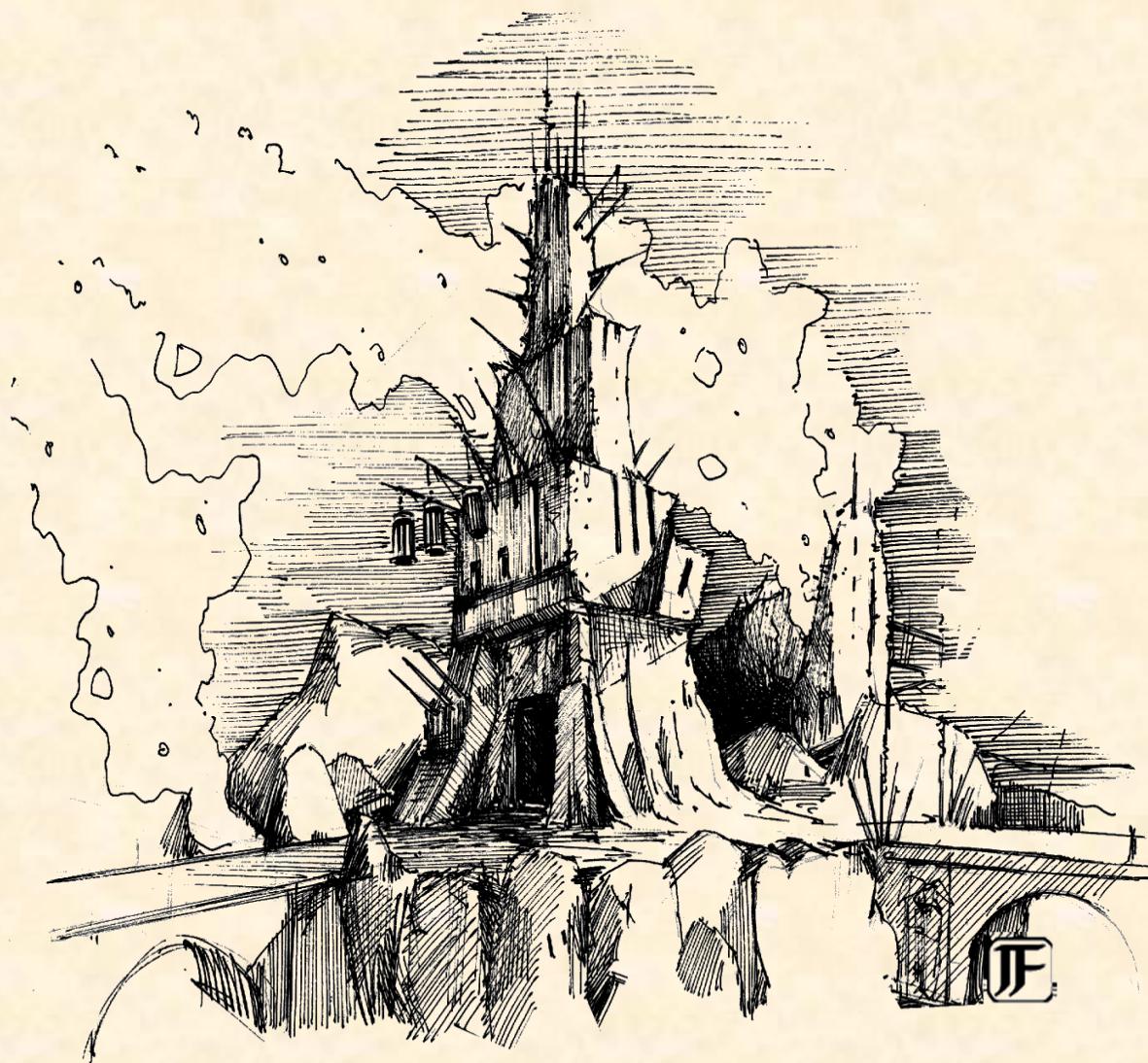




# VARN KARAGOSS



# Varn Karagoss

## Rumours & Hooks

In an old, wax sealed tube is a map to *Varn Karagoss* (translation in old Varnori: *Place of Ending*). The location is leagues to the distant north, surely encased in ice and snow. Some rare texts suggest the site is an ancient burial ground of the giants.

Legends say that Varn Karagoss, an ancient shrine and graveyard, is maintained by the *Frost Giants* of the *White Drifts*. The dying journey to the temple to offer not only themselves, but great tithes, gilding their transition to the next life.

*Varn Karagoss: Place of Ending.*

Long forgotten by men of the present day, every giant knows and dreads the great boneyard of their forebears; the secret place where the giants go to die.

Located far to the distant north, locked within the glaciers and ice floes of the *White Drifts*, the blessed temple awaits, summoning the sick and decrepit to settle their life debt, and honour the old gods.

Since before written history, the *Frost Giants* have been charged with maintaining the ice temple, holding to the first rituals and entombing their brethren. Each decade, the keepers light the great signal fires of Karagoss, summoning their kin from across the mountains to bring forth their dead and dying, as they have done for millennia.

Those that make the final trek do not venture alone; they are accompanied by family, guards, pilgrims, and those of holy office (shamans, priests, etc, depending on the race and clan). Perhaps more importantly (from an adventurer's point of view) the giants are also accompanied by valuable gifts, offerings to appease the spirits and induce a favourable reincarnation.

The adventurers might become involved in this adventure by (i) finding an old map referencing the boneyard of the giants, (ii) seeing the signal fires from nearby mountains and travelling to investigate, or (iii) happening upon a dying hill giant shaman, who begs the party to take her heart to Varn Karagoss, and earn her kin's eternal gratitude.



## The White Drifts

Crossing the White Drifts is a journey not undertaken lightly. The snow fields run for leagues, followed by glaciers and ice floes, in temperatures low enough to freeze a man's heart. In the unthawed north, nothing grows and few creatures are tenacious enough to survive. For the most part, the artic wastes are a collection of arid but awe inspiring vistas, overseen by the glimmering aurora borealis.

Each day a character spends on foot trekking through the White Drifts requires a Con check to avoid losing 1 Con due to extreme exhaustion. This Con loss does not begin to return until the adventurer is back in normal climes (or a place of relative comfort, such as an inn).



### First Leg

The first leg of the journey requires navigating the ice floes of the Arctic Sea. The adventurers will need to charter a ship for this purpose, or captain a vessel of their own.

Either way, the voyage takes  $1d3+4$  days (depending on the weather and thickness of the ice). Each day there is a 30% chance of a random encounter. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8, adding +1 during the last two days:

1. *Bergs forward bow!* During the night the ship becomes embroiled in a maze of giant icebergs. A group *Luck* save is required to avoid a collision, sinking the ship.
2. A *stowaway* makes their presence felt on board. If the ship is large, an 11 yr old orphan thief named *Ruper* is filching purses and food (Dex 17). If the ship is small, the stowaway is a *Sprite* (Nixie LFG p.125 or *Xornling* LFG p.130) instead.
3. A *Varnori Longship* with 20 rowing benches (about 50 crew) is on a training mission in remote waters. There is a 75%

chance they take the opportunity to “blood” the crew, and attack (as *Bandit*, with 20% *Berserkers*, LFG p.114).

4. Severe *Thundersnow* (a blizzard with lightning) ravages the region, with howling winds and massive waves. If the ship is small, individual *Luck* saves are required to prevent PCs being swept overboard. If the ship is large, a Group *Luck* check is required to prevent ship damage (30%), being blown off course (40%, adding  $1d3$  days to the voyage), or being sunk (30%).
5. 2d6 *Argosan Stranglers* begin tracking the ship from beneath the ice floes. They wait until the vessel gets stuck in thick ice, or nightfall, to attack.

*Argosan Strangler*, AC 13, HD 4+1, Bite 2d6, 19: special, S19 D13 C14 I4 P10 W9 Ch5, L7, Mv 30 ft or 60 ft swimming. On a natural 19 the target is strangled, suffering 2d6 damage per round on the monster’s turn (opposed Str check to break free). Once per hour, may spend an action to spray sticky acid from its tentacles up to 30 ft (single target). A *Luck* (Dex) save avoids 1d6 damage per round for 1d6 rounds.

6. 1d4+2 *Artic Falcons* (as *Giant Eagle* LFG p.106) are hunting in the skies overhead, circling out from gigantic iceberg eyries. Humans make excellent chick food.
7. A thick fog envelops the ship for 4d6 hours, slowing travel and making hazard spotting difficult. A Group *Luck* save is required to avoid any icebergs (see entry 1). 2d4 *Will o’ Wisps* (LFG p.129), the souls of lost sailors, attempt to lure a PC into the sea (when they attack). One of the wisps is able to use the *Silent Image* spell (shadows and light only) to assist in the deception.

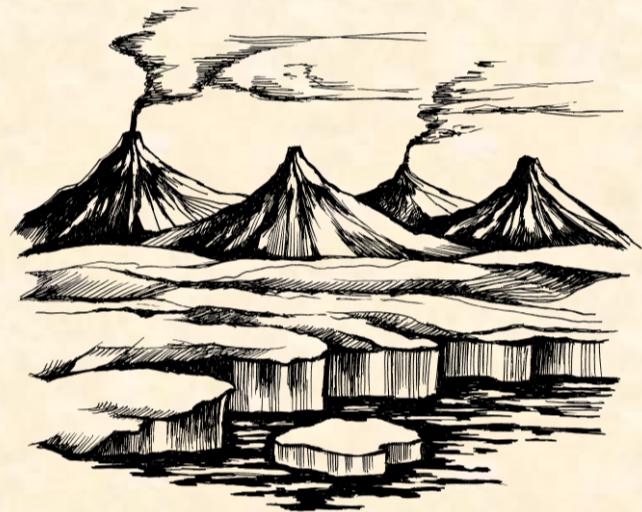
8. A flotilla of 1d3+3 primitive catamarans round a nearby iceberg, on their way to Varn Karagoss. Each boat carries 1d3+2 *Hill Giants* (LFG p.110, half of whom are elderly/dying, in no condition for combat). Some humans to snack upon would surely make their trip more bearable.
9. A small dark cloud, about 1000 ft across, is moving at low altitude across the sky. An exceptionally rare contingent of 1d3+1 *Storm Giants* (LFG p.110) are borne aloft by weather magic unknown to man. One of the storm lords is dying, and en route to Karagoss. The cloud seems to match the party's ship for a time, the giants curious to see humans this far north. There is a 50% chance they make contact, querying the business of such childlike beings in the frozen wastes.

## Second Leg

The second leg of the journey to reach the boneyard requires 10 days of navigating snow fields, frozen glaciers and treacherous crevasses.

Each day there is a 35% chance of a random encounter. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d8:

1. 1d4+1 *Frost Giants* (LFG p.110) are journeying across the snow, with an oversized chest to be delivered to a rival chief (contains blood money in coins and gems, 2d4 x 100gp worth). They are startled to find humans this far north, but relish such scrumptious delicacies!
2. *Crevasse!* A snow covered crevasse suddenly opens beneath the party, requiring a *Luck* (Dex) save to avoid falling 2d10 x 10 ft. The skeleton of an old explorer is at the bottom (1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Trinkets & Curios, LFG p.136, 141).



3. 1d4+2 *Ice Bulettes* (LFG p.102 but amphibious and immune to cold damage) burst from the ice, eager to devour the party. The ice cracks and shudders 1d4 rounds before the pack arrives.
4. The corpse of a stunning 5½ ft female *Elf* in black and green furs is encased in the ice. The body is well preserved, and clearly very old (although precisely how old is uncertain). If dug out, 1 x Valuables and 1 x Trinkets & Curios (LFG p.147, 141) may be retrieved.
5. 2d4 *Feathered Maws* spy the party from the high thermals above, and begin to circle. They will wait until sunset to attack, swooping in with the glaring sun behind them.

*Feathered Maws*, AC 15, HD 3+1, Poison Limb (special) and Bite 1d8+1, 19: Special, S14 D18 C12 I3 P14 W12 Ch4, L6, 120 ft flying. Feathered Maws are 6 ft carnivores with 14 ft wings, tentacle limbs, elongated necks and gaping, toothy jaws. Rarely spotted, they prefer cooler climes and tend to high mountains and snow fields. A maw's limbs carry an oily poison (*Luck*

(Con) save or paralysed for 1d4 hours), which allows them to feed on a live victim at their leisure. On a natural 19, the maw's poison penetrates the victim's skull, imposing a moderate madness (*Luck (Will)* save resists).



6. 1d4+1 *Mammoths* are walking in a line along a nearby ridge, glacier or snow field. The largest of the herd, a 15 ft fearless brute (13 HD), breaks off to challenge the party, issuing a blasting trumpet that echoes for miles. The male charges anyone that does not signal submission.
7. A sudden *Blizzard* engulfs the area, dumping blinding snow and dropping temperatures even further. PCs must make Con checks or suffer frostbite, losing 1d2 Str. There is a 50% chance *Ice Bulettes* take the opportunity to attack (ranged attacks are impossible).
8. The party crests a small rise, revealing a human tucked in furs. *Ilvard* (Varnori, bedraggled and sunburnt) can be heard muttering to himself (or is he chanting?). It's hard to tell over the howling wind. Ilvard might be a monk seeking enlightenment, an artic druid dedicated to keeping the uninitiated at bay, or an exiled rune seer who fell out of favour

with the closet Jarl. Or perhaps he is a simple hermit, unfond of visitors.

### Varn Karagoss

The temple of the frost giants is fashioned of hardened snow and ice, erected on a glacier plateau, surrounded by a deep chasm. Everything here is giant sized: the benches, shelves, doors, stairs, etc, making navigation/searching more difficult. Thick plumes of black smoke waft into the sky from signal fires stoked by the temple's keepers, guiding the giants across the drifts.

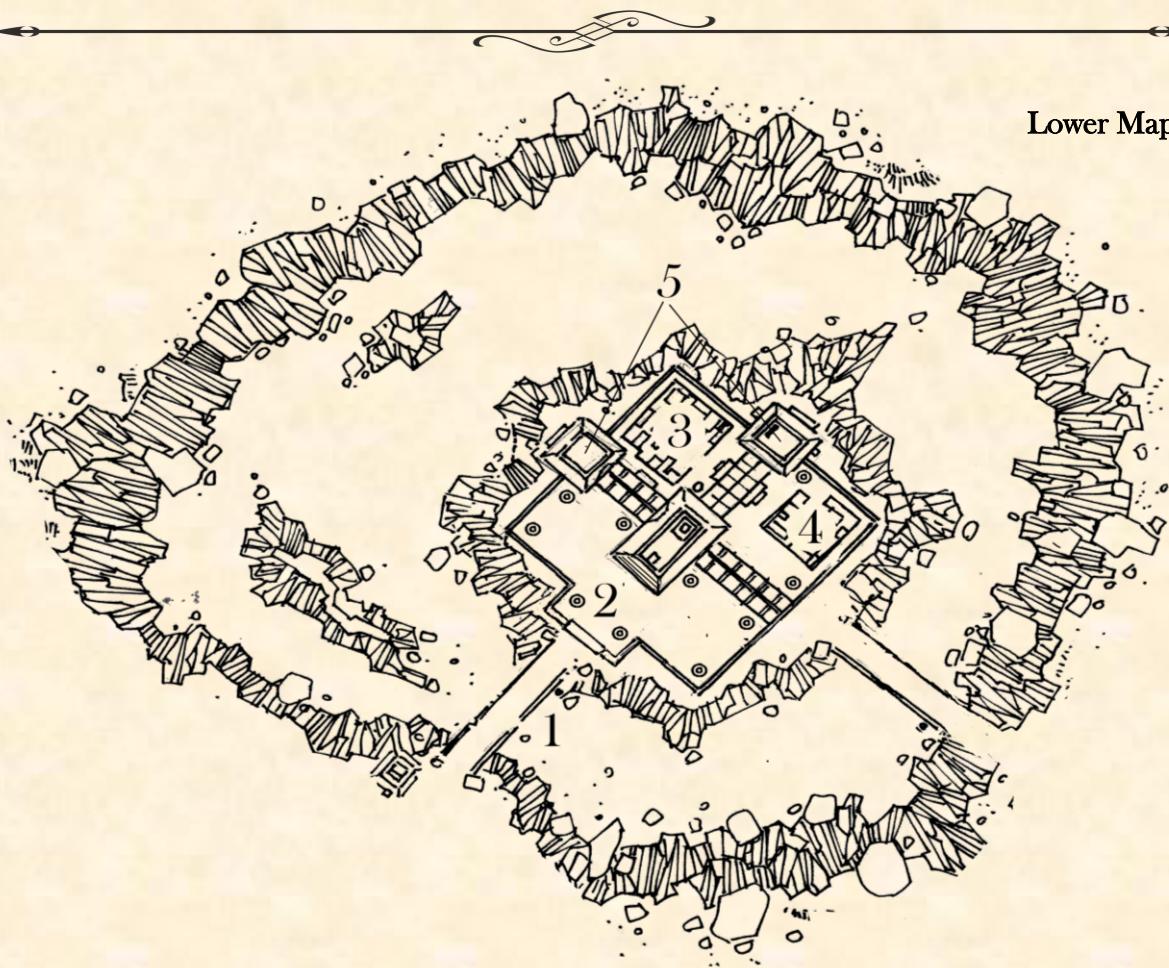
Two long bridges stretch across the chasm to reach the temple, lit by braziers day and night. At the time the PCs arrive, giant kin are coming and going, entering the temple with their dying and dead. Many wear voluminous, hooded robes of white (escort), sky blue (dying) and yellow (other pilgrim). Nearby are several smaller temporary buildings and/or tents that the pilgrims rest in for a few days as the ceremonies are performed. When the end comes, the dying throw themselves into the chasm, adding their bodies (and tithes) to their ancestors 200 ft below.



### Area 1 – Entry Bridges

The 100 ft by 25 ft entry bridges are made of hardened snow and ice, lined with braziers. Smoke from the signal fires wafts nearby, cloying the air. At the head of each bridge are 1d3 frost giant guards. The guards are here more as a point of ceremony than any sentry concern, and are lax about their duties. There is a 75% chance the guards are distracted (throwing rocks into the distance, casting rune bones, drinking, dozing, etc). The guards are accompanied by 1d3 *Hoarfrost Wolves* (as modified Dire Wolf below).

Lower Map



*Frost Giant*, AC 15, HD 12+4, Giant Halberds 3d8+2, 19: *Causes Injuries*, S21 D10 C16 I11 P11 W14 Ch11, L12, 50 ft. Throw boulders, humans, barrels etc up to 120 ft for 4d6 damage. Reach 15 ft. Creatures of 2 HD or less must make a *Luck* (Will) save or flee for 2d6 rounds. The giants will not hurl PCs into the chasm (adding humans to the ancestor pile would be desecration).

*Hoarfrost Wolf*, AC 13, HD 3+4, Bite 2d4+1, 19: a random limb is frozen with ice, paralysing it for 1d4 hours (*Luck* (Con) save resists), S18 D15 C17 I2 P13 W14 Ch6, L6, 60 ft. Advantage when tracking and on attack rolls when flanking. Hoarfrost wolves are immune to cold damage.

#### Area 2 - Nave of Supplicants

This massive hall is approximately 150 ft by 100 ft on the south eastern side (adjacent to Area 4). The 50 ft drawbridge is in a constantly lowered position while the signal fires burn. The vaulted

ceiling is 60 ft high, ice carved in intricate bas reliefs reflecting giant history. Massive 15 ft diameter pillars support the ceiling, decorated with symbols of protection, death and renewal. Tiled paths of black stone contrast the ice hewn walls.

A 35 ft by 60 ft raised dais dominates the centre of the gathering chamber, lit by hanging lanterns. The dying are presented on the 20 ft high platform to *Thraago*, a frost giant priest garbed in scarlet vestments and a deep hood (75 hp, criticals on 18+, Huge Hammer 3d8+3).

4d6 giants (60% *Hill*, 30% *Frost* and 10% *Storm*) gather in the sanctified hall, where all are equal and bloodshed forbidden under elder law. Some stand and some sit on snow hewn benches set about the walls. A non-giant entering the chamber is unheard of, but will be extended the same protections as any other (outside however, is an entirely different matter).

*Hill Giant*, AC 12, HD 8+2, Giant Club 2d8+2, 19: *Causes Injuries* S20 D8 C15 I6 P9 W12 Ch8, L9, 40 ft. Throw boulders, humans, barrels etc up to 120 ft for 3d6 damage. Reach 10 ft. Creatures of 2 HD or less must make a *Luck* (Will) save or flee for 2d6 rounds. Advantage on smell related checks.

*Storm Giant*, AC 18, HD 16+6, Giant Trident 3d10+2, 19: *Causes Injuries* S22 D12 C18 I14 P15 W16 Ch14, L16, 50 ft. Throw boulders, humans, barrels etc up to 120 ft for 5d6 damage. Reach 10 ft. Creatures of 2 HD or less must make a *Luck* (Will) save or flee for 2d6 rounds. May cast *Fog Cloud*, *Lightning Bolt* or *Control Weather* once/day.

If the giants are defeated, or otherwise stolen from, they carry 2 x Carry Loot and 2 x Valuables (LFG p.136, 147).

### Area 3 - Disciples' Chambers

1d3+1 frost giant disciples live in this 55 ft bed chamber with 25 ft ceilings, decorated with austere, giant size bunks, tables and scarlet robes. A spiral staircase in the centre of the room leads to the upper level. There are no books, maps or scrolls (the frost giants employ complex oral histories and do not keep written records). A search of this room scrapes together 1 x Carry Loot, 1 x Trinkets & Curios and 1 x Potion (LFG p.136, 141, 150).

### Area 4 - Preparation Room

This 40 ft room contains 18 ft shelves of oils, unguents and incense, as well as huge chests of ceremonial robes (especially sky blue robes with a thick black line down the centre, which the dying put on before dropping into the chasm). 1d3 frost giant priests are here to prepare the dying for their final descent.

### Area 5 - Last Sanctuary

These twin 35 ft sanctuaries are the last chambers the dying see before their end. Entry is via runed archways obscured with heavy scarlet curtains. The chambers within are windowless, lit by phospherant glow bugs in lanterns.

A single frost giant priest waits inside. After proclaiming the final litanies, the priest opens the door to the chasm and uses an iron winch to wind out a wooden platform painted sky blue. The supplicant stands on the platform until they are suspended above the chasm. Finally, the priest intones the blessed note of ending, at the completion of which the supplicant leaps, steps or topples into the abyss.

### Temple - Upper Level

The spiral staircase from Area 3 accesses the upper level of the temple (and continues up to the top level); a 130 ft square chamber, divided in half by heavy black curtains. Windows allow some light during the day, but at night visibility is poor, lit only by glow bugs in oversized lanterns.

Each half belongs to one of the *Sisters of Ice and Snow*. The sisters are incredibly old and infirm frost giant twins, alive solely by means of strange magic even they do not properly understand. They came to Karagoss decades earlier to die, but did not perish; somehow sustained by otherworldly forces. They are dark oracles, able to predict the future or see into the past through repugnant blood rituals. They will perform the rites for any that ask, but plucking at the strands of fate imposes 1d4 *Luck* drain and a moderate madness. The offeree may ask the soothsayers one question about the past, present or future, and the GM must answer truthfully (albeit cryptically or in riddles at the GM's discretion).

*Soothsayers*, AC 12, HD 12+4 (half normal hp), No physical attacks (incapable), 19: NA, S6 D6 C10 I14 P15 W18 Ch7, L16, 10 ft. The soothsayers are too fragile to fight with weapons, but may cast up to three of the following spells once per week (9<sup>th</sup> level): *Cone of Cold*, *Fog Cloud*, *Thunderwave*, *Magic Missile*, *Shield*.

If the sisters are slain and the level searched, 1 x Trinkets & Curios and 1 x Valuables (LFG p.141, 147) may be found amongst the enormous sleeping furs.

### Temple - Top Level

The spiral staircase from Area 3 and the upper level continues to the top level; a 110 ft wide tower, 50 ft deep with a 200 ft ceiling. Chains of copper and silver descend from hooks on the ceiling to connect with a 10 ft diameter crystal orb in the centre of the room.

The orb collects lightning from occasional bolts attracted to the metal spines sprouting from the top of the temple. The orb is used by those supplicants too fearful to plunge to their doom; it stores deadly electricity that will stop a giant's heart by touching it.

Anyone approaching the orb can feel a distortion in the air, and discerns a slight hum emanating

from it. Touching the orb (by hand or conductive metal) sends waves of lightning strobing through the target, causing 10d6 damage each round until dead. A *Luck* (Con) save allows the PC to wrench their hand free of the orb, ending the lightning chain.

### The Chasm

The 200 ft deep chasm is sheer and treacherous, prone to breaking away in great shards when heavy weight is applied. Scaling the slippery cliff requires 1d4 Str (Athletics) checks at disadvantage by each climber (proper climbing gear grants automatic success with enough time, or negates disadvantage if in a hurry). A failed check requires a *Luck* (Dex) save to avoid falling at a random point (if the climber survives, they must roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table), or if tied off to other PCs/an anchor point, slamming into jagged ice for 4d6 damage.



At the bottom of the chasm are hundreds of giant corpses, stacked up over the centuries, the older layers buried beneath rising ice, or swallowed by shifting cracks. Spread amongst the dead is a

literal hoard of treasure. A quick scavenge scrapes together 1 x 7 HD Lair Treasure and 1 x Valuables. A full excavation (taking at least a week) produces 1 x 12 HD Lair Treasure, 3 x Valuable and 3 x Trinkets & Curios (LFG p.140, 147, 141).

As might be expected, the boneyard of the giants is not unguarded. 3d4 *Frost Worms* are hibernating about 100 ft down the cliffs, in a hidden burrow. They awake when the adventurers approach within 60 ft.

*Frost Worm*, AC 15, HD 7, Bite 2d8, 19: special, S19 D10 C15 I3 P8 W14 Ch4 L9, Mv: 40 ft or 5 ft burrowing.

Frost worms are armour plated, 15 ft predators with segmented jaws, found in freezing climes of ice and snow; typically the Ironhull peaks or the White Drifts. They hunt for flesh in small groups, detecting their prey through a combination of smell, tremor sense and echolocation. On a natural 19-20 attack roll, the worm exhales a blood freezing fog (10 ft diameter) causing a *Slow* effect (as the spell, *Luck* (Con) save resists). In times of great scarcity, frost worms revert to a stasis like dormancy until a warm blooded creature approaches within 60 ft. Frost worms are immune to cold damage.

The frost worms take 1d4 rounds to awaken, at which point they burrow up through the cliffs, bursting out to snap at PCs. At the GM's discretion, the worm attacks might snap climbing lines, dislodge anchor points and so on, requiring Dex checks or *Luck* saves to avoid disaster.

### Aftermath

Graverobbing the giants is potentially very lucrative, but also extremely dangerous. If the PCs manage to get away with any treasure but are identified, the giants will take steps to punish them, including sending out tracking parties, hiring bounty hunters and blockading mountain passes until the PCs are turned over to them. If the PCs are not easily identified, the smarter giants make discrete inquiries through human fences and other agents, or perhaps even employ sorcery to facilitate their revenge. The giants never forgive, and they never forget, but careful PCs might just escape their wrath entirely.





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