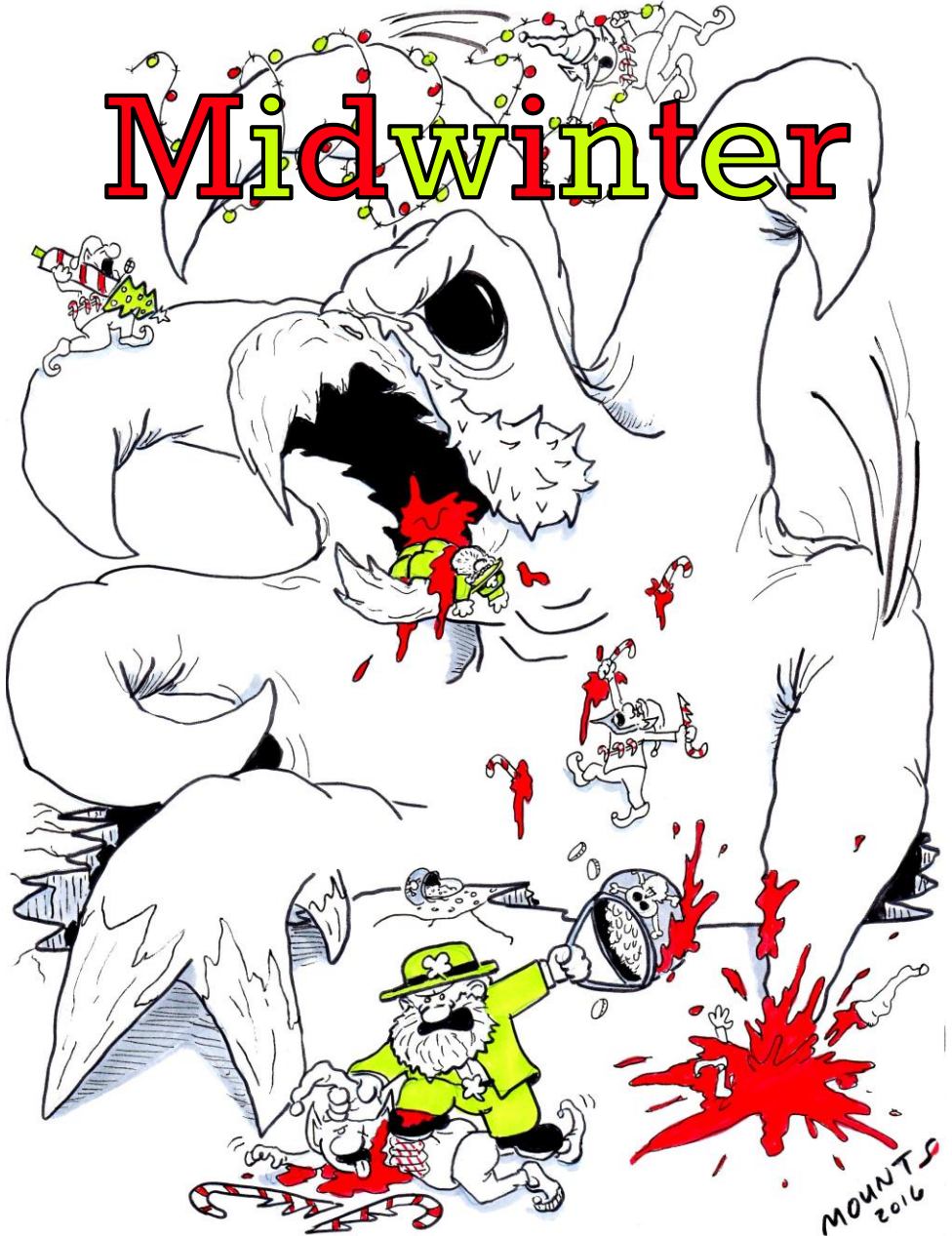


In Bleakest Midwinter



(holiday fun for all)

In Bleakest Midwinter

a holiday adventure by Jonathan Linneman
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scairytalesnoir.com (spell *scary* with an “i”!)

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(plus a bunch of stuff pulled from the public domain)



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Someone has to do Santa's dirty work . . .

It may as well be you. You are among the elite of Santa's elves, the Stealth Operations Brigade of the North Pole, simply called *Santa's S.O.B.s* by those in the know. Ensuring holiday cheer for people around the world doesn't come easy. Sometimes, you have to get your hands dirty. Santa Claus can't get his hands dirty. He needs plausible deniability for some of his most important work.

That's where Santa's S.O.B.s come in. They get their hands dirty.

So what is this game?

This is a quick RPG adventure covering a secret mission of the North Pole's Stealth Operations Brigade. Baby New Year has been kidnapped, and it's up to the S.O.B.s to ensure that he finds his way safely through the holiday season. It might not end well.

What is an RPG?

An RPG is a roleplaying game, where players take on the roles of one or more characters and send them on adventures. Honestly, if you're not familiar with RPGs, I'm probably not going to be very good at explaining them to you here. However, this game should be easy to play, even if you've never played an RPG before. You may need someone who has experience with this type of thing to be the Gamemaster (GM), since the minimal rules do assume some familiarity with the world's most popular RPG or games that are based on it.

What are the rules here?

The rules-related stuff in this adventure uses a generalized system that tries to be modern in presentation but old-school in feel. I generally refer to it as the GRIND (Generic Rules for Icosahedral Narrative Designs; hilarious, eh?), and it will hopefully be readable to most folks who are

familiar with RPGs that use classes, levels, and a d20 for combat. If you think you'll need to alter stuff to fit the system you're using, here are the assumptions you might need to know:

Stat modifiers range from -2 (for a stat of 3) to +2 (at 18).

Armor Class (AC) is just referred to generally as **Defense**. It starts at 10 and gets better as it ascends. Attack rolls hit if they meet or exceed Defense.

The basic Hit Die for a human is a d6. Most weapons do damage in terms of the d6, as well.

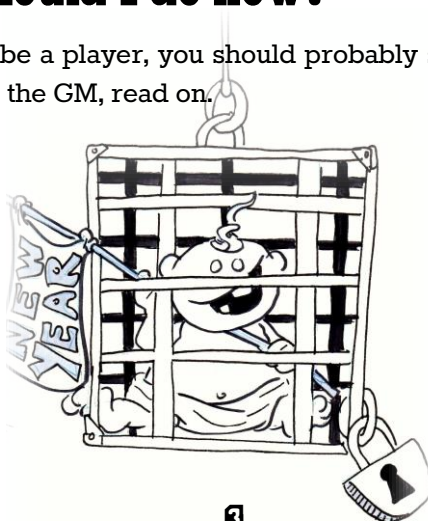
The most important rule, though, is to *have fun*. This adventure is expected to be deadly. Not all of the elves are going to make it through to the end. It's possible that none of them will. Hopefully, this is your idea of fun.

What if I don't believe in Santa Claus?

Then your sins won't be forgiven, and you're probably going to Hell. I think I've got that right, anyway.

So what should I do now?

If you're going to be a player, you should probably stop reading here. If you're going to be the GM, read on.



So you're the Gamemaster?

Okay, here's the deal . . .

This is going to be a quick synopsis of what's actually going on in this adventure. If you want to be surprised by anything, you shouldn't read this, okay?

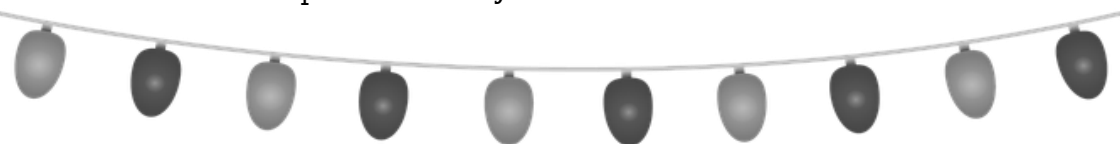
Okay.

Baby New Year has been kidnapped. Elvin spies have traced his whereabouts to a secret hideout in a remote portion of the Yukon, and the North Pole's Stealth Operations Brigade must move in for the rescue. As they move through the adventure, the elves will find out more about the plot behind Baby New Year's disappearance:

He's been kidnapped by the aging spirit of the current year, who is usually referred to simply as The Old Man. The Old Man plans to carry out an eldritch ritual that will give him an additional year of life by sacrificing his infant successor. If he succeeds, the entire world will be forced to relive the current year exactly as it happened the first time around. And a bunch of bad stuff went down, so nobody wants that. At the very least, it'd be pretty weird.

The ritual planned by The Old Man involves the components of the 12 days of Christmas along with the corpse of Ebenezer Scrooge. He's gathered these items and is ready to begin. To protect the process, The Old Man has secured the services of some other rogue holiday figures - some leprechauns, a disgruntled apprentice to the Easter Bunny, and a horrific mutated turkey monster.

Now, time is running out for Santa's S.O.B.s to foil The Old Man's plan and restore some hope to the holiday season.



Characters on this mission are expected to be elves in the Stealth Operations Brigade. There are premade characters on pages 12-13 that you can just cut up and roll with (you just need to pick out a name and roll for hit points), or you can generate your own using whatever method (and system, really) that you prefer. Here are some specific details you might want to include in this adventure:

Santa's elves resemble small humans (averaging around 3.5 to 4 feet tall) and usually have pointed ears. They get +1 to Defense due to their small size, are resistant to the effects of cold, and get a bonus of 4 (or 20%) when attempting to sneak up on someone. If they have levels of the warrior class, Santa's elves can make two attacks per round when wielding a pair of candy blades as weapons (see below). (They may advance as any class, but members of the Stealth Ops Brigade are almost always warriors or mages.)



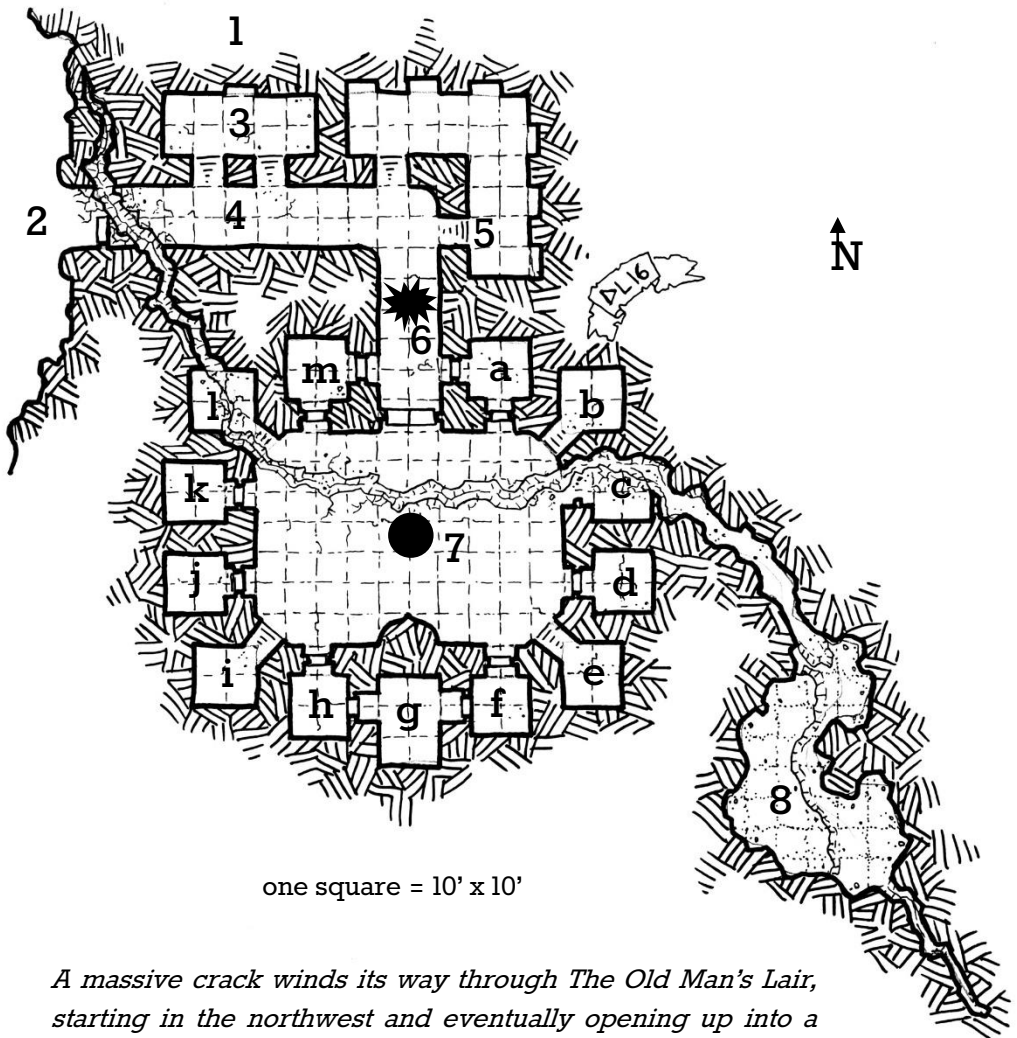
Santa's S.O.B.s can be found using a variety of weapons, as there is no "standard issue" arsenal for the team. However, they usually don't load themselves down; one or two main weapons and a few peripheral items or small backups is typical. Here are some arms that they are trained to use:

Candy blades are serrated implements of minty death. They're small, so they only deal d6-1 damage, but S.O.B.s (as noted above) can wield two at a time, attacking twice in a round (including attacks on different targets). They can also be thrown for d6-1 damage (only one attack per round if thrown). Using a candy blade gives an S.O.B. a bonus of 4 (or 20%) when climbing.

Flashcanes are tiny stun grenades that Stealth Ops Brigade agents typically carry on their belts. They are thrown at enemies and, if a hit is scored, deal 1 damage and stun the enemy for a round on a failed saving throw. (A note on saves: If it isn't obvious how they should work in this

(continued on page 7)

The Old Man's Lair



A massive crack winds its way through The Old Man's Lair, starting in the northwest and eventually opening up into a small mountainside grotto.

The lair has a steep mountain to the east and forest in all other directions. To the north and west, large snowbanks have accumulated. Elves can safely observe the structure from those directions without being spotted.

(continued from page 5)

adventure based on the ruleset you use, just default to a target number of 15 on saving throws, adding the level/HD of the saving character to the roll.) They're pretty light, though, and are only accurately thrown within about 20 feet (take a -1 penalty on the throw for each 10 feet beyond that).

Elvin assault rifles are the most common firearms carried on Santa's stealth ops missions. They shoot coal, can be fired once per round, deal 1d6 damage, and have a large enough range and ammo capacity that you don't really have to worry about those on this mission. (You can if you want to, though. If you really want to fiddle around with it, give each magazine 30 rounds and let the elves shoot up to 300 feet without any penalty as long as they spend a full round aiming and shooting.) Elvin assault rifles can also be used as improvised melee weapons that deal 1d6 damage.



The **rocket-propelled tree (tiny)** is a cumbersome weapon. Usually just one or two elves are designated RPT(T) gunners on a mission, carrying one tree each. One single, tiny, explosive tree. An RPT(T) does 3d6 damage to everything within 20 feet of what it hits. Usually, an attack roll isn't even necessary, unless you just need to determine *exactly* how close the explosion is to its target.

Bo-lights are specially weighted strings of holiday lights. They're a festive way to tie up an opponent. After being hit, an opponent is automatically entangled (no actions) for one round. They may then free themselves with a successful saving throw (one per round).

Most S.O.B.s wear simple, lightweight body armor that provides +1 Defense.

Elves should be airlifted by reindeer, under cover of night, to the forested region surrounding The Old Man's Lair (map on facing page). The lair's details start on the following page. . .

1

A single leprechaun stands guard near the westernmost window on the lair's northern side. He is paying close attention to the facing snowbank. Like all leprechauns that will be encountered in this adventure, he will fight on sight.

Leprechaun	2 HD (7 HP)	Defense 12
<u>Attack:</u> Pot (of gold) +2 (1d6 damage)		
<u>Treasure:</u> Pot holds 5d6 gold coins. If an elf takes possession of a shamrock from the pocket of a leprechaun, all attacks on the elf have a -1 penalty.		

2

The lair's western door is guarded by 2d6 leprechauns due to the large crack that compromises the structure at this point. They are all distracted by a dice game and can potentially be surprised by a sneak attack.

3

There is no activity in this room, but the floor is covered with piles of feathers in a variety of sizes and colors. If the elves search the piles, they will find a battered copy of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

4

Another 1d6+1 leprechauns are in this L-shaped room. All but one of them are facing southward (toward #6) and looking very worried, but they will charge the elves upon entry. Two rounds after entering, the elves will be able to see what the leprechauns were worried about, as a 20-foot-tall Turkraken with tentacle-like feathers rounds the corner, tossing a lifeless leprechaun from its massive beak.

Turkraken	5 HD (18 HP)	Defense 12
<u>Attacks:</u> Beak +5 (1d6 damage, save or get tossed for an additional 1d6 damage) <i>and</i> 3 feathers +3 (1d6-1 damage, may also target leprechauns)		
<u>Treasure:</u> In its stomach are a golden crabapple and another copy of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> .		

5

At the end of the east-west portion of the room, a large, anthropomorphic pink bunny in a bowtie rains egg-bombs upon the elves from the top of a stairwell. The attacks begin as soon as there is just one leprechaun left fighting *or* if any of the elves attempt to move through the north-south portion of the room (toward #6).



The bunny will spread its attacks among each player's elves somewhat equally *unless* one of the players makes an "egg-splosion" joke, in which case the bunny will only go for that player's characters.

Bunny	3 HD (11 HP)	Defense 13
<u>Attack:</u> Egg +3 (1 damage, roll d6 for additional effect) 1-3 - Splash of sizzling acid for 1d6 additional damage. 4-5 - Clothing catches on fire; 1 damage per turn until it is extinguished. 6 - Creamed corn; Turkraken only directs its beak attack at you (first attack comes immediately).		
<u>Treasure:</u> Nah...		

If elves look into the room where the bunny is standing, they will see that it contains 10 sets of 3-high, leprechaun-sized bunkbeds and a host of personal effects. Among them are several well-worn copies of the sheet music for "The Twelve Days of Christmas."

6

There is a huge opening in the floor where the Turkraken broke through from its small subterranean cell. Elves must succeed at a DEX check when navigating this, or fall 15 feet to the floor below (save or take 1d6 damage for a fall). The cell itself is about 20' x 20' and mostly empty (although it is filthy), containing some large, bone-filled piles of turkey droppings and a few stray feathers (big ones).

7

There is an enormous (about 5' tall and 15' wide), steaming cauldron in the middle of this room. It appears that there has recently been a fire beneath it. Elves who look in the cauldron will notice a strange mix of ingredients - drumsticks (the wooden kind and the bird kind), human hands and feet, eggshells, and lots of other bird parts. Looking into the mixture while inhaling its fumes will cause the elves to see fleeting (yet vivid) visions of events that occurred over the past year.

In a circle around the cauldron, in what appears to be blood, is something written in a magical script. If interpreted via *read magic*, the writing says:

*I sacrifice the baby boy
And gain a New Year to enjoy*

Besides the entrance doors, there are 12 passages leading away from this large room. Some have doors, while some are marked by staircases. If the elves explore these areas, they will find: (a) a few feathers; (b) a dead dove, partially plucked; (c) two dead chickens and a crumbled back wall (a small amount of light and the faint sound of chanting come from the opening; elves can follow this passageway to reach #8); (d) three small birds, two of them dead and one barely alive (tweeting a soft and mournful song); (e) four rings of gold; (f) five dead geese and a single egg on a bed of feathers (if picked up, the egg will explode, forcing all in the room to save or take 1d6 damage); (g) a withered corpse with a sign



saying "Scrooge," chained to six bags marked with a "\$" (the bags contain 10d6 silver each; one of the corpse's legs has been beaten into a powder, and a heavy wooden mallet lies next to him); (h) six dead swans; (i) eight dead women, their hands cleanly removed; (j) nine dead women with their feet torn off; (k) ten dead men, again with no feet; (l) eleven dead humans in a pile, their faces mutilated and with flutes sticking out; (m) twelve more dead humans lying on a stack of drums.

8

As the elves near the source of light and chanting in the grotto, they will be able to see The Old Man, his long beard flowing around his aged frame. In one hand he holds a staff with a dead partridge hanging from its gnarled end; in the other, he holds aloft a chalice. The Old Man has his gaze locked on Baby New Year in a small cage hanging before him and chants in a harsh (yet festive) tongue.

The Old Man	6 HD (21 HP)	Defense 14
<u>Attack:</u> Staff +6 (1d6 damage)		
<u>Magic:</u> The Old Man can cast both <i>magic missile</i> (three bolts per casting) and <i>levitate</i> at will.		
<u>Treasure:</u> That staff. And that chalice.		

The elves *might* be able to sneak up on him. Whenever he becomes aware of their presence, he will stop chanting and begin to magically attack them. As he casts his first spell, he will shout (in villainous fashion):

"Jolly fools! You won't stop this baptism and sacrifice! I shall live on!!!"

This could very easily be a battle to the death, although The Old Man will *teleport* out of his lair if he is able to act while at 5 or less HP.

Santa's S.O.B.s succeed at their mission if they are able to:

- (1) kill The Old Man (although someone will have to perform a ritual to ensure a successful year's end) or force his escape;
- (2) escape the lair with Baby New Year; *or*
- (3) dump both the chalice *and* the cauldron at #7.

They can then radio for pickup by reindeer. There's a good chance they're already dead, though.

Happy Holidays.



Name: _____



Level 2 Warrior
Defense **12**

HP (2d6): _____

STR 11 DEX 13 CON 9 INT 9 WIS 7 CHA 18
--- --- --- --- --- (+2)

Attacks: 2x CANDY BLADES +2 (1d6-1 damage)
Extra: 3x FLASHCANES

Name: _____



Level 1 Warrior
Defense **12**

HP (1d6): _____

STR 16 DEX 10 CON 13 INT 14 WIS 10 CHA 8
(+1) --- --- --- --- ---

Attacks: 2x CANDY BLADES +2 (1d6 damage)

Name: _____



Level 1 Warrior
Defense **12**

HP (1d6): _____

STR 14 DEX 8 CON 13 INT 6 WIS 10 CHA 15
--- --- --- --- --- (+1)

Attack: ELVIN RIFLE +1 (1d6 damage)

Name: _____



Level 2 Mage
Defense **11**

HP (1d6+1): _____

STR 12 DEX 13 CON 13 INT 13 WIS 8 CHA 11
--- --- --- --- ---

Attack: CANDY BLADE +0 (1d6-1 damage)
Spells: MAGIC MISSILE x1, READ MAGIC x1

Name: _____



Level 1 Mage
Defense **11**

HP (1d6-2): _____

STR 6 DEX 10 CON 3 INT 17 WIS 9 CHA 12
(-1) --- (-2) (+1) --- ---

Attack: CANDY BLADE -1 (1d6-2 damage)
Spell: MAGIC MISSILE x1

Name: _____



Level 1 Mage
Defense **11**

HP (1d6): _____

STR 13 DEX 9 CON 10 INT 11 WIS 14 CHA 11
--- --- --- --- ---

Attack: ELVIN RIFLE +0 (1d6 damage)
Spell: READ MAGIC x1

Name: _____



Level 2 Mage
Defense **11**

HP (1d6+1): _____

STR 8 DEX 11 CON 10 INT 11 WIS 12 CHA 6
--- --- --- --- --- (-1)

Attack: RPT(T) x1/adventure (3d6 damage)

Spells: MAGIC MISSILE x1, READ MAGIC x1

Name: _____



Level 1 Warrior
Defense **12**

HP (1d6): _____

STR 9 DEX 8 CON 10 INT 8 WIS 8 CHA 10
--- --- --- --- ---

Attack: ELVIN RIFLE +1 (1d6 damage)

Extra: 2x FLASHCANES

Name: _____



Level 1 Warrior
Defense **12**

HP (1d6): _____

STR 13 DEX 14 CON 9 INT 3 WIS 8 CHA 14
--- --- --- (-2) --- ---

Attacks: CANDY BLADE +1 (1d6-1 damage) *or*
BO-LIGHTS +1 (entangle)

Name: _____



Level 1 Mage
Defense **11**

HP (1d6): _____

STR 9 DEX 9 CON 5 INT 12 WIS 16 CHA 13
--- --- --- (-1) ---

Attack: CANDY BLADE +0 (1d6-1 damage)

Spell: READ MAGIC x1

Name: _____



Level 2 Warrior
Defense **12**

HP (2d6): _____

STR 15 DEX 13 CON 11 INT 13 WIS 13 CHA 8
(+1) --- --- --- ---

Attacks: 2x CANDY BLADES +3 (1d6 damage)

Name: _____



Level 1 Warrior
Defense **12**

HP (1d6): _____

STR 11 DEX 8 CON 10 INT 10 WIS 6 CHA 7
--- --- --- --- ---

Attacks: ELVIN RIFLE +1 (1d6 damage) *or*
BO-LIGHTS +1 (entangle)

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Baby New Year is missing.

Only an elite team straight from Santa's workshop can get him back.

To be honest, though...it isn't looking so good.

(*In Bleakest Midwinter* is a cozy little holiday adventure for any number of expendable elves.)