THERE'S SNOW PLACE LIKE HOME



Steal gifts. Fight reindeer.
Save the holidays!

by Jonathan & Beth Ball

GUILD

There's Snow Place Like Home



A Duet Holiday Adventure

Introduction: This wintery adventure is perfect for one-on-one play or small groups. The one-shot plays off several of our favorite holiday stories and traditions, and we hope it conjures magical memories and new experiences for you as well.

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A merry misadventure for duets or small groups of 4th level characters.

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Introduction

Adventure Background

The party is magically teleported into a snowy dreamscape. Upon arrival, a snowman with a corncob pipe and a top hat animates and explains that they have landed in a wondrous place called Cheerington, long ruled by a kindly Winter Eladrin with snow-white hair and a round belly. Every year in a celebration of generosity and joy called the Gifting, this jolly gentleman gives incredible mechanical gifts to all denizens that have been hand-crafted in his workshop by the skillful elves up the mountain. The town beneath the workshop is primarily populated by a race of inherently good gnomes.

However, disturbing changes have recently beset this idyllic scenario. A week ago, after the most recent Gifting, pillars of black smoke began spouting from the workshop and a thick globe of translucent ice encased the mountain. The only people with magic powerful enough to get through that much ice are the gnomes of Cheerington, but since the Gifting, they have been doing nothing but dreaming of sugar plums. Would the party be willing to awaken the gnomes and help restore the tranquility of this frosted fantasyland?

How to Use this Adventure

This adventure is set in a wintery demiplane called Cheerington. You can find several adventure hooks in this section to help your party transition from their current campaign into this wintery one-shot. The adventure picks up as the players enter the demiplane and closes with their escape.

This adventure assumes that you have access to the *Players Handbook* (PHB), the *Monster Manual* (MM), and the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG).

Text box example: Text that appears in a box like this may be read aloud, paraphrased, or omitted as you prefer. It is intended to help describe scenarios and environments.

Sidebar example

Text that appears in sidebars is optional and/or intended to provide extra background information or lore that may be helpful as you flesh out the adventure.

Creatures with stat blocks, magic items, or important tables appear in bold with reference information directly following in parentheses: **3x Goblins (MM 166)**. This means that the party encounters three goblins. The goblin stat block may be found in the *Monster Manual* on page 166.

For Groups or Duets

This adventure is designed to work with small groups or in duets with one DM and one player. In duets, if the PC is traveling alone, they may to bring along Sparkle the Snowman to fill out the adventuring party. Alternatively, they might also have access to additional support such as Garren from the *Crystaline Curse Trilogy* or an appropriately leveled Sidekick such as those found in the *Essentials Kit*. For more information and resources about playing this one-on-one style, please see dndduet.com.

Regardless of whether you are running this adventure for a group or as a duet, one of the most important roles of the DM is balancing and tweaking encounters to suit the PC. The combat should feel weighty, but fun. Some strategies include reducing or raising hit points or changing the number of combatants before the session begins. In-session, you should also feel free to make adjustments during combat.

Adventure Hooks

This adventure occurs in a magical demiplane of perpetual winter holiday cheer. You might push your players into this diversion in several ways.

- The party is browsing Xoblob's Shop in the Dock Ward of Waterdeep, looking for unique gifts for the upcoming Midwinter festivities when they are drawn to a beautiful crystalline snow globe that seemingly swirls all by itself. When they touch it, they disappear into Cheerington. (Consider placing the snow globe wherever your adventuring party might run into it!)
- The party is wandering in the wilderness when a snowstorm accosts them and causes them to lose their way. As they press onward, they find themselves surrounded by snow-covered evergreen trees in Cheerington.
- The party listens to a sagacious elderly story-teller spinning tales by the fire of a wonderful place. The speaker's descriptions of that magical locale are so immersive that the party can feel the cold nipping at their noses. Suddenly, they find themselves wading through hip-deep snow apparently in Cheerington.

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Synopsis

Once the player characters arrive in Cheerington, this adventure unfolds across three parts.

In Part 1: A Sleepy Town, the characters meet a magical construct of snow and song, who introduces them to the region and its problem. The nearby town has been bewitched into sleep and the ruler cannot be reached. A massive burning log lights the center of town where all the denizens are stuck in a deep sleep caused by magic emanating from tidy presents in each home.

In Part 2: Through the Forests and Through the Fields, the adventurers assist their new gnomish friends. Fresh from their long slumber, the gnomes are determined to assail the sealed workshop to demand answers from Count Cringle. However, the road is rife with danger and the party will need to navigate encounters with deranged reindeer and other hazards.

In Part 3: Workshop Assault, the adventurers assault Cringle's workshop and encounter a meeting between a conniving elf and a dirty devil named Belsnickel. Can the party defeat the devil, catch the crafty elf, and save the seasonal celebration?



Characters

Sparkle the Snowman
Sparkle is the adventure's quest-giver. He can serve as a guide to Cheerington or as a Sidekick, but he cannot leave the demiplane.

The Cheermeisters
Jolly, Twinkletoes, and Coldhammer are the three Cheermeisters that maintain the peace and tranquility of Cheerington. Since there are seldom problems in this peaceful town, the gnomes are free to pursue their other interests: toymaking, tavern-keeping, and conspiracy theorizing, respectively.

Pyotr Decorovich
Pyotr is an ambitious elf with awakening arcane powers. He's been straining against Cringle's prohibition against using arcane magic and has made a dastardly deal with a devil to get out from under the restrictions of the Winter Eladrin—a deal which he now regrets.

Belsnickel
Like most devils, this being delights in corrupting innocent souls. When it discovered its way into Cheerington through the bitterness growing in Pyotr's heart, Belsnickel was agog at the purity of the demiplane's peoples and salivated at the prospect of tainting their spirits.

Count Sebastian Cringle
For ages, Cringle has ruled over these lands in which little changes and generally everyone is jolly. The Count is the primary participant in a regional holiday called the Gifting during which he delivers small mechanical wonders to every citizen of Cheerington. Somehow, he manages to accomplish all of these surreptitious shipments in one night while everyone is asleep, a feat that never ceases to amaze and delight the populace.

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Part 1: A Sleepy Town

"Get it? It's the town, but in gingerbread! What could be better!…Why are you smiling like that?"

~overheard in Jolly's General Store

It is unclear how you arrived in this dense evergreen forest, but moments ago, you were not quite this cold, nor did copious amounts of snow whip around you in the frigid wind. Through the drifts, you catch the vague outline of a round humanoid figure.

Initially, the figure is stationary. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the being, made entirely of snow, is wearing an unseasonable top hat and has a corncob pipe.

If the characters approach, Sparkle the Snowman animates and greets the adventurers warmly. If they resist approaching the snowman, he follows them for a time to gauge their disposition before forcing an introduction.

Sparkle the Snowman
Lawful good snow construct
Jaunty black top hat, coal eyes, corncob pipe

Sparkle is thrilled that some capable-looking adventurers have arrived because he's got a major problem that only adventurers can help sort out. As he outlines the quest, Sparkle may relate the following information:

- The Gifting is a celebration in which people exchange presents. Everyone in Cheerington always gets a terrific mechanical gift from Cringle.
- Count Cringle is an incredible person, extremely nice, and probably the only person capable of getting the players back home.
- Count Cringle's workshop sits atop Mount Merryberry surrounded by a dangerous forest.
- When traveling in Cheerington, one should be careful not to feed the reindeer…or look at them…especially since they only eat flesh.
- The gnomes of Cheerington are safety-conscious by nature and devise all manner of home-defense measures.
- Cringle's not alone up there like some kind of hermit. He enjoys the companionship of a number of diminutive elves, chief among which is Pyotr who visits town sometimes.

For groups: Sparkle points the party in the direction of Cheerington, but is loath to approach too close to the town as an ever-burning Yule log throws a massive amount of heat in every direction.

For duets: If the PC is traveling alone, Sparkle offers to accompany them on their journey. He's been reluctant to investigate by himself, but the PC has emboldened him.

Cheerington

Two hours of travel by foot to the north brings the party to the idyllic town of Cheerington.

A number of quaint houses and shops surround a massive, brightly burning log in the middle of this cozy village nestled in a narrow valley. A tall mountain breaks the horizon behind the town. At its unnaturally spherical peak, an opaque white ball releases tendrils of black smoke.

The vast majority of the houses are empty and still. These are locked up tight but do contain peacefully sleeping gnomes. There are four locations of note. In each location, a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the deep snoring of the snoozing gnome(s) inside and clarifies their location.

What happened?

Shortly before the last Gifting Eve, Pyotr, with the aid of his devilish contact Belsnickel, overpowered Count Cringle and took over his workshop and began producing Corrupting Coal. Belsnickel wanted the gnomes of Cheerington to burn the magical coal in their hearths which would allow darkness into their hearts. Pyotr balked at the magnitude of this deed and sought to protect the gnomes by introducing a powerful sleeping enchantment to the process. Proximity to the Corrupting Coal, located inside the presents, puts its gnome addressee into a deep slumber.

Corrupting Coal

In each location, the party has to destroy, disable, or distance the malicious presents to restore the gnomes within. These gifts emanate an aura of enchantment magic to anyone who casts *detect magic* or who is proficient in Arcana and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The gifts affect only the individual that they are addressed to in a 30-foot-radius sphere. Casting *dispel magic* on the gifts renders them inert. While under the effects of the Corrupting Coal, a sleeping creature suffers terrible nightmares.

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Unless otherwise noted, the buildings in Cheerington share the following characteristics.

- Doors are made of wood reinforced with iron and have an AC of 10. Locked doors may be opened with either a successful DC 13 Thieves' Tools ability check, or a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.
- The ceilings are low at 5 feet.
- Floors are worked stone and often covered in thick rugs, while the walls are made of plaster, wood, and stone.

C1. Coldhammer's Abode

Garland festoons this low, steep-roofed house. Icicles hang precariously from the gables and doorway. A soft glow indicates a light burning behind the frosted windows.

The front door and windows are locked. Icicles fall on characters who touch the window or stand in front of the door. The character must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 piercing damage from the ice stakes.

Characters may heat the glass windows to peer inside where they find a cozy house with a single candle burning on a small table that illuminates a low bed. Bundled against the cold lies an older gnome whose moustache flutters with every deep breath. He seems to be asleep.

In the corner stands an evergreen tree, covered in baubles and foppery. Underneath the tree, three packages are neatly wrapped in brightly colored paper. One is addressed to "My Muffin" from "Bae" (inside is a suggestive sweater), another to "Mr. Coldhammer" from "Twinkletoes" with the note "thanks for the patronage these many years" (contains a bottle of mulled wine), and the third simply "to Coldhammer" (containing a large chunk of Corrupting Coal that pulsates magic).

Craig Coldhammer

Lawful neutral male gnome
Long, white, wispy moustache. Piercing blue eyes. Bulbous nose.

Coldhammer is a long-time critic of Count Cringle and a bit of a conspiracy theorist. When he wakes up, he reacts in panic to the presence of outsiders and accuses them of being assassins sent by Cringle. If placated or cowed with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) or Strength (Intimidation) check, he calms down enough to divulge the following information:

- He has long suspected Cringle of having some kind of ulterior motive to all of his jollity and gift-giving. (This is untrue, but he believes it.)
- He vaguely remembers railing against Cringle at Twinkletoe's Tavern the night of the Gifting and staggering home to bed, but that's all.
- He doesn't trust Cringle partly because the Count does not seem to have access to or use arcane magic.
- No one ages here and little changes.

After waking, he suggests the party rouse some other important gnomes so that they can figure out what to do. He can help with his neighbors, but the party should look after Twinkletoes and Jolly.



C2. Twinkletoe's Tavern

The only two-story building in town faces a broad courtyard, in the middle of which burns a massive log the size of a wagon. Though the fire is intense, warm, and bright, it never seems to diminish the log. The windows on the upper floor of the building are shuttered, and the large front doors are closed. Loud snoring can be heard within.

The front door is unlocked, and the backdoor hangs open. It bangs gently in the blustery wind. Investigating the door reveals claw marks. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the door has been torn asunder by a large animal.

Inside, sleeping behind the bar, is a **Polar Bear (MM 334)** who sought food inside the tavern. If the players enter quietly, have them make Dexterity (Stealth) checks contested by the bear's Wisdom (Perception). The bear rolls at disadvantage as he has been into Twinkletoe's Tasty Tipples. If the bear notices the players, it roars threateningly. A player must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom (Animal Handling)

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check to calm it or coax it out peacefully. If the players offer the bear food, the check is made with advantage.

Once the bear is dealt with, the party may find Twinkletoes upstairs in a deep magical slumber. She has several presents piled on her table from various patrons. All of the presents contain small trinkets of little value except for one addressed to "Ms. Twinkletoes" containing a large chunk of Corrupting Coal pulsating magic.

Tinsel Twinkletoes

Chaotic good female gnome
Short, spiky silvery hair, golden loop nose ring
Twinkletoes has a spunky, bright personality and lots of energy. Her cheeriness makes her a very popular figure in Cheerington. She will immediately befriend the party and make them welcome in her establishment in addition to offering the following information.

- Cringle has never been anything but kind to the gnomes.
- Cheerington rarely gets visitors, but when they do arrive, Cringle is the one who gets them back home.
- His right-hand elf, Pyotr Decorovich, comes down every now and then and talks to the locals. Lately, though, he's been more aloof.
- Mount Merryberry is easy to climb, but the forest is scary.
- Coldhammer keeps a key to his house underneath his barstool in case he forgets where his main set is.
- Twinkletoes, Jolly, and Coldhammer are the three Cheermeisters, and each play a role in steering the town. Mostly this consists of settling small interpersonal disputes.
- The last time Coldhammer was in her tavern, he was sloshed on peppermint schnapps and talking excitedly, first to Jolly about some discovery and then to everyone about how Cringle was treating Pyotr poorly. Coldhammer said of Pyotr, "He's one of us! And Cringle won't let him do anything."

The tavern offers hot cocoa, spiced apple cider, and mulled wine for 1 sp. or a cheery song. For their service to the town, Twinkletoes is happy to provide the adventurers with free accommodations. Each room sports a fireplace and hoodie-footie pajamas for guests. If amusing to the party, all the pajamas are ill-sized as they're made to Cringle's proportions: too short for tall adventurers, too wide for thin adventurers, etc.

C3. Jolly's General Store

The broad windows of this store backlight incredible magical inventions and toys. Dolls look side-to-side and a herd of little toy horses chase each other round-and-round. A toy adventurer wearing (describe a party member's attire) flies from one corner to the other and slides down a miniature zip-line before crawling back up again.

Peering through the window, characters can see a packed store crammed with all manner of practical and fun items. A giant gingerbread replica of the town sits in a place of privilege with many gingerbread gnomes partaking in all manner of winter activities. In the center of the gingerbread town, where the Everburning Log should be, is a present simply addressed to "Jolly".

Jolly takes security very seriously. Anyone crossing the threshold of the store after hours without Jolly's Key awakens **6x Gingerbread Men (Appendix B)** from the diorama. The gingerbread men disappear from the town model and hide amongst the densely-packed merchandise. Each **Gingerbread Man** picks a target and makes a Dexterity (Stealth) check contested by the character's Wisdom (Perception) in an attempt to Hide, and then attacks.

Action Economy

When playing adventures one-on-one, the number of actions each side can take per round does a lot to shape the encounter's difficulty level. If combat begins to drag, consider limiting the options for enemy combatants or having multiple combatants take their action and movement at once. Gauge what is fun in the moment, and if it is more enjoyable for an enemy to do something sub-optimal, trust your instincts.

In the backroom where Jolly does the majority of his work, a frightening cyclops toy gazes at the workbench. The eye in the cyclops toy gives off a faint magical aura to anyone proficient in Arcana. A *detect magic* spell reveals that they eyeball emits divination magic. Jolly doesn't know, but Pyotr Decoravich uses the toy to spy on Jolly's brilliance.

The backroom has one final door behind which the sleeping Jolly can be found cuddling with his presents, one of which contains Cringle's Corrupting Coal.

When Jolly awakens, they profusely apologize to the characters if they were harmed and offer them a 50% discount on anything in the store.

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Jolly

Lawful good gnome
Rosy-cheeked, button-nosed, clean-shaven, a shock of purple in otherwise white hair
Jolly is a powerful magic-user, but especially enjoys small figurines. They made a breakthrough a few days before the Gifting about a way magic could be used to duplicate an item. Jolly wrote the process out in their notes but, alas, their notebook is gone!

- The theft is especially upsetting since Jolly left his buddy Myopia the Cyclops doll to watch over it. Jolly received Myopia in the most recent Gifting one week ago.
- Jolly really wants the notes back as replicating the process of Arcane Duplication would be nigh impossible. It was really complicated and relied on the unique magical properties of Cheerington itself.
- Jolly is impressed with Cringle and the elves' ability to make such wondrous toys and inventions without magic. The only magical elf they've ever run into is Pyotr, who seems sad of late.

In addition to adventuring gear **(PHB 150)** Jolly also sells the following items:

Item	Cost
Jingling Stocking Cap (disadvantage on Decterity [Stealth] checks)	5 sp
My Little Doppel (action figure that poses and changes to look like its owner)	5 gp
Perma-Candle of the Seasons (Appendix C)	50 gp
Stocking of Holding (Appendix C)	3 gp

C4. Cheerington Abode

This house has one floor, four windows, and one locked door. Snow sits heavily on the roof.

The majority of the homes in Cheerington contain little more than a sleeping gnome family with Corrupting Coal presents addressed to the denizens.



Developments

With the Cheermeisters freed, the three town leaders deliberate about the situation. Jolly is pretty sure this is a misunderstanding and wants to figure out what is really going on from the source. Twinkletoes thinks it may have just been an accident and that the hilarious gag gift of coal was magically tainted somehow. Coldhammer is ready to scale Mount Merryberry and demand answers. With two of the three Cheermeisters agreeing that they need to talk to Cringle (and the fact that Cringle is the only route by which the characters can leave the Cheerington demiplane) the gnomes hatch a plan.

The gnomes huddle together and begin to confer. Snatches of conversation rise above the crackling of the Everburning Log. 'We'll never make it through the forest without protection.' The gnomes look meaningfully at you.

The gnomes explain that they'll also need a way to keep warm through the forest and to get through the thick ice at the top of the mountain. Unless the players have a better idea, the gnomes suggest using the Everburning Log to get through the icy shell that surrounds the top of Mount Merryberry and Castle Cringle. However, the forest is dangerous and they will be defenseless while focusing their magic on moving the log. They need help getting there and getting to the bottom of things. Can the adventuring party help?

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Part 2: Through the Forest and Through the Fields…

Dashing through the snow,
Running as fast as they can,
Hungry for the gnomes,
But they'd settle for some Man…
~Traditional Cheerington song warning children about the region's reindeer

Channeling their arcane power, the three Cheermeisters hold out their hands and blasts of red, green, and gold energy extend from their fingertips, levitating the Everburning Log a few feet off the ground.

Creeping Cold

Venturing more than 100 feet away from the Everburning Log results in exposure to the forest's Creeping Cold. For each hour of exposure during travel, failure on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw causes one level of exhaustion.

If the characters are interested, there are a number of things they might learn from the Cheermeisters during downtime or on the journey to Mount Merryberry.

- This land has always been coated in winter, but they prefer it that way here. Besides, there's no use wishing it any other way.
- Things don't usually change in Cheerington. In fact, it hasn't been since Count Cringle took over about a thousand Giftings ago that there was a shake-up.
- Everyone enjoys this stability. Pretty much everyone. Pyotr, the foreman at Cringle's, has seemed increasingly discontented of late. He often vents into his drink that Cringle doesn't "see the bigger picture."

The gnomes use the **Acolyte (MM 342)** stat block with the following racial bonuses: They are Small and can move through an ally's space one size larger without it being difficult terrain.



The gnomes move the log at a normal walking speed. It takes a day and a half of travel to get through the wood and up the mountain with the log. At some point, the gnomes and the party need to camp. Once before the "Nose for Trouble" encounter at camp and once after, roll on the random encounters table below. Do not repeat encounters.

D4	Encounter
1	The party encounters a tall, beautiful pine tree festooned with strands of brightly colored ribbon and twinkling lights. A silver and gold star crowns the top of the festive fir. Something shiny glints in the light at the base. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a number of humanoid bones under the tree, blending in with the snow. Unfortunately, **4x Will-o-Wisps (MM 301)** have made their home in the boughs and attack anyone who gets within 15 feet of the tree. One of the skeletons is wearing a silver bracelet worth 20 gp.
2	The forest suddenly opens into a clearing in which one hundred snowmen stand. No two of them are the same. As the players move through the clearing, they have the unshakable feeling that the snowmen are watching them. Have the party roll a Wisdom check DC 15. On a fail, the eerie clearing inflicts one effect from the short-term madness table **(DMG 259)**. One a success, the party realizes the snowmen are harmless, but the creepiness remains.
3	The party sees a recently slain moose, its red blood not yet frozen in the snow. The moose fell prey to **2x Yeti (MM 305)**, one of which is a juvenile with 34 (3d10+18) hit points. The yetis attempt to stalk the party and stealthily attack from the rear.
4	Roll initiative for the party. Along the trail, someone has hung clumps of mistletoe. The adventuring party, Jolly, Coldhammer, and Twinkletoes are overwhelmed with the urge to kiss one another. All creatures who can see must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be enamored with the person behind them in initiative order. The mistletoe has the same effect as a **Philter of Love (DMG 184)**.

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A Nose For Trouble

The party stops to rest. Even though the gnomes are nervous about sleeping in the forest, they're also tired, and their magical reserves are dwindling. However, they're hopeful that the light and warmth of the Everburning Log will be enough to keep the Rabid Reindeer away. They're not.

The gnomes look exhausted as night falls in the forest. After you find a suitable place to camp, the gnomes prepare hot cider and bring out brightly decorated cookies. The Everburning Log glows faithfully in the darkness.

Determine how the evening watch runs. On the second watch, a chill runs down the watcher's spine as a stiff wind blows. Ask for a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they hear rustling in the treetops. The Rabid Reindeer of the Wood are on the attack.

Flying in from multiple directions, **4x Rabid Reindeer (Appendix B)** assail the party with the goal of incapacitating as many as possible and dragging them off to their lair to eat. After two rounds, an ominous red light pierces the sky as an additional **Rabid Reindeer** with the Red Nose Variant arrives on the scene.

A rescue mission may be undertaken to recover anyone stolen by the reindeer. It is clear that any reindeer absconding with players or NPCs is headed toward Mount Merryberry. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check allows players to track the route via fumit or dropped items. Inside, in addition to any reindeer that fled, the party finds the stolen persons surrounded by a dozen or so juvenile and baby reindeer. These are just learning to hunt and feed and do not pose a threat to anyone armed and capable.



Developments

After winding their way to the tip top of Mount Merryberry with the Everburning Log, the party finally encounters the massive, icy globe. Working together, the gnomes push the log into the ice wall, boring a large tunnel through the barrier.

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Part 3: The Devil's in the Details

"Oh, so he's like Cringle? Just dirtier and worse?"
"No! He's much better! No one fears Cringle the way that all fear Belsnickel."
~Exchange in the new cells below Castle Cringle

Falling ash taints the beauty of the castle before you. It drifts down from three large smokestacks the protrude out of the long, low building on the eastern side. The black and gray smudge taints the glistening snow, and a dense smog slowly gathers, growing darker across the ice-globe ceiling overhead.

Location Crawls

This section of the adventure lays out the factory and Castle Cringle room-by-room rather than in a particular order to allow characters maximum flexibility. Some players enjoy exploration more than others. If your player becomes stuck or frustrated in the "dungeon crawl," allow the DMPC or sidekick, such as Sparkle the Snowman, to guide.

The front entrance to the castle can only be opened by raising the portcullis inside. The party may gain castle access via the factory, and the upper floors can be accessed by characters who can fly or climb. A large evergreen stands between the castle and the factory. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to climb the tree and jump onto the wall overlooking area C1.

The Factory

The front doors to the factory are open as no one expects visitors from the outside to get through the ice.

F1. Foyer

Beside the doorway to F2, an imposing portrait of a thin, narrow-faced elf with bright green eyes hangs at a focal point inside this room. In the portrait's background, gnomes travel on a conveyor belt into a smoking factory and sacks of gold come out.

The door to F2 is magical and locked. When approached, an arcane face appears over the surface and addresses the adventurers in a sharp, staccato voice: "Which is best? To give or to receive?"

If the players answer, "to receive," the door opens. If they answer with anything else, the door says, "Well, I've got something to give you!" and extends two arms out as if for a hug. The door is a **Mimic (MM 220)**.

Either by admittance or defeating the door, the players gain entry to F2.

F2. Packaging

The door opens onto a walkway that winds around the outside walls and overlooks an impressive assembly line. Dull clumps of Corrupted Coal zip from an adjacent room down conveyor belts. 6 grim-faced, thin elves **(Commoner MM 345)** are chained by the ankle to their stations around the room. They drop lumps of coal into boxes before meticulously wrapping them in brightly colored paper.

4x Imps (MM 76) oversee the packaging room and prod any elves that falter or slow with sharp forks. The imps challenge anyone they notice, but are primarily occupied tormenting the once-cheerful elves. They make Wisdom (Perception) checks with disadvantage. The noise of rattling conveyor belts prevents sound from this room from reaching F3. If a fight breaks out, the imps attempt to flee to F3.

On the lower floor to the west, a hall leads in the direction of Castle Cringle. On the walkway to the north, a door leads to Production in F3.

F3. Production

In this room, the original chunk of Corrupting Coal that Belsnickel brought Pyotr is infinitely replicated using Jolly's Arcane Duplication Apparatus. The operation is overseen by a **Bearded Devil (MM 70)** who attacks any intruders it notices. If the devil is anticipating the party, he writes their name on a lump of Corrupting Coal, forcing that character to succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or fall into a magical slumber while the Corrupting Coal is within a 30-foot-radius sphere of the character. The devil only has time to afflict one character in this manner.

The Arcane Duplication Apparatus is very fragile. It has an AC of 5, 10hp, and immunity to poison or psychic damage.

A player who attempts to use the Apparatus to duplicate a non-magical item must succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check and place said item on the pedestal the original chunk of Corrupting Coal rested on.

A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a divot in the western wall of this room. It is a false wall that leads to a secret passageway into Castle Cringle (Area C5).

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Castle Cringle

C1. Courtyard

A thick, defensive wall surrounds this open courtyard paved with intricate cobbles. Snow angels embedded in piles of snow slowly melt in the heat that emanates from the factory next door. On the western side of the courtyard, a large fir adorned with colorful baubles and strands of red berries stretches skyward, a verdant contrast to the gathering gray around it.

Unless otherwise alerted and responding to clear danger, Belsnickel and Pyotr are in the courtyard.

If the players approach stealthily, they hear a heated exchange. Belsnickel has discovered Pyotr's tampering with the presents to protect the gnomes.

If the players are discovered or approach loudly, Belsnickel engages the players. Pyotr fights for 2 rounds before fleeing into area C2 if possible and then down into C7, leaving the way partially open in his haste. If he makes it to C7, he may hold Cringle hostage.

Pyotr Decoravich

Lawful evil male elf
Covered in soot, sharp features, jet-black hair
Pyotr uses the **Cult Fanatic (MM 345)** stat block with the following changes: He has *sleep* prepared as a 1st level spell. Over the course of many years, Pyotr slowly rose through the ranks of toy-making elves, dutifully assisting Count Cringle in delivering joy every Gifting. He had some natural arcane talent and offered to use and develop those talents to serve the workshop, but Cringle vehemently refused without explanation. This rejection planted seeds of bitterness which grew to rage as Pyotr decided to supplant Cringle and strengthen his awakening arcane power.

Pyotr wanted to expand his arcane abilities and Belsnickel offered to teach him in return for stopping Cringle from spreading cheer. Things evolved when Belsnickel wanted Pyotr to give Corrupting Coal. Wanting to please his new patron, but not wanting to harm the denizens of Cheerington, he added in a powerful sleeping component to protect them from Belsnickel's corruption.

Pyotr may divulge the following pieces of information.

- He tried, for years, to get Cringle to understand, to get Cringle to not limit his potential. But he refused to listen. He refused to explain.
- He despises his peers and views them as willfully blind servitors of tradition. Just because things have always been a certain way, does not mean they shouldn't change!
- He is afraid of the devilish powers he has aligned himself with and now seeks to mitigate, as much as possible, the damage he has done.
- He does not know about the awful dreams the Corrupting Coal inflicted upon the gnomes he was trying to help.

If Pyotr is slain, his dying words are, "I'm…so sorry. I only wanted to learn…" He is wearing a gold ring worth 10 gp. In his pouch, he carries his fiendish contract with Belsnickel. A character succeeding on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a loophole releasing Pyotr from the contract if he performs, "a significant act of reconciliation with Party B (Cringle)."

Belnsickel

Lawful evil devil
Long, black-brown beard, button nose, long robes made of skins from various woodland critters
Belsnickel was attracted to the corruption growing in Pyotr's heart. In addition to his soul, when he offered the elf a way to grow in arcane knowledge and usurp his long-time superior, the devil also gained access to a whole new demiplane of hitherto untainted souls.

The devil won't allow any impediment to stand between him and his new source of corruptible souls. If Pyotr, Cringle, or (most likely) the characters stand against him, he attempts to destroy them.

If slain, the devil disappears in a flash of fire, leaving behind the stench of brimstone and a pouch containing four gemstones worth 50gp each and a bottle of **Universal Solvent (DMG 209)**.

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C2. Receiving Room

An uncomfortable, humid heat squats in this large room. On the north wall, two mounted reindeer heads flank a velvet and gold throne that overlooks an expansive reception room. Their eyes follow you.

Engaging with a terrifying monster they cobbled together using the broken bits of numerous gingerbread men into stitched together with icing are **4x Imps (MM 76)** who just animated, but then lost control of **1x Gingerbread Man (Appendix B)** with the following changes: it has 30 (12d4) hp, it is Small, and it has the ability to make one melee attack for each of its three arms.

The throne drops down into the secret Protoyping Lab (area C7). A character that succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check sees sooty fingerprints revealing a small door on the right arm of the throne. Behind the small door is a keypad on which a character may play a tune. Gray fingerprints mark four of the keys. Encourage the players to hum what tunes they try to play. At the DM's discretion, or with a successful DC 12 Charisma (Performance) check, they get it right and the throne slides aside to reveal a chute that leads to C7.

C3. Study

Rich, thick carpet and numerous thank you cards with hand-drawn illustrations decorate this small, warm room.

On the table is a plate of 1d6+4 cookies and a glass of milk. The cookies restore hit points equal to a **potion of healing (DMG 188)** but the milk has long ago soured and tastes of lemon.

C4. Master Bedroom

A character investigating this room automatically finds a thick diary under the mattress. The diary contains information about how Cringle dabbled with the arcane, but then swore off that power after trapping the entire region in a demiplane. More recent entries express dismay and frustration at Pyotr's growing interest in magic.

Inside Cringle's diary are several lines of sheet music that can be used on the keypad on the throne.

C5. Storage

This disappointing room is empty… except for a crumb that's even too small for a mouse.

There is nothing in this room.

C6. Kitchen

The smell of festive spices and sugar hangs in the air. Heaps of delectable treats and goodies lie along the cluttered countertops. An enormous, intricate replica of the factory and castle stands on the kitchen island.

There are no **Gingerbread Men** in this area, but it could be fun if the characters believe they are about to be swarmed.

C7. Protoyping Lab/Dungeons

Sweeping down a curling metallic slide, you land in a brightly-lit, sterile white room. Along immaculate, tidy shelves sit brightly colored, complicated mechanical toys.

On the table is a bottle labeled "Universal Solvent". A character with a passive Perception of 14 or greater, or proficiency in Arcana, notices that something seems off and the label is peeling. This is actually a vial of acid that deals 2d6 acid damage to anything it is applied to. Amongst the toys is **Cringle's Curious**

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Condensed Catapult (Appendix C). Beside this item is a bag of 1000 Ball Bearings and a note that reads: "Dangerous! Deadly! Must reduce power!"

Count Cringle is glued to the back wall of his Prototyping Lab with a liberal application of **Sovereign Glue (DMG 200)**. When he sees the characters, he cries out for help.

Count Cringle

Neutral good male eladrin
Long, white beard, twinkling eyes, rosy cheeks, jolly belly

Count Cringle is lord of these lands in part because of his arcane tampering and experimentation with powers beyond his control that trapped the region in a demiplane. After the catastrophe, from which it seems that neither he nor any of the original denizens can escape, he swore off magic.

Cringle attempts to conceal this information from the characters. If they found out about Cringle's past on their earlier search, or picked up clues from Pyotr, they may ask Cringle pointedly about Cheerington's history. If not, a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that he's hiding something if he's questioned about the region or his rule.

Developments

The adventure concludes with the defeat of Belsnickel and a decision for the characters to make.

Pyotr is Slain

Cringle laments his treatment of Pyotr and explains that it came from a place of fear. He blames himself for Pyotr's fate and swears to learn from his mistakes. He thanks the adventurers for restoring a sense of normalcy to his unusual domain.

Pyotr is Spared

The characters are treated to a tenuous reunion between apprentice and his master. Cringle is relieved to reunite with his long-time friend and warmly offers his forgiveness. Pyotr is reluctant at first to reconcile, but a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces him to come around and apologize. On a failure, Pyotr goes into self-imposed exile.

Rewards

Cringle asks the adventurers if there is anything that he can do for them. He has at his disposal a sack 300 gp and offers a neatly wrapped present containing an item for each of the characters. As the DM, you should decide what gift would be most appropriate for your adventurers, but if you would like to use a random table, **Magic Item Table C** (DMG 145) offers rewards that would be suitable for the conclusion of this adventure.

Return

Finally, when the characters have defeated Belsnickel, Pyotr's fate has been resolved, and the characters are ready to go, Count Cringle produces a curious orb containing a diorama of the location from which the characters left. He instructs the characters to all touch the orb, click their heels, and recite the magic words in unison: "There's Snow Place Like Home."



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Appendix A: Maps

Cheerington



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Count Cringle's Castle



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Appendix B: Stat Blocks

Belsnickel

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (magical hide armor)
Hit Points 71 (13d8 + 13)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +4, Wis +5
Skills Deception +2, Insight +5, Perception +5
Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Clockwork Toy Swarm (Recharge 6). As an action, the devil drops a sack of 1d6+1 clockwork toys in a 10-ft. radius. The clockwork toys use the **Homunculus (MM 188)** stat block.

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The devil makes two attacks: one with its nettle whip and one with its wooden bowl.

Nettle Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Wooden Bowl. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Ashy Step (Recharge 5-6). The devil can disappear in a cloud of ash and teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space that it can see. Any creature within 5 feet must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn.



Gingerbread Man

Tiny construct (cookie), unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 10 (4d4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +0, Stealth +4
Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning, fire
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Gingerbread
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

Candy Cane Pike. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Gumdrop Button. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 10/40 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) poison damage.

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Rabid Reindeer

Large beast, neutral evil

Armor Class 14 natural armor)
Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)
Speed 40 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +6
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Reindeer
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Charge. If the reindeer moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target, either on the ground or flying, and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Flyby. The reindeer doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one prone creature. *Hit*: 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Variant: Red Nose

The red nose variant reindeer is its carnivorous pack's leader, marked by its distinctive, glowing red nose. A Red Nosed Reindeer has a challenge rating of 2 (450 XP) and the following trait.

Radiant Red Nose. The nose glows in a 30-foot-radius sphere. Any non-reindeer creature who enters the nose glow's area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there is engulfed in ghostly flames that cause searing pain and must make a Constitution saving throw. The creature takes 2d10 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



Sparkle the Snowman

Medium construct (snowman), neutral good

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +2
Damage Immunities cold
Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Elvish, Gnomish
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Carrot Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Coal Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +2 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Protection. Sparkle imposes disadvantage on the attack roll of a creature within 5 feet of it whose target isn't the snowman. Sparkle must be able to see the attacker.

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Appendix C: Magic Items



Box of Baubles

Wondrous item, uncommon
Inside this intricately painted wooden box, 1d6 + 4 colorful, translucent glass orbs each hold a tiny windup toy. Each toy is unique, and they embody the spirit of the various adventuring classes.

The windup toys have the stats of a **Homunculus (MM 188)** with the following variant traits:
The toys are mechanical constructs and follow the commands of whoever takes an action to throw them and smash the glass orb. The toys play joyous holiday tunes for up to 10 minutes. Non-cheery characters and those of neutral or evil alignments must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or suffer a headache for 1d4 hours.

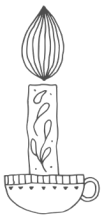
Cringle's Curious Condensed Catapult

Weapon (+1 light crossbow), uncommon
This hand crossbow still needs tinkering. Within 20 ft., it throws ball bearings that explode and deal 1d8 + 1 piercing damage plus 1d6 fire damage. Between 20 and 80 ft, the ball bearings deal 1d4 bludgeoning damage. They cannot reach beyond 80 feet.



Mug of Heating and Cooling

Wondrous item, uncommon
Once per day, this bright red mug can adjust and perfectly maintain the temperature of a beverage for 1d4 hours. This ability resets at dawn.



Perma-Candle of the Seasons

Wondrous item, rare
This beautiful candle has four layers, one for each season, with seasonal flora embedded inside the wax. The candle's wax never diminshes, and it magically transitions throughout the year so that its environment's current season is on top.

The candle casts dim light and its seasonal scent in a 30-foot-radius sphere. Any creature who rolls hit die while in the candle's aura can roll hit die one size larger than normal. For example, a character who normally rolls a d8 instead rolls a d10.



Stocking of Holding

Wondrous item, rare
This magical giant sock can hold an infinite number of sweets. If something other than a small toy or sweet is placed inside the sock, it falls out.

Terrifying Tinsel

Wondrous item, rare
This 8-ft.-long piece of tinsel can wrap around a non-magical, inanimate object and pull it closer, similar to the *thorn whip* spell. However, the tinsel instantly cuts through the object, and one foot of the tinsel is destroyed in the process.

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