

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

THE OLD GOD'S RETURN

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A LEVEL 1 ADVENTURE
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THE OLD GOD'S RETURN



The Old God's Return is an adventure designed for six 1st-level characters and can be completed in a single session. The adventure explores a sinister spreading sickness, a mysterious floating iceberg, and the ancient forest god found within the frigid, flying mountain. At its climax, *The Old God's Return* pits the forces of fire against the power of ice, with the PCs serving as the champions of heat and light, gifted with supernatural abilities granted to them by the Lord of Flames. *The Old God's Return* draws influences from the numerous rites practiced around the northern hemisphere during the winter solstice, making it the perfect adventure to play when the weather turns cold, the cider is mulled, and a roaring fire burns in the hearth.

BACKGROUND

In the days when the world was young, a great kingdom of Man stretched across the northern latitudes. The northern pole was not gripped by ice then, but a temperate, verdant region that housed numerous cities, lush farmlands, and bastions of learning. This Hyperborean empire was a paradise, and the residents dedicated themselves to the betterment of mind, body, and spirit. Numerous magics were birthed in this hothouse of knowledge, and Man's wisdom grew in great leaps.

But doom comes to all paradises, and the Hyperboreans were no exception. The world changed and temperatures fell across the polar region, plunging the empire into turmoil. As snow fell upon the once-green fields and glaciers emerged from the mountains, the people fled their homeland, scattering across the earth. These refugees would become the forefathers of a score of legendary fallen and forgotten cultures.

In their exodus, the Hyperboreans left many magic treasures behind. Entombed within the snow and ice, these abandoned wonders slept, their powers faded, but not extinguished. As the millennia passed, many of the ruins of old Hyperborea were razed by glaciers' slow grinding, but a handful, safely preserved within the ice, endured. These relics were carried south to the verge of the frigid oceans. As the glaciers broke off into icebergs, many of the ruins, still encased within the ice, drifted into the sea. But not all of Hyperborea's legacies drowned in the deep. Occasionally, once an iceberg was free of the glacier's hold, the slumbering magics within sprung to life, producing weird effects. Our tale concerns one such oddity.

Trapped in one glacier was a small ziggurat, the former home of a forgotten sorcerer-priest. A portion of the ziggurat rose above the ice, providing meager sanctuary against the cold and driving snow. And in the Forlorn North, any refuge, no matter how slight, draws inhabitants.

The entity that took up residence within this ruin was once a powerful forest god of the taiga, a being known to his worshipers as Tjaptar. In his prime, Tjaptar was appeased by regular sacrifices of children, drawing their spirits into his own to

appease his hunger and empower his divinity. But widespread war and starvation deprived Tjaptar of many of his worshipers, and with their eradication, the forest god's power waned immensely. Tjaptar, now a shadow of his once-mighty self, roamed the north, forgotten and wrathful. In his wandering, Tjaptar discovered the ziggurat and claimed it as his own. There, surrounded by but a handful of his supernatural agents, the old, weak deity awaited his end. Only his lasting anger at humanity's neglect allowed him to endure as long as he had.

As the years passed, the glacier approached the ocean's edge, but Tjaptar took no notice of the slow journey. The glacier ultimately reached the sea and the portion of the great ice containing Tjaptar's abode broke free. Released from the bulk of the glacier, the ziggurat's sleeping magic sprang to life. The former god and his servants watched in wonder as the iceberg fell, not into the waters, but rose into the air above it. Held aloft by the ruin's now-active magic, the iceberg became a floating, sparkling island cast adrift on the winds. Tjaptar, roused from his emotional torpor by the incident, stared down on the world below as the cold gusts slowly blew the iceberg south.

The forests and mountains of the taiga soon gave way to villages and farmlands, and the forest god's ire at humanity grew with each reminder of its presence. His anger rekindled, Tjaptar vowed to make mankind remember why they once venerated and feared him. As his floating sanctum drifts south, Tjaptar has left a string of horrors in his wake. When night falls, his agents descend to the ground and creep into homes to harvest the essence of children. With each reaping, a comatose child is left in his bed, his lips blue with cold and his skin blackened by exposure. These harvests have renewed Tjaptar's power, but it is still a pale shadow of his former might. Nevertheless, unless the entity's predations are stopped, he will soon achieve even greater power than he possessed in the northern wilds.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The Old God's Return begins in a rural village on the night of the winter solstice. This settlement may be the party's home base or simply a stop-over on their trek elsewhere. In any case, it being the evening of the solstice, a great celebration is underway and the merriment has attracted the PCs' interest and perhaps participation.

If the judge is using *The Old God's Return* as part of an ongoing campaign, he may want to introduce rumors of a strange sickness affecting children in the area prior to beginning this adventure. The symptoms of the illness are a comatose state, blackened patches of skin, and blue-black lips appearing in the afflicted. So far, the disease seems only to affect children of ages ten or less and is immune to treatment (including magical). The first instances of the illness appeared in the area just days ago, but cases have appeared further north for several weeks. The illness path exactly mirrors Tjaptar's path southwards. Additional inquiries into the disease unearth rumors of a great glittering shape being spotted in the sky prior to the outbreaks. So far, the village the adventure begins in has been spared, but this soon changes.

If the adventure is a being run as a one-shot scenario, the PCs automatically know of the illness and have heard the rumors of the odd shape floating through the sky.

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
Event One	C	5 Tontuu
Hyperborian Iceberg	C	1 Tontuu
1-1	C	3 Tontuu
2-2	C/T	Joulbok, 5 Tontuu, pit trap
3-1	C	Demonic Ice Guardian
3-2	T	Sapping Sap
3-4	C	Tjaptar, 1 Tontuu, 1 Joulbok

EVENT ONE: THE ATTACK



Read or paraphrase the following: *You stand in the village square, surrounded by laughter, cheering, and raucous celebration. It is the night of the winter solstice and the day's holy rites have ended. The last of the village's selected livestock have been slaughtered in preparation for the hard months ahead, and the proper veneration to the gods are complete. Now, all that remains is to breach the kegs of mead and beer and dance around the great bonfires. Presiding over the sacred blazes is an elderly human priest of Loptir, Lord of Flames. The cleric is dressed in his scarlet vestments, a crown of brass circling his head.*

The fires' heat is greatly welcome, for the past weeks have been abysmally cold. Despite the frigid temperature, no snow has fallen and the air seems almost unnaturally dry for this time of year. It is as if the world is holding back its moisture in preparation for a great blizzard yet to come.

Suddenly, the merriment is shattered by an agonized scream! A villager bursts from her home, her child wrapped in her arms. At her heels is a short, gnarled creature with a glittering knife in its hand. Out of the shadows surrounding the village square rush several more of these small humanoids. The light of the bonfires glitters on their bared steel and murder shines in their eyes. The square erupts in chaos as the menaces fall upon the villagers and people flee for their lives.

The assailants are Tontuu, servants of Tjaptar. For weeks they've been harvesting children's spirits for their master, but this has done little to quench their bloodlust. The Tontuu entered the village to drain more spirits, but the presence of so many humans and the sounds of merriment have driven them to appease their penchant for murder. Against orders, they attack the residents of the village.

There are more than a dozen Tontuu in the village, but most occupy themselves

with chasing down and attacking fleeing villagers. A handful of the more daring creatures rush towards the party's location, leaving only five for the PCs to deal with. Four engage the party while the fifth pursues the fleeing mother. If the one chasing the woman is not dealt with in two rounds, it slays its quarry before turning on the PCs.

Tontuu (5): Init +1; Atk knife +2 melee (1d3+2) or frigid touch +2 melee (heat drain); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP frigid touch siphons heat and vitality from victim (DC 8 Fort save or 1 point of temporary Stamina damage), immune to cold/double damage from fire; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Tontuu are gnarled, gnome-like humanoids standing 4' tall.

A Tontuu's skin is icy blue in color and their hair and beards are dirty white

lichen. Pallid green moss clings over their eyes in place of eyebrows. Their small forms conceal immense strength (Strength 16).

During the fight, one or more of the party glimpses the following:

As the battle rages in the village, a great shadow falls upon you, blocking out the silvery moonlight. A quick glance above you reveals an astounding sight. Passing through the air to the west of the village is a glittering mass of ice that momentarily obscures the moon. This hill-sized monstrosity, the angled shape of ruined structures protruding from its top, moves slowly southwards. Several other villagers cry out in alarm and point towards the gleaming oddity, but the battle around you quickly draws your attention back to more lethal matters.

The PCs should be able to overcome the Tontuu, but if bad luck turns the battle against them, the judge can have the priest of Loptir or a brave villager or two come to their aid. Once they defeat their opponents, the village grows quiet. Six villagers have died in the attack, but not before eight more of the Tontuu were



slain. As the survivors assemble around the bonfires, the PCs (or an NPC) notice the child that was carried from the home. The boy is six years old and in a comatose state. Patches of blackened skin mar his flesh, and his lips are deep blue. He shows all symptoms of the mysterious illness sweeping through the region. Should the PCs think to check, the blackened patches are identical in size to a Tontuu's fingerprints. Give the PCs a few moments to investigate and speculate, and then move on to Event Two.

EVENT TWO: THE CHAMPIONS OF FIRE



It is clear that the strange sickness has come to the village and that the Tontuu are connected to its spreading. This, combined with the sighting of the iceberg, lead to the conclusion that the three are intertwined and are a threat to be defeated.

The priest of Loptir approaches the party, a flaming brand in his hand. With a soft voice that resembles the sizzling of flames, the priest speaks:

"An evil is upon us, one that bears with it the chilling touch of dread. These foul things we've defeated here, on this night that marks the great conflict between the brilliance and life-giving heat of fire and the cold, life-stealing force of ice, serve malevolent powers. Loptir, the Lord of Flames, demands this frigid foe be brought low.

"You have shown yourself worthy of bearing Loptir's blessing. Of all gathered here this night, only you demonstrated the mettle required by He of the Flickering Flames to be worthy champions of the forces of heat. Will you take up the sacred fire and quench this icy evil that threatens our land?"

If the party readily agrees, the priest calls upon the divine assistance of Loptir. Streamers of fire slither from his burning torch to caress each PC's forehead. They feel their bodies turn pleasantly warm as if they consumed a draught of potent liquor on a cold night. Their eyes briefly crackle and they become preternaturally aware of their new abilities (see sidebar).

Should the PCs demand payment for their efforts, the village elders agree to award them 20 gp each from the settlement's limited funds should they locate and defeat what is causing the sickness and responsible for the attack. Also, due to their less-than-altruistic demands, Loptir's blessing is slightly less potent. When gifted with *sovereign fire*, the PC have only 8 points to draw upon rather than 10.

After the blessing is bestowed, each character is provided with a horse from the village stable to pursue the iceberg. The mounts are expected to be returned to their rightful owners if the party is successful.

SOVEREIGN FIRE



optir's blessing imbues the recipient with a spark of divine flame, known as *sovereign fire*. This internal flame allows him to produce supernatural effects by drawing upon the god's power. This blessing grants the PC a pool of 10 *sovereign fire* points (8 if they demanded payment) he can spend to enact mystical effects as detailed below. Each recipient of the blessing is automatically aware of what effects they can create with *sovereign fire* and how much of the imbued power is exhausted to do so. This divine-given knowledge allows the players to keep track of their own power reserves and best plan how to expend it. The possible effects of *sovereign fire* and their costs are as follows:

Protection from Cold: A PC may spend up to three points of *sovereign fire* to gain a bonus on a single save against cold-based effects. Each point spent adds +1 to the saving throw. Like Luck, spending *sovereign fire* in this manner can be done before or after the saving throw roll is made.

Empower Fire-based Magic: An elf or wizard can use *sovereign fire* to power any flame-based spell. Doing so is identical to spellburning, except each point is deducted from the PC's *sovereign fire* pool instead of his ability score(s). *Sovereign fire* can be used in conjunction with spellburn on fire-based magic to further amplify results.

Ignite Weapon: By spending one point of *sovereign fire*, the PC causes his weapon to burst into flames for a single combat round. While alight, the weapon gains a +1 to hit and a +1 to damage. If used against cold-based creatures, the damage bonus increases to +3. This effect can be extended to subsequent rounds by spending additional *sovereign fire* points.

Searing Touch: The PC can generate brief, intense heat from his hand to deal damage or melt ice and snow at the cost of one point of *sovereign fire*. The effect lasts one round, but subsequent *sovereign fire* points can prolong the effect. When used in combat, a successful attack does 1d6+class level damage (modified by Strength). If used to melt ice and snow, the heat cuts through up to 6" of ice and 1' of snow per round.

Form of Fire: By spending five *sovereign fire* points, the PC causes his body to briefly transform into living flame. While in flame form, the character can fly at a speed of 60', is immune to fire damage, and gains the benefits of the "searing touch" power as above. However, the character suffers double damage from cold-based attacks while in this form. The transformation lasts two rounds. Any object worn or held by the PC is absorbed by his fiery body, returning to normal and unharmed when the transformation ends.

THE HYPERBOREAN ICEBERG



The drifting mass of ice measures 400' in height and 300' in diameter. It has a roughly inverted teardrop shape, and its sides are jagged expanses of ice spotted with pieces of rocky rubble and debris. The iceberg maintains a steady altitude of 100' above the ground and drifts directly southwards at a speed of 40'. Along the eastern side of the iceberg is a long, twisting set of stairs hewn from the ice. The Tontuu use rope ladders affixed to the bottom of the stairs to ascend and descend from the iceberg, drawing the ladders back up when not needed. By the time the attack on the village ends, the iceberg is a half-mile south of the village and drifting further.

With their provided mounts, the PCs can swiftly catch up to the drifting ice, but reaching it is another matter. The flame form power of *sovereign fire* is the simplest means of doing so, either by having the entire party take flight to reach the stairs or by sending a single member up to lower the rope ladders. The players may concoct other schemes as well.

At the bottom of the stairs is a single Tontuu charged with keeping an eye out for his fellows' return and lowering the ladders. Grown complacent with success, the guard is half-asleep and there's a 4 in 6 chance of surprising him unless the party makes a spectacle of themselves approaching the iceberg or preparing to ascend to the staircase. If unsurprised, the Tontuu climbs the stairs to warn his allies in area 1-1, fighting only as a last resort. He moves at half speed up the twisting, icy stairs.

Tontuu (1): Init +1; Atk javelins (3) +2 ranged (1d6+2) or frigid touch +2 melee (heat drain); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP frigid touch siphons heat and vitality from victim (DC 8 Fort save or 1 point of temporary Stamina damage), immune to cold/double damage from fire; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

THE ZIGGURAT



This ruin is fashioned from massive blocks of expertly-worked stone. This master craftsmanship has allowed it to survive the extremes of ice and time as well as it has. The interior ceilings are 20' tall and each level is separated by 10' of solid stone supported by columns and braces. Unless otherwise stated, there is no artificial light inside the ziggurat.

Area 1-1—The Courtyard: *Tumbled, haphazardly positioned debris protrudes from the ice, forming a roughly rectangular courtyard on a plateau of glittering frost. Breaking through the hard rime is a squat, rectangular structure, its walls and roof weathered by ice and time. Windowless, the structure's only distinguishing feature is a deep alcove set into its southern face. Several trails of footprints crisscross the courtyard, leading from gaps in the court's accidental walls to the shadowy alcove.*

A trio of Tontuu keeps watch over the entrance to the ziggurat. They are partially concealed by the alcove's gloom and a DC 8 Intelligence check is necessary to spot the guards. The Tontuu are anticipating their comrades' return, but are likely surprised by the PCs' unexpected appearance. There is a 3 in 6 chance the guards are surprised.



Tontuu (3): Init +1; Atk knife +2 melee (1d3+2) or javelins (3) +2 ranged (1d6+2) or frigid touch +2 melee (heat drain); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP frigid touch siphons heat and vitality from victim (DC 8 Fort save or 1 point of temporary Stamina damage), immune to cold/ double damage from fire; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.

Should the Tontuu notice the PCs, they hurl javelins from the safety of the alcove. Any character moving faster than half his normal speed across the ice to close with the small fiends must make a DC 7 Ref save to avoid slipping and falling prone.

Area 1-2—Upper Tier: *Beyond the broken stone doors is a small chamber. Rime covers the exposed stone, and snow dusts the floor. Strangely, numerous small evergreen trees sprout in clusters from the bare stone, forming curious, sparse groves about the room. The air is here is cold and rich with the scent of pine needles. A cracked spiral stair case descends through the floor to places unknown.*

CROSS-SECTION





□ = 10'

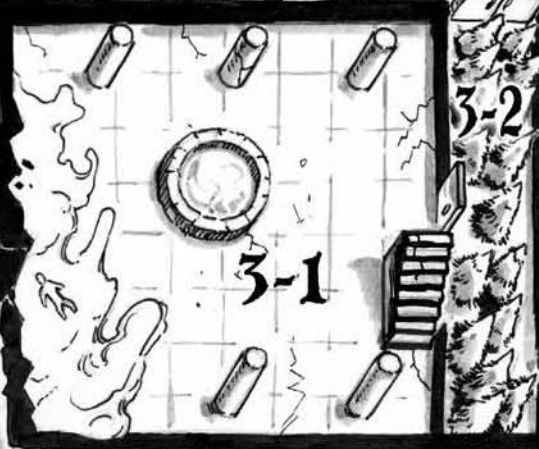
⊙ = JOULBOK

⊙ = TONTUJ

TJAPTAR

SNOW
COVERED
HOLE

DOWN TO 3-3



UPTO
2-2

The pine trees are scrawny and young, measuring 3' in height or less. They are a byproduct of Tjaptar's returning power and radiate a faint magical aura if sought for. They are otherwise normal trees. The stairs descend to area 2-1 below.

Area 2-1—The Whispering Grove: *At the bottom of the stairs is a larger and warmer chamber than the one above. The stone floor's flagstones are uneven and askew, as if they've suffered great stress and upheaval. The walls bear strange hieroglyphics of unknown origin. The smell of evergreens hangs in the air like heady incense. Numerous pine trees, larger and more numerous than above, grow out of the stone, and some have spindly trunks that almost seem humanoid in shape. Several of the boughs rustle, but there is no draft present to stir them.*

Like those in area 1-2, the trees here are a result of Tjaptar's growing vigor, but have another unearthly purpose. Twenty of the trees contain the essences of children stolen by the Tontuu but yet untapped by the ancient god. These souls give the trees a vague, childlike shape, and the spirits trapped inside sense the party's presence. These trees begin to rustle and faint whispering voices can be heard.

The voices are childlike, but ghostly. PCs straining to listen can hear fragmented words. Some of the phrases heard are:

- "He is old, so old. Older than even grammy and grampa."
- "...scary head and mean eyes...dark forest monster..."
- "Hatred and hurt...he drinks from us."
- "Tjaptar...won't let us go...chains of horn..."
- "...angry. Angry he's been forgotten...pain until everyone remembers and fears the forest again."

Tjaptar senses the souls' agitation, warning him of interlopers. The rustling and whispering of the trees also alerts Tjaptar's servants in area 2-2 and they prepare to repel intruders.

Although the spirit-containing trees are unsettling, they aren't a threat. If the party makes a concentrated effort to communicate with the whispers, one grows stronger and more lucid than the rest. This voice is that of Romu, a 10-year-old girl whose spirit was taken several days ago. Romu cannot directly assist the party, but can provide more detailed information about Tjaptar's history and weakness (see Background above and area 3-4 for specifics). She stresses that the forest spirit's antlers imprison the souls he's harvested and this crown of horns must be shattered to free herself and the others.

Should the party destroy one of the trees with either weapons or fire, they hear a loud scream, followed by an innocent whimper that swiftly fades. Somewhere, a comatose child dies, his soul destroyed. Lawful PCs participating in the destruction lose 1 Luck point. If the PC is a cleric of a generally good deity, he also gains 2 points of disfavor.

The hieroglyphics on the walls are Hyperborean in origin. A *comprehend languages* spell decrypts them as various magical symbols pertaining to archaic elements and magical charms. These ancient writings have no bearing on the adventure, but the judge can use them to introduce forgotten lore, provide clues to another possible adventure site, or otherwise incorporate them into the campaign if desired.

Two doors exit the room, but are obscured by the trees. PCs searching the chamber easily discover them.

Area 2-2—All Fall Down: *Broken columns and upheaved flagstones have turned this large chamber into a shambles. The walls are cracked in several places, spilling ice into the room. Frost clings to the shattered stone debris littering the room and a layer of icy snow covers the uneven floor. Moments after you enter, a large humanoid form rises up from amongst the rubble at the far end of the room. Its body is covered in woolly, black hair and it bears the head of a fearsome, horned ram. Whirling a length of chain in defiance at your intrusion, it snorts and bleats with anger!*

The goat-headed creature is a Joulbok, a brutish monster that serves as one of Tjap-tar's captains. Five Tontuu hide behind the rubble here as well, waiting for their leader's plan to come to fruition before attacking.

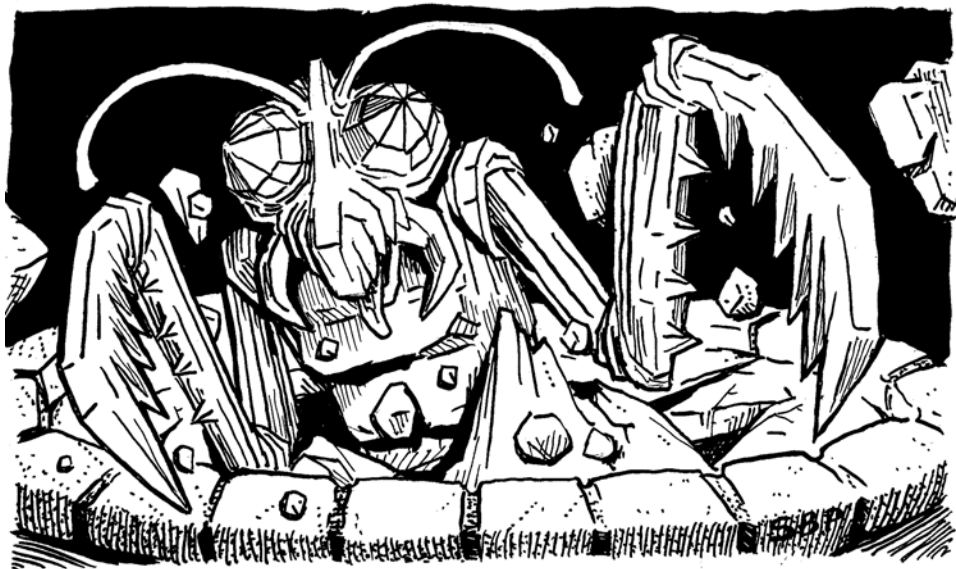
The Joulbok stands on the opposite side of a large hole in the chamber's floor. A layer of frozen snow covers the pit, making it difficult to spot (DC 13 Intelligence or find trap check). The Joulbok attempts to lure one or more PCs into close combat with it. If successful, he uses his first attack to smash the snowy cover with his chain, shattering it and forcing all PCs within 10' of him to make a DC 10 Ref save or plummet into area 3-3 which is 30' below. PCs failing the save can make a Luck check to grab the edge of the hole. If successful, their fall is arrested, but they lose any Agility bonus to AC and are considered prone if attacked.

Once the trap is sprung, the Tontuu leap from cover, attacking PCs in battle with the Joulbok from behind or engaging the remaining party members in combat.

Joulbok (1): Init +2; Atk chain +2 melee (1d6+1) or head-butt +3 melee (1d4+1) or bite +1 melee (disease); AC 16; HD 3d8; hp 20; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP filthy bite (DC 6 Fort save or additional 1d6 damage); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

Joulbok are 6' tall humanoid creatures resembling manlike goats. Covered with coarse, woolly hair and standing on cloven feet, Joulbok possess great, wiry strength and wield weapons in their human hands. A pair of twisted horns crowns their heads and Joulbok use these in both combat and in mating displays. Despite their goatish appearance, Joulbok are carnivores and have sharp, filthy teeth. Joulbok only speak in goat-like bleats, but can learn and understand other languages.

Tontuu (5): Init +1; Atk knife +2 melee (1d3+2) or javelins (3) +2 ranged (1d6+2) or frigid touch +2 melee (heat drain); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP frigid touch siphons heat and vitality from victim (DC 8 Fort save or 1 point of temporary Stamina damage), immune to cold/double damage from fire; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will -1; AL C.



In a cleared area amongst the rubble is a small camp used by the Joulbok and Tontuu. The snow here is bloodstained and packed down into sleeping nests in several places. Animal and human bones, some still with scraps of meat attached, are strewn about. There are also six odd bundles here. These bundles are small boxes fashioned from lashed-together bones and wrapped with uncured animal hides. Each bundle belongs to one of the room's occupants and contains their private possessions. Mixed in amongst spare clothing and other worthless personal objects are an ivory comb (15 gp value), a silver necklace (25 gp value), a wineskin holding potent brandy (20 gp value), a fox stole (50 gp value), a collection of silverware (45 gp value), 26 cp, 8 sp, and 4 gp. These treasures were stolen from the homes visited by the Tontuu.

Area 3-1—Meditation Sanctum: *This room is in better condition than those you've passed through previously. With the exception of the western end of the room, the walls and floor here stand straight and even. A circular basin rests in the room's center. Once a decorative pool, the water is now frozen, entombing several dark shapes within. A door in the eastern wall exits the room. The western end of the room is a sheet of ice, signifying the far wall is damaged and the surrounding ice has penetrated the chamber. Like the frigid pool before it, this ice sheet contains a dark figure, and the glint of gold is dimly visible within the frosty wall.*

The dark forms in the frozen pool are simply dead ornamental fish, forgotten and frozen long ago. There are eight in number.

The shadowy shape in the ice sheet, however, is one of the ziggurat's former Hyperborean residents. Slain in the commotion of the empire's exodus, his corpse was left behind and absorbed by the encroaching snow and ice. Although somewhat rotten, the body still bears its ancient, ebon robes and a golden amulet around its neck. This amulet is vaguely visible through the ice. A successful DC 8 Intelligence check identifies the form as human.

The corpse is located behind 12" of ice and can be reached by either hacking through the sheet (requiring an edged weapon and 2d5 rounds of work) or through the use of *sovereign fire*. Unfortunately, the corpse was formerly a sorcerer and strange echoes of his magic still protect the body. Attempting to free the body triggers defensive safeguards. These safeguards cause a minor demonic spirit to manifest, coalescing in the frozen pool. Moments later, the icy basin erupts as a squat, insectile form comprised of ice (with a few dead fish protruding from it) bursts from it. The manifesting guardian attacks anyone attempting to defile its master's body.

Demonic Ice Guardian (1): Init +2; Atk icy claw +3 melee (1d4+1) or mandibles +1 melee (1d6+1); AC 15; HD 4d8; hp 20; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP cold-based creature, immune to cold-based attacks, suffers half damage from non-magical weapons (weapons alight from *sovereign fire* are considered magical vs. this entity), takes double damage from fire-based attacks; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.

The guardian resembles a cross between a tick and a praying mantis fashioned entirely of ice. Its serrated mandibles clack together as its squat, grotesque body scuttles towards opponents on eight legs. The demon attacks until slain, upon which it dissolves into a quickly-dissipating, acrid steam, leaving a pile of rotting fish in its wake.

The amulet is covered with Hyperborean hieroglyphs and is magical. *Comprehend languages* reveals the writing spells out "Ogalltus," a command word. When spoken, this word causes a pair of ghostly black wings to sprout from the amulet wearer's back, allowing him to descend from heights as if under the effects of a spell check 14 *feather fall*. The effect lasts for four rounds and can be used once per day.

Area 3-2—Sapping Sap: *Beyond this door is a wide corridor running north-south. The passageway is crowded with much stouter and more numerous pine trees. Like those previously encountered, the trees grow from the ancient stone flooring and walls of the 20' wide chamber. These evergreens, although seemingly more robust, are pallid teal as if they've spent their entire life cycle beneath a cloudy, sunless sky. The scent of pine tar is thick in the air, and globs of pine sap spot the corridor's floor.*

The pines grow very thick here and it is difficult to spot the door at the north end of the corridor (DC 12 Intelligence check). The dense growth also makes it challenging to pass through the hallway without brushing against the trees. A careful inspection of the trees notices that many of their needles are drenched in viscous sap. This sap is dangerous to intruders.

PCs moving directly down the hallway automatically come into contact with the sap. Those stating they wish to transverse the corridor without brushing against the tree limbs can make a DC 10 Ref save to do so. Failure indicates contact with the sap.

The sap drains heat from living creatures upon contact, inflicting 1d4 damage and requiring the affected PC to make a DC 12 Fort save. If unsuccessful, the victim begins shivering uncontrollably, imparting a -2 penalty on all rolls until his core

temperature is raised to normal levels. This can be done by sitting beside a modest-sized fire for 30 minutes, being wrapped in heavy blankets or clothing for 1 hour, or by expending a single point of *sovereign fire*.

The trees can be destroyed by fire (either normal, magical, or *sovereign flame*), but doing so produces a thick, oily smoke that fills areas 3-1 and 3-2. Those caught in the acrid cloud must make a DC 6 Fort save or suffer 1d3 points of damage from smoke inhalation.

The southeastern door leading to area 3-3 is frozen shut by the ice behind it. A DC 20 Strength check is required to open it.

Area 3-3—Oubliette: *This small chamber was likely once a storage area judging from the broken shelves and shattered pottery that line the walls and litter the floor. A portion of the wall has collapsed, burying much of the room in ice and jagged stone. Only the gap in the ceiling above seems to allow escape.*

The room contains nothing of value. The door to area 3-2 is buried behind 4' of ice and stone. PCs that fall into this room (or their corpses) will likely have to be retrieved by ropes lowered from 2-2 above.

Area 3-4—Hall of the Old God: *A wave of power, like the static electricity of an imminent thunderstorm, rolls over you as you open this door. Beyond is a large space filled with corpulent pine trees growing from the broken stone. The air here is cold and ominous, a portent of calamity. Amongst the dense greenery you see fashioned stone, carved columns, and what appears to be the edge of a platform or dais. You spy shimmering colors deep within the grove, flickering illumination as if the Northern Lights hide within.*

This former audience hall is now the domain of Tjaptar, his sole temple and sanctum. The pine trees strewn throughout the ziggurat have alerted the former deity of the party's presence, and he's prepared a welcome.

Hidden amongst the 20' tall trees that scrape the ceiling on this chamber are a Tontuu and Joulbok. This duo is well-concealed (DC 14 Intelligence check to spot). The two lie in wait until the PCs reach the far edge of the grove, then attack from behind.

Tontuu (1): Init +1; Atk knife +2 melee (dmg 1d3+2) or bite +1 melee (venom; see below) or frigid touch +2 melee (heat drain); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 15; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP poisonous spittle (DC 9 Fort save or nausea: temporary -1d3 Stamina and -1 to all rolls), frigid touch siphons heat and vitality from victim (DC 8 Fort save or 1 point of temporary Stamina damage), cold-based creature; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

The mouth and teeth of this Tontuu are stained green by the mistletoe leaves he regularly chews. The wad of masticated mistletoe he keeps in his mouth grants him a poisonous bite (DC 9 Fort save or become violently ill; sickness causes temporary 1d3 Stamina loss and -1 to all rolls).

Joulbok (1): Init +2; Atk chain +2 melee (1d6+1) or head-butt +3 melee (1d4+1) or bite +1 (disease); AC 16; HD 3d8; hp 24; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP filthy bite (DC 6 Fort save or additional 1d6 damage); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; AL C.

The real threat here is Tjaptar, who squats upon a ramshackle altar of broken stone atop the dais. Once his minions attack, the forest spirit rises and descends from the platform. The trees along the northern end of the grove part at his presence, exposing his ragged majesty for the party to see. Any PC glimpsing the former god must make a DC 10 Will save or be stunned by his majestic aura for 1 round.

Tjaptar (1): Init +2; Atk fists +3 melee (dmg 1d4+3); AC 16; HD 4d10; hp 40 (but see below); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP cold-based creature, *aura of majesty* (mortals glimpsing Tjaptar must make a DC 10 Will save or be stunned for 1 round), spell-like powers: *wood-wyrding* (cast as 4th level cleric; +8 to spell check) and *freezing blast* (as *flaming hands* but inflicts cold damage; +5 to spell check, countered in spell duel by *flaming hands*), takes double damage from fire-based spells, antler vulnerability (see below); SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +4; AL C.



Tjaptar appears as a 15' tall humanoid figure. Although he stands and walks like a man, his head is that of a reindeer complete with an impressive rack of antlers. His decline in power, however, has given Tjaptar a decayed appearance. His head displays patches of exposed skull and the once felt-like tawny fur covering his body is mangy and dirty. Tjaptar's bedraggled appearance is overshadowed by his aura of majesty and by a ghostly corona of flickering colors that dance around his antlers. This corona resembles the *aurora borealis* and those that gaze upon it glimpse the visages of children among the lights. These faces are the essences Tjaptar has consumed, but not yet fully digested. Slaying the old forest spirit will free them and restore their comatose bodies to life. Tjaptar uses his *wood-wyrding* power to deprive opponents of weapons or inflict damage upon them before wading into battle. Once in melee, he employs his *freezing blast* power or fists against foes. Tjaptar is a potent enemy, but his antlers are his Achilles' heel. The horns house the god's stolen vitality. Damaging or destroying the antlers robs him of power.

The antlers can be targeted by Mighty Deeds (treat as AC 14) or by precise attacks (-4 penalty to hit). The crown of horns has 20 hit points. When reduced to 10 hp or less, Tjaptar loses his ability to cast *freezing blast*. When reduced to zero hit points, he is destroyed. Reducing Tjaptar's normal hit point total also kills the old god.

EVENT THREE: THE ESCAPE



hen Tjaptar is slain, a burst of silent, concussive force erupts from his body. The blast produces two effects. One, the lingering vestiges of stolen children's essence are freed, returning to their inert bodies and restoring them to health. Secondly, the force causes great fractures to appear in the surrounding ice. A slow rumble begins to grow as slabs of ice begin sloughing off the drifting iceberg, plummeting to the ground below. Fissures appear in the floor and walls of the Hall and it's evident that the party has but a short time to escape before the iceberg disintegrates.

Fleeing back to the area 1-1 requires each PC to make a DC 8 Ref save or suffer 1d4 damage from falling ice and rubble. A PC rolling a natural "1" is struck by a large slab that does 2d4 damage. Regardless of success or failure, the PCs reach the courtyard as the iceberg begins disintegrating under their feet.

With a 500' plunge to the earth imminent, the PCs need to think fast to survive. Even if they've deduced the Hyperborean amulet's power, have *sovereign fire* remaining, or access to *feather fall*, the 500' drop is too great a distance to utilize those means to survive. The party must close the distance to the ground and hope the crumbling ice remains intact long enough for them to do so.

The icy stairs and rope ladders are the most obvious means to achieve the ground. To replicate the fracturing state of the iceberg, the judge should have the PC with the best Luck make several Luck checks. Each successful check indicates the party has descended 100' down the stairs without the iceberg breaking apart beneath them. Four successful Luck checks result in the PCs reaching the rope ladders, allowing them to descend via them or through other means. The judge should endeavor to make this descent as dramatic as possible, describing the cracking ice, gaping crevasses the PCs leap across, and the spray of ice chips that hang in the air as the iceberg self-destructs.

If even a single of the PC's Luck checks fails, however, the iceberg disintegrates beneath the party, threatening to drop them from the height they had achieved when the check failed. For example, failing the first check indicates the party is 500' above the earth, while failing the third check determines they've descended 300' down the stairs before the iceberg utterly collapsed, dropping them 200' to the ground (100' of remaining stairs plus the 100' distance the iceberg drifts above the earth). Unless the distance remaining is short enough to be traveled with *sovereign fire*, *feather fall*, or similar abilities, this fall is almost certainly fatal.

However, there is a single chance for survival. The lingering Hyperborean magic contained within the iceberg causes several large chunks of ice to maintain a failing mystical buoyancy, drifting slowly to the earth after breaking loose from the iceberg. A successful DC 8 Ref save allows a PC to leap atop one of these slowly falling fragments and reach the ground unscathed. A failed check results in a missed leap and a swift, final descent to the hard earth.

Read the following to the survivors:

With a last, great crack that echoes across the land like a thunderclap, the soaring iceberg collapses, becoming a cloud of glittering, icy vapor. Where the iceberg once floated is now a nimbus of colorful light that flickers and dances in the sky, transforming the landscape below into a fairyland of red, green, blue, and yellow.

The glittering ice spreads across the sky, becoming a bank of ashen white clouds. Moments later, the first soft snowflakes begin to fall, collecting in your hair and clothes. Then, silently and without fanfare, the dancing lights in the sky streak off to the north, destined for some far-removed place...and perhaps time. Somewhere else, children are stirring, their sickness vanquished as their souls return home. The threat of Tjaptar is ended; the power of ice is overcome by you, the champions of fire and light.

Tjaptar's power has been destroyed...or so it appears. If the judge wishes to utilize the old god as an ongoing adversary of the party, the flickering lights that streak away may contain a portion of the forest spirit's power. In time, Tjaptar will regain his mortal form and confront the PCs again, especially if their travels bring them to the Forlorn North (see *DCC RPG #79 Frozen in Time* for one possible reason that party may enter Tjaptar's domain).

The PCs return to the village to great acclaim. There they discover the comatose boy has awoken and the group is feted with the remains of the solstice feast. If they have monetary rewards coming, the village gratefully pays the PCs. For defeating Tjaptar (even temporarily) and restoring the afflicted children, each PC gains 1 point of Luck.

The morning sun rises upon a landscape covered in newly-fallen snow, transforming the village into a winter paradise. Life returns to normal in the settlement now that the malicious power of ice is on the wane. But evil never slumbers long and soon the PCs will encounter other threats to life and limb, for such in life is the world of Dungeon Crawl Classics!

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