelers on the trail and the forest begins to feel very lonely. If you feel like giving the cowpokes a tougher time of it, Marshal, feel free to use the rules for cold weather in *Savage Worlds*. The air temperature is 30° F during the day and drops to 20° F at night.

The higher the posse goes, the deeper the snow becomes. With a Tracking or Survival roll, a hero realizes snow has been falling on the mountains for several days.

As the snow gets deeper, the heroes find themselves traveling slower. By mid-afternoon it becomes obvious they may not reach the work camp until near nightfall. To further complicate the trip, the sky is rapidly clouding over again.

## Wolfing Down Dinner

Near mid-afternoon, the trail begins to follow a small stream that feeds Donner Lake. By this time snow is almost two feet deep.

At this point, the heroes are within a mile and a half of the work camp, but there are no recent signs of the crew. As the posse follows the trail along the edge of the water, with a Notice roll a character hears a far-off howl. The echoes in the pass make it impossible to determine the direction.

A few minutes later have the players make Notice rolls again. Any cowpoke who makes one catches a glimpse of shadowy forms circling the party behind the tree line. Before the sharp-eyed hero can do anything but shout a warning, the posse is attacked by a pack of ravening wolves!

If no one notices the animals prior to the attack, the wolves attack with surprise. (Note: As these animals are under the influence of dark powers, they attack even heroes with the Beast Master Edge.)

There are two animals for each member of the posse and they divide themselves as evenly as possible amongst the posse. The wolves fight until three-quarters of their number are killed, at which point they retreat howling and yelping into the forest.

After the battle, any character with Survival or an appropriate Knowledge specialization (Biology, Zoology, etc.) or the Beast Master Edge knows that these wolves were well-fed. She also knows that ordinarily wolves do not attack humans unless they are starving. This does not require a roll of any sort.

## Wolves

These are large, obviously well-fed gray wolves. The light has a nasty habit of catching in their eyes and turning them into devilish red orbs.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Guts d6, Notice d10

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fleet Footed:** Wolves roll a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **Go for the Throat:** Wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
- **Size -1:** Wolves are relatively small.

## Hunger Pangs

About one hour after the wolf attack and by best guess an hour from the work camp, make a Spirit roll for each hero. Those who succeed begin to feel a little hungry. Those who fail suffer the effects of a day's starvation and gain a level of Fatigue (see *Savage Worlds*).

The heroes find that no matter how much food they consume, they are unable to sate the terrible cravings. Unfortunately, this starvation is a result of the emanations from



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the abomination in the pass. The only way to sate the hunger is to consume human flesh. Of course, since there's no reason for them to make this assumption yet, hopefully the characters don't attempt this remedy right away.

Continue the Spirit rolls every hour of game time. Once a character has failed he doesn't have to make any subsequent tests. However, he gains another Fatigue level every day until either the abomination is destroyed or he resorts to cannibalism. Exactly what happens to them at that point is up to you Marshal, but it should be *unpleasant*. After all, wendigos and ghouls start off with a single bite...

### Now That's Not Right!

Shortly after their stomachs begin growling, the heroes get an undeniable clue that something's very wrong in Donner Pass.

The trail enters a small clearing and at the far side, the posse can see a pair of rabbits hunched up, presumably nibbling at an exposed patch of grass. As they get closer, the rabbits apparently take no notice of the group, instead focusing on what now looks like a small clump of berries.

This is a good time to mention the fact that some fresh meat sounds quite appetizing, especially since everyone in the posse seems to have worked up a lumberjack-sized hunger. Taking a shot at the critters is easy, and with a successful Shooting roll a hero can drop one with a single shot from a firearm or bow.

However, the other rabbit doesn't bolt at the sound. Instead, it turns and begins nuzzling the fallen animal. Although this may seem like an oddly human display of grief, it's actually eating the dead rabbit and the "berries" are in fact a dead chipmunk's entrails on the snow!

This unnatural behavior is rather unsettling. When a hero catches a glimpse of it, a Guts check (+2) is required. Any character who has the Tenderfoot Hindrance is immune to this roll, as she has no idea how animals act in the wild and assumes it's normal...

If approached too closely, the remaining rabbit attacks. Feel free to play up the incident for as much amusement value as you want, Marshal. But even a ravenous bunny is, in the end, just a bunny and a single good hit puts it down.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE MAIN COURSE

The posse arrives at the work camp just before nightfall. Although snow is now beginning to fall, a full moon illuminates the cloud cover from behind, providing fair visibility in the clearing.

However, the forest surrounding the camp is dark and ominously silent. The crunch of the snow under the posse's boots seems unnaturally loud. While they are outside in an open space, the clearing feels oddly claustrophobic and threatening.

### The Work Camp

*Fear Level: 3*

The camp itself is a shambles. The tents have been torn down or ripped apart. The animals have been butchered and eaten. Tools and personal gear lie scattered around the camp. Smoldering ashes lie amid the ruins of a wagon.

With success on a Tracking roll, a cowpoke can tell that the wagon was used for a bonfire last night. Human tracks lead into and out of the surrounding woods from all directions. Some of these tracks are only a few hours old. A hero attempting to follow the tracks finds that they wander aimlessly through the woods for some distance and eventually end up back in the clearing.

If the heroes search the area more carefully, they find a few scattered piles of smaller bones. A posse member can identify the bones as human with either a Healing or Knowledge



(Medicine or Biology) roll. On a raise, she can tell the bones have been gnawed by some animal, although not what type.

A Notice roll turns up a few days supply of salted meat in the ruins of a tent.

Should the posse continue to search the ruins, a raise on a Notice roll uncovers a scrap of paper in a nearby tent. The paper is torn and badly scorched, but appears to be from a journal. All that can be made out on the paper is:

*Hunger grows each day. How long until relief? October 28th*

## Elias Arrives

After the posse has had time to search the site, have each player make a Notice roll. For those who fail, they're startled by an emaciated man who staggers into the camp. He mutters incoherently for a moment and then notices the characters.

His name is Elias Kingsley and he is quite mad. Elias was affected by the abomination's influence, but his mind snapped completely from its horror. Elias has cannibalistic tendencies, but only toward himself.

To make his plight even worse, Elias has a very low tolerance for pain. As a result, he spends a lot of time gazing wistfully at one of his legs or arms and drooling. Occasionally, he may lick his fingers or nibble at his palms, but he lacks the will to ever "take a bite."

Of course, Elias never explains this to the posse—he doesn't even understand his own situation. His actions should eventually give the heroes an idea, however.

## The "Others"

What Elias can tell the posse is that the "Others" are in the woods. He is referring to his fellow crew members, but he no longer thinks of them as such. He has avoided them by being clever, he claims.

If the heroes ask about the other work men, Elias says,

*T'weren't our fault, y'know. T'was the Thing from the cabin what did it. The Others is just hungry.*

Elias won't elaborate on who the "Others" are. He only repeats,

*Not you and not me, the Others are coming...and they're hungry.*

If the posse mentions the Donner party, Elias mutters,

*Them spooks tain't the Others. Oh, they don't like 'em, don't like 'em one bit.*

After this, he begins softly giggling and ignores the heroes, scrabbling off to the woods when they aren't watching. It's possible the posse may subdue or tie up Elias. If so, that's fine. He wails and cries, certain the group is going to fricassee him, and tries to get away at the slightest opportunity. He's weak and fragile-minded, though, so the heroes won't have a hard time keeping him secure.

This is a good time to remind the heroes of their own gnawing hunger pangs. Any hero examining his craving (with success on a Smarts roll) realizes what he desires is *human flesh*. This unsettling insight forces a Guts check.

A cowpoke making this realization is of course free to pass it on to the other posse members—who then have to make the same Guts check.

## Dinner Bells?

Shortly after they have had a chance to learn all useful information Elias knows, have each player make a Notice roll for their hero. Apply modifiers for hearing. Repeat the roll every couple of minutes until at least one cowpoke hears the sound.

Whoever succeeds hears a faint tinkling from the woods to the west. If any hero gets a raise on the roll, she hears a soft, deep whistling as well from the same direction. The posse is hearing the bottles hanging in front of



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Hastings' lair, a dilapidated cabin. The cabin lies about three-quarters of a mile northeast of the work camp.

A quick check of the camp perimeter finds a number of footprints leading to an old path just back in the woods a few yards, headed in the direction of the sounds.

## Attack!

About a half-mile from the camp, the posse comes across the ruins of a few cabins built by the Donner party. Read the following:

*The ruins are little more than a few logs outlining the former walls. The cabins were hurriedly built and had hide roofs. They have not weathered the years well. Booted footprints crisscross the area, but there are no signs of recent habitation.*

A search proves fruitless, as there is nothing here to find. After the characters have had a few moments to search the cabin, a few of the former workmen creep from the woods and attempt to ambush the posse. They have been shadowing the party since its departure from the campsite. Hunger finally forces them to attack.

The workers are now human in name only. Given over totally to madness, they are feral, wholly consumed with their desire for food.

They seek to surprise the posse, but failing that fall back on a good, old-fashioned bum rush. There is one cannibal, plus one more for each posse member. Fortunately for the heroes, only two have working firearms—the rest are armed with crude clubs.

## Cannibals

Their clothing is in tatters and they lack any facial expressions, save a vacant stare and slack jaw that occasionally dribbles saliva. Most have terrible cases of frostbite to which they seem totally oblivious.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

**Gear:** Club (Str+1d4) or double-barreled shotgun (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 1-3d6, RoF 2, Shots 2 ), and 15 shells.

## Hastings' Lair

*Fear Level:* 4

The snowfall has continued to increase since the posse's arrival at the work camp, and is now quite heavy. About one mile past the first cabins, the posse arrives at the monster's lair. At present, Hastings is out on his evening hunt.

Although the moon provides some diffuse light, the decaying one-room cabin is cloaked in the shadow of the trees. The cabin was built years before even the Donner party arrived in the area. In fact, it served as shelter for the Kesebergs, a family trapped with the Donners. Time has taken its toll on the small building. The porch has long since fallen, and the roof has several large holes in it.

## The Bottle Tree

In front of the cabin is a tree adorned with a number of bottles hanging from strings. This is the source of the tinkling the posse heard at the work camp.

With success on a Notice roll, anyone looking at the bottles knows that they are recent additions to the tree. Occasionally, a faint whistling sound can be heard. With a raise, a hero realizes there is no wind blowing when this occurs.

If they didn't hear Johnson's tale, with a Knowledge (Occult) roll a posse member knows that bottles often are hung from trees or porches in such a manner to capture spirits or ghosts. The Hastings abomination has placed them here to trap the angry ghosts of the Donner victims.



## Inside the Cabin

The interior is best described as a frozen abattoir. Anyone entering the cabin must make a Guts check.

Pieces of workmen are strewn about the cabin, tossed as if in a beastly frenzy. Portions of the roof and the remnants of primitive furniture litter the floor. If the posse has a light of some sort they find writing scrawled on the northern wall, clawed deeply into the wood in large crude strokes, that reads: "HUNGER."

## Digging for Clues

Make Notice rolls for any strong-stomached cowpokes who want to dig through the mess. Each roll requires 10 minutes game time. Allow the party 30 minutes to search the cabin (or three Notice rolls per hero). After this, Hastings arrives at the cabin. Each success and raise uncovers one of the items below.

- **Donner's Journal:** A badly worn copy of the book *The Immigrant's Guide to Oregon and California*, 1846, by Lansford Hastings. The badly worn book is lying among a pile of wood that was once a crude shelf. The inside cover identifies the book as "Property of George A. Donner." A careful examination (no roll necessary) reveals a bookmark in a section describing the Hastings Cutoff. Written in Donner's handwriting in the margin is a short phrase, "It was a trap."
- **Donner's Skull:** An old, yellowed skull. With success on a Knowledge (Medicine) roll, a character determines its owner has been dead for decades (30 years, to be exact—this is the skull of George Donner, which Hastings has kept as a trophy).
- **Hidden Compartment:** An odd loose board in the southwestern corner of the room. In a small compartment underneath the board are the remains of the journal of Lewis Keseberg. Keseberg was the last victim of the Donner party to be rescued. The journal is almost entirely moldy and decayed, but the last page is legible. Dated April 8th, 1847,

it is largely the indecipherable scribbling of a madman. However, one passage clearly states:

*Met a pale man in the woods today. He laughed at me and said we were his. I asked who he was, to which he replied, 'Don't you recognize me? You knew me by my old name, Lansford. I once was as you. Now I am far more.' I knew him then, and would have kilt him, save hunger had sapped my strength.*

## Here's Lansford!

Hastings, sensing the arrival of the posse in the area, has returned early from his nightly hunt. The monster was not totally unsuccessful before returning, for slung over its shoulder is the body of Kingsley, or another workman if the posse brought Kingsley along. It found him gibbering in the woods not long after the party left the camp.

The abomination is furious at the destruction of its cattle. It settles for no less than the death of every member of the posse.

## Don't Play with Your Food!

As he lumbers out of the shadowy forest, Hastings uses his Zombify Special Ability to raise minions from the bodies of the dead. He reanimates one for every two posse members—including Kingsley, if possible—as frozen dead (see page 13). Additionally, he creates one animated part (see page 13) for each member of the posse. Increase those numbers if you want a tougher challenge, Marshal.

Make a Guts check (–2) for any hero unlucky enough to witness this. Any hero still in the cabin sees the dismembered pieces begin to writhe and move toward the posse. Needless to say, this requires a Guts check as well.

## Breaking Bottles

Hastings is well aware of the danger the Donner ghosts pose to him. He immediately focuses on any hero who damages the bottle tree. There are seven bottles on the tree. It



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requires seven successful Shooting rolls with a rifle or pistol, or four with a shotgun, to break all the bottles.

A cowpoke trying to break them by hand can break one per action, as long as he's within reach of the tree. Thrown weapons follow the same rules as rifles or pistols.

As soon as all the bottles are broken, the ghosts are released. A pale green haze swirls from the shards of glass. Within the fog are the hollow eyed and emaciated faces of the Donner dead.

Hastings stares in horror as tendrils lash out toward him. Within moments he is totally enveloped within the haze. The specters begin to devour both Hastings' body and the manitou inhabiting it. When Hastings is destroyed, any zombies he raised or animated parts fall lifeless to the ground.



### Lansford Hastings

Hastings resembles a bloated, eight-foot-tall human. The manitou's essence has so filled his physical form that it is swollen almost to bursting. His skin is bluish white and cracked from the cold constantly

surrounding him. Dark blue lines outline his frozen veins. His teeth are uniformly pointed and even, while his lips are split in numerous places. His eyes are coal black save for tiny red sparks at the center. When he speaks it is in the manitou's voice, deep and rumbling, trailing off into the tinkling of breaking icicles.

**Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d12

**Skills:** Fighting d10, Intimidate d10, Stealth d8, Throwing d8, Tracking d8

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11

### Special Abilities:

- **Frozen Blast:** Range 8/16/32, Damage: 2d6. As an action, Hastings can summon blasts of faint windblown snow to buffet a single target. Transparent, skull-like shapes can be seen swirling in the snow.
- **Claws:** Str+1d6.
- **Invulnerability:** Lansford can be Incapacitated, but can't be destroyed permanently by any attack but his Weakness (see below).
- **Low Light Vision:** Hastings can see normally in anything but total darkness.
- **Parts Is Parts:** Hastings possesses the ability to animate portions of corpses killed by cannibals. Once per night, he can create 2d6 animated parts. Unless destroyed, these remain animate for the remainder of the night or until Hastings is killed.
- **Size +1:** Hastings is almost eight feet tall.
- **Unnatural Hardiness:** Although "alive," Lansford has several similarities to the undead thanks to his unholy connections – and unusual diet. He has +2 Toughness and +2 to recover from Shaken. Furthermore, he ignores 2 points of wound penalties. Finally, he is immune to poison and disease.
- **Zombify:** Once per night, Hastings can raise 1d6 frozen dead from the bodies of cannibals or of his victims. Unless destroyed, the undead persist for the remainder of the night or until Hastings is killed.





- **Weakness (Donner Party Ghosts):** Only the ghosts of the Donner party trapped in the bottle tree can permanently put Lansford down. Otherwise, he melts into the snow to rise again the next night.

## Frozen Dead

These escapees from the grave are blue-skinned from their frozen flesh and missing bite-size hunks of flesh in several places. The cold has frozen each of their faces into a rictus of death.

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

**Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

### Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** The frozen flesh is hard and resilient.
- **Claws:** Str+d4.
- **Fearless:** Frozen dead are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Immunity:** Frozen dead take only half damage from cold-based attacks.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to disease and poison.
- **Weakness (Head):** Attacks to a frozen dead's head inflict +2 damage.

## Animated Parts

Legs, hands, even an occasional head (don't ask how it moves)--the name pretty much says it all. These severed parts all have the same statistics, although the flavor of each (sorry) varies. After all, parts is parts!

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

**Skills:** Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Lockpicking d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Taunt d4

**Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

### Special Abilities:

- **Fear:** Anyone viewing an animated part must make a Fear check.
- **Fearless:** Animated parts are immune to Fear and Intimidation.
- **Flail/Bite/Kick:** Str damage.
- **Improved Dodge:** Attackers' Shooting and Throwing rolls are at -2, and the animated part adds +2 to evade area of effect weapons.
- **Size -2:** These are pieces of limbs after all.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to poison and disease.

## After-Dinner Mints

After defeating Hastings, posse members suffering from his monstrous influence immediately recover, provided they have not succumbed to the hunger. The heroes still have to eat to recover from starvation-based Fatigue, but now any food sates the hunger.

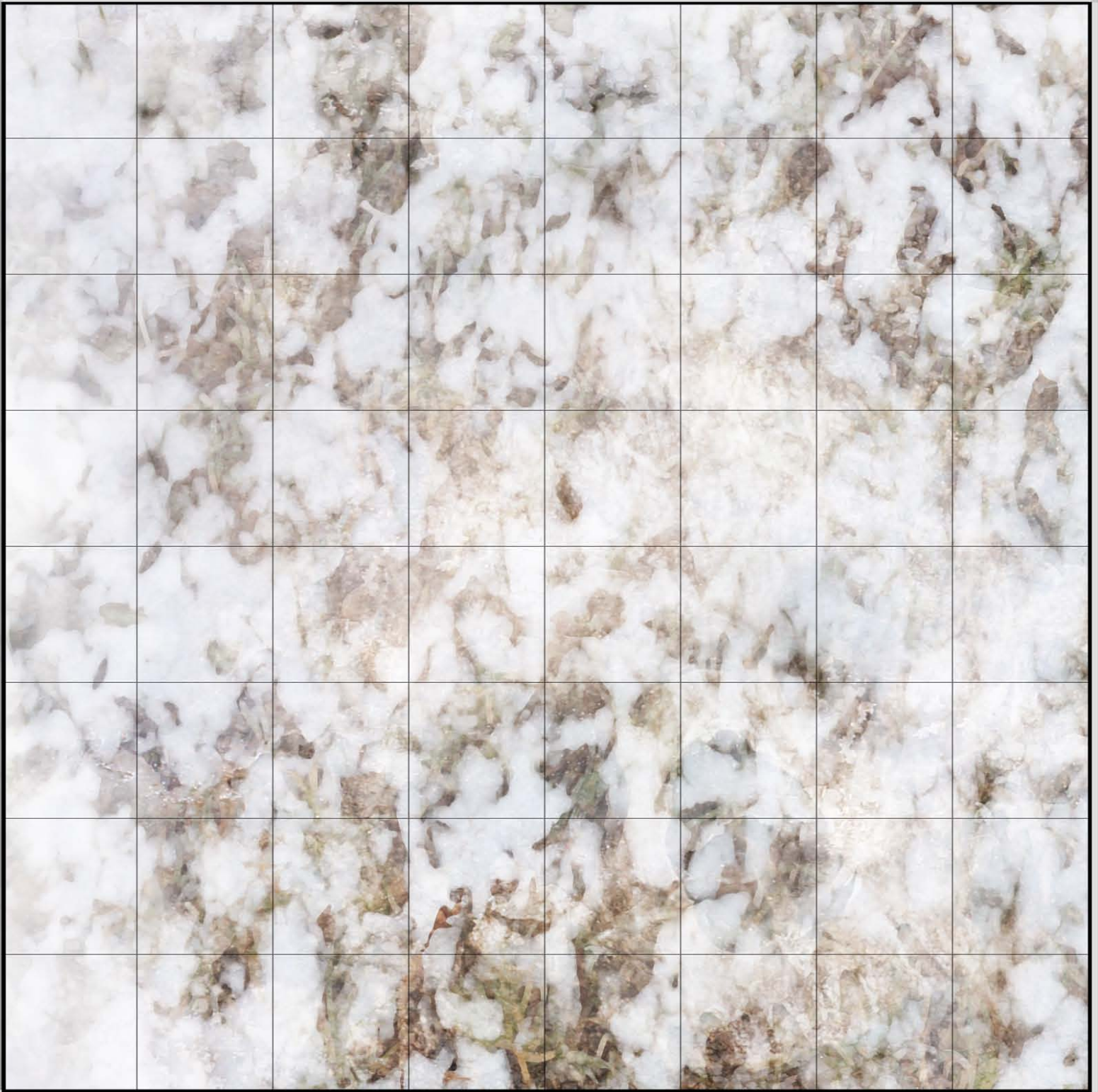
The storm abates, and within a few hours the sky clears.

The party can locate another five workmen with a day or two of searching the area around the lake. The men are quite unnerved and take a good deal of coaxing to come out from hiding. Any additional time spent uncovers nothing but half-eaten remains and bones.

The return to Virginia City is arduous but uneventful. The railroad representatives are quite upset at the events in Donner Pass, but grateful that the party was successful in eliminating the threat. They offer a \$100 bonus to each member, provided the posse swears to keep the events quiet. It would certainly complicate matters for the railroad if it had to explain why its workers were eating each other.

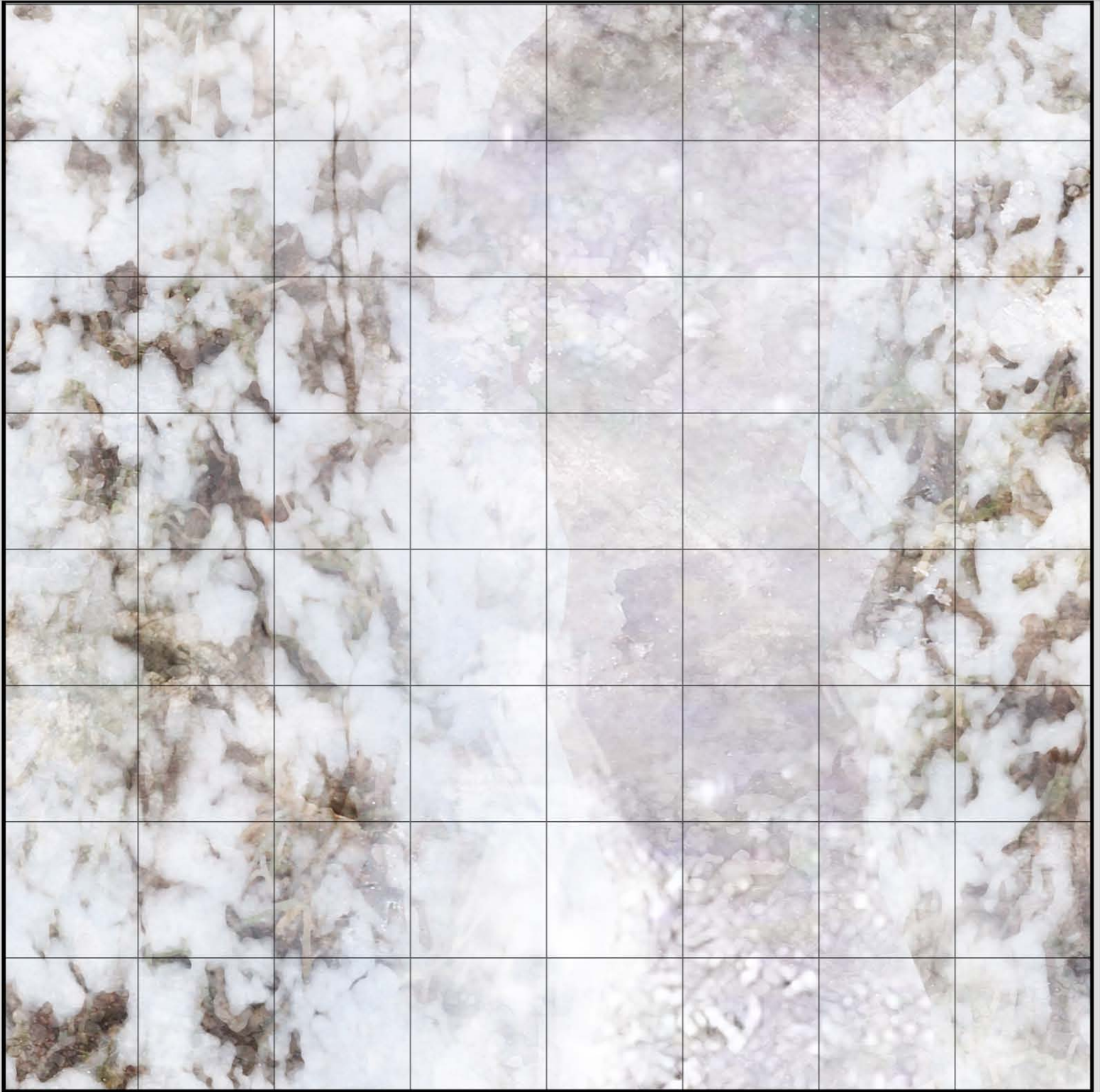
The Denver-Pacific has suffered a setback in its plans. However, as a number of the main competitors are interested in the progress of the Denver-Pacific, it's doubtful that the westward drive will be long delayed.





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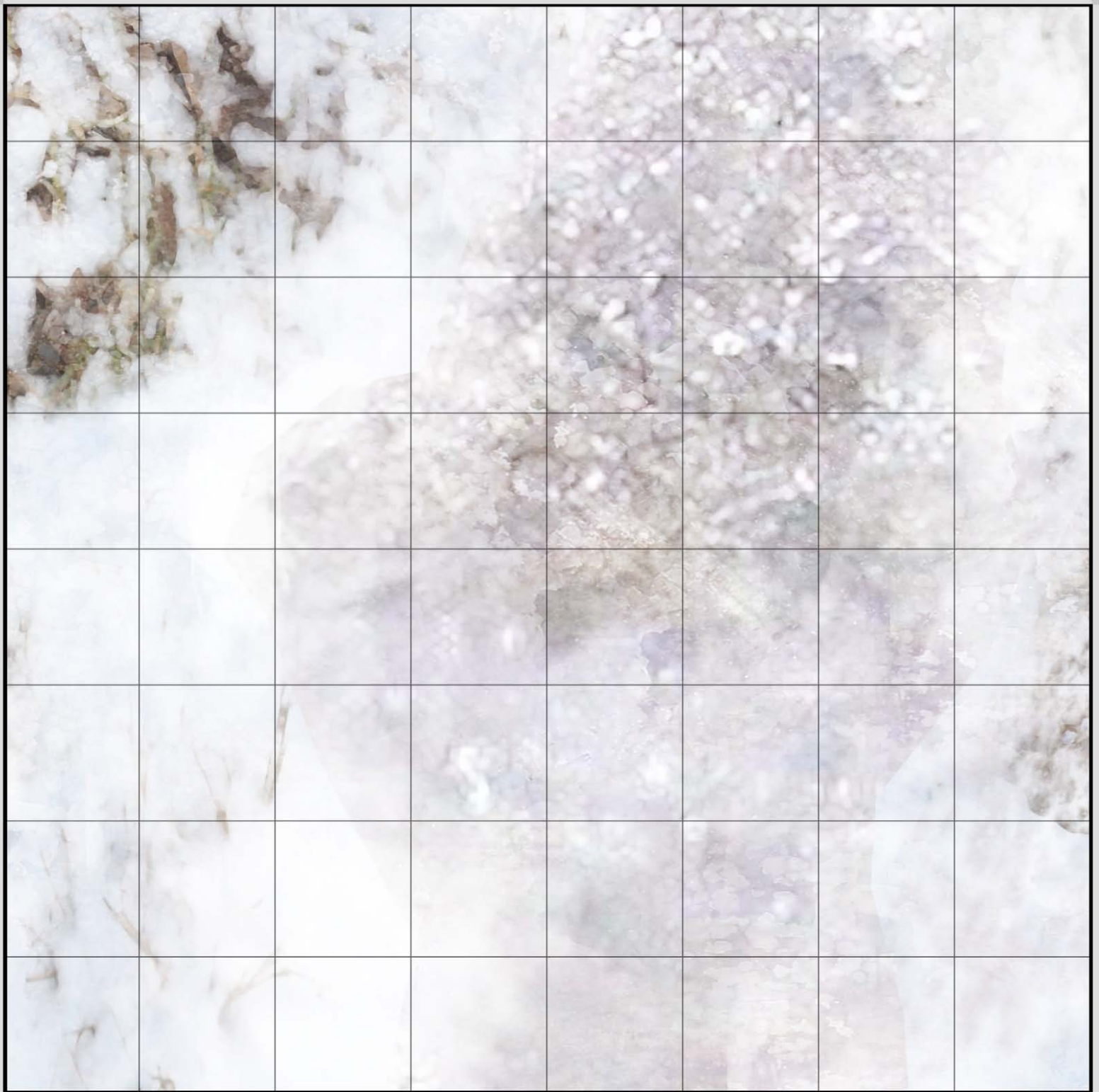
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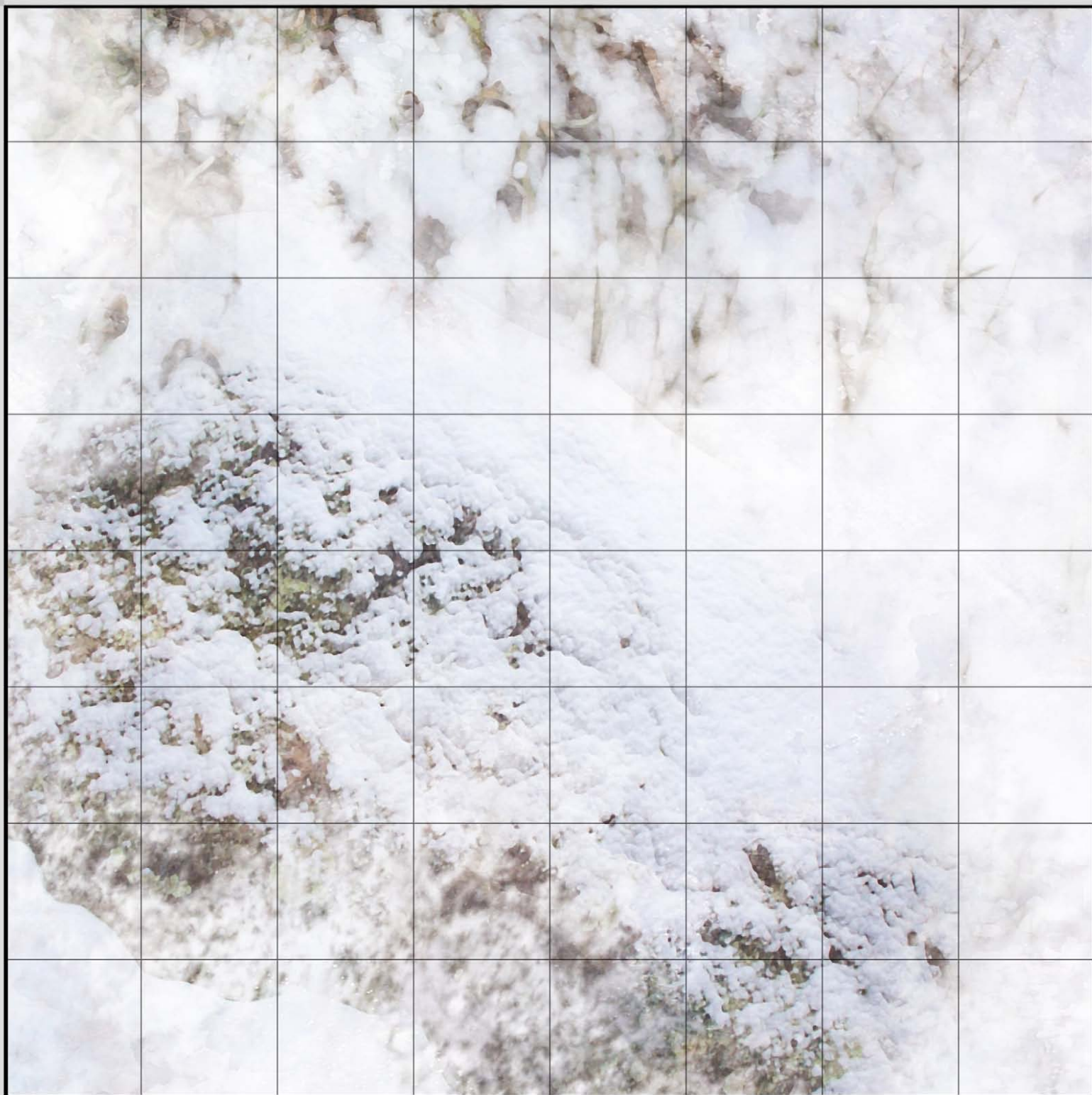
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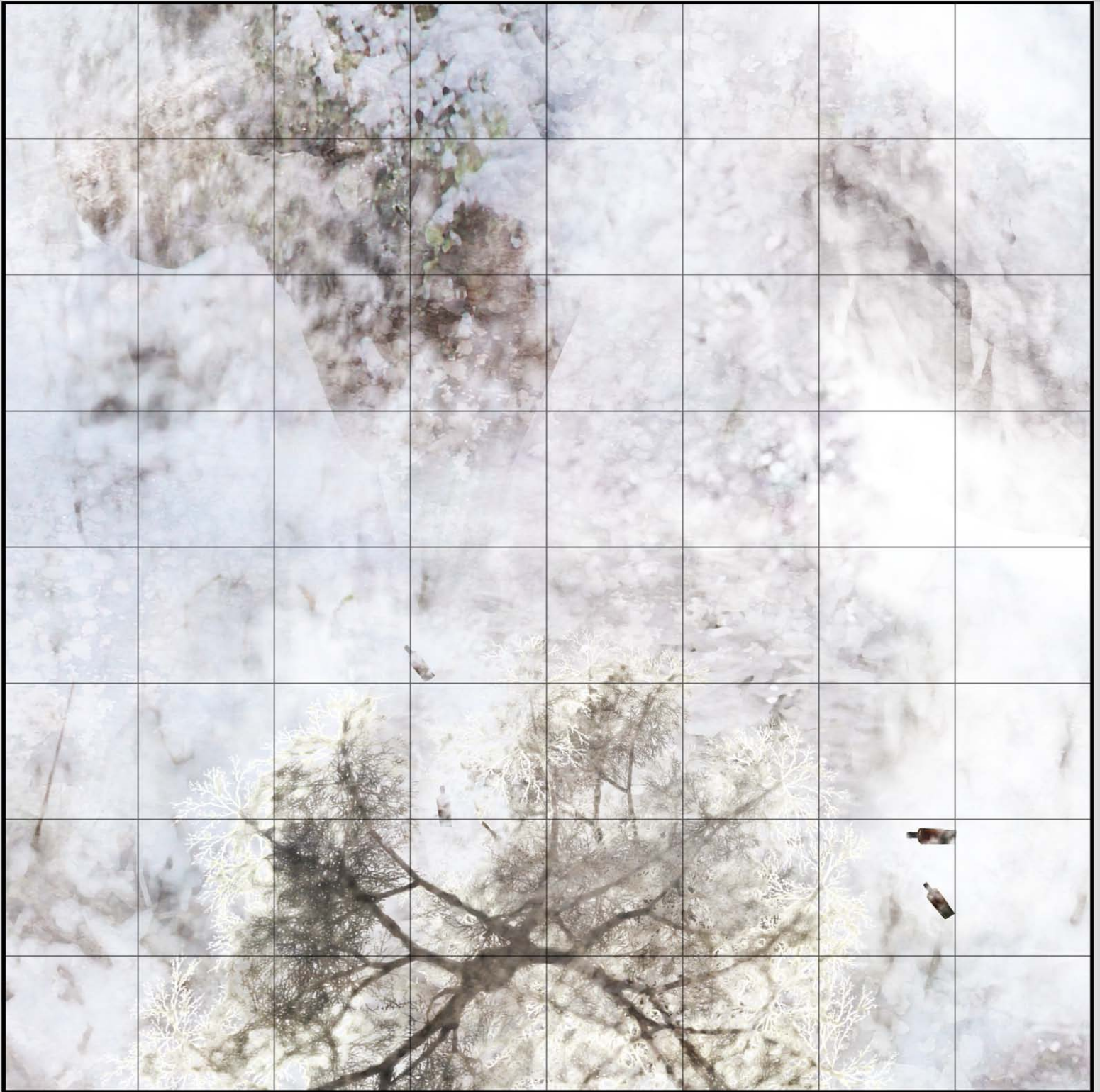
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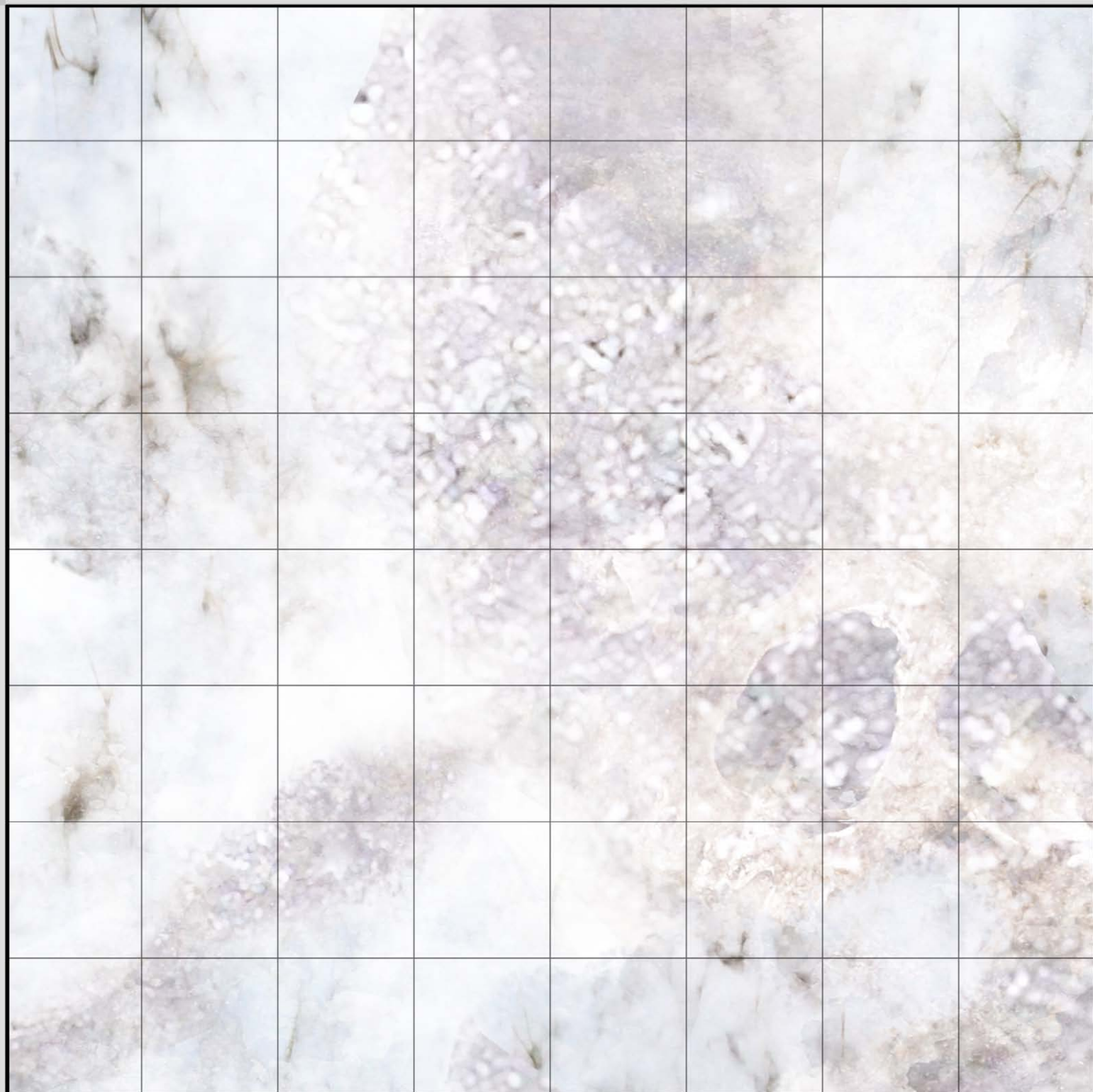
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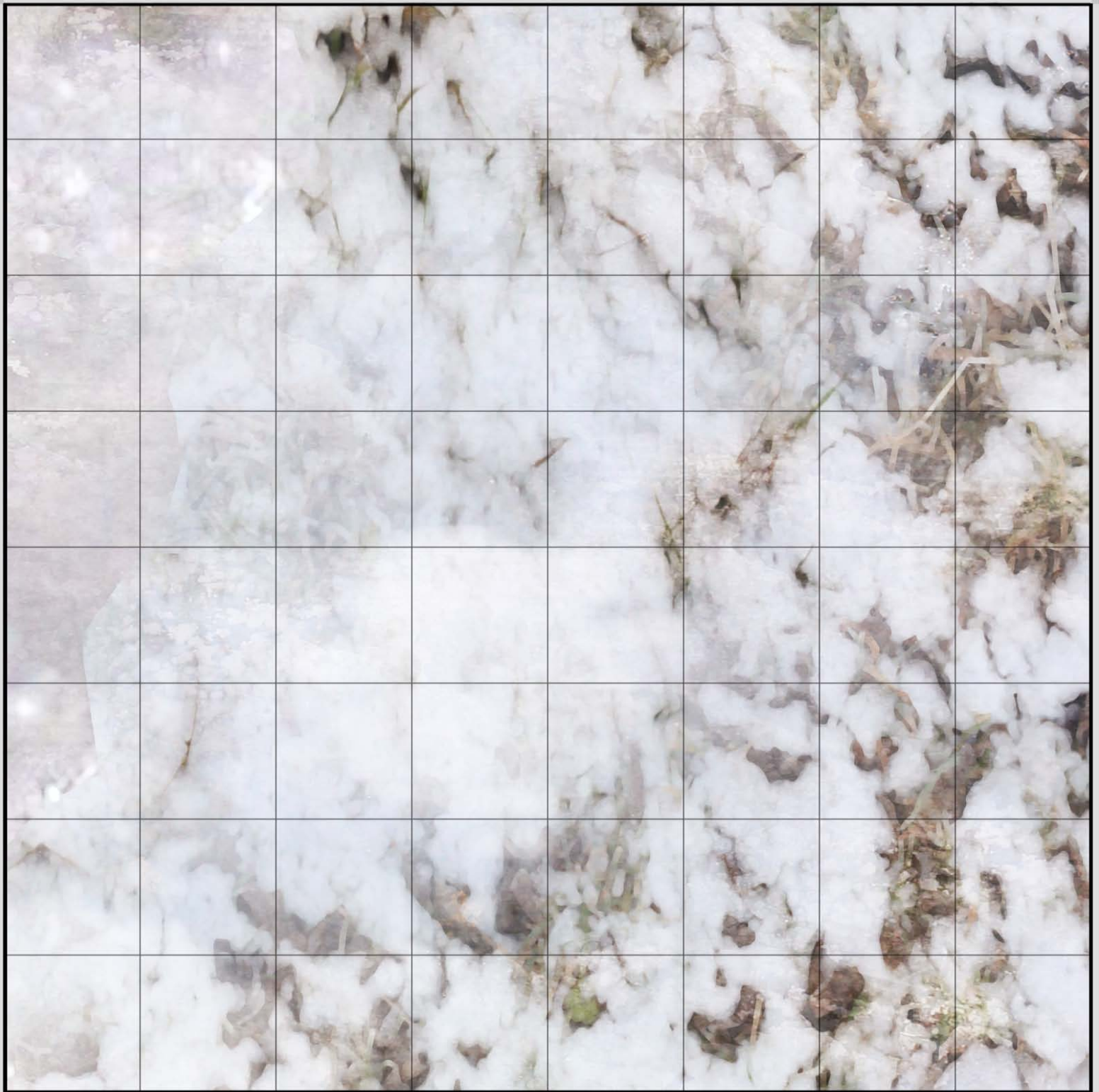
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