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THE DARKEST NIGHT

A CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE FOR FIFTH EDITION

SHAWN ELLSWORTH

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THE DARKEST NIGHT

Iceville was cursed to darkness
In a time long ago
Every nook and cranny
There, no light would go

Fear and sadness for all
And the tears oh, they did flow
For no relief in sight,
Did the dawn ever show

A stranger came to town
Coming up the road
He said he wanted to free Iceville
From the darkness that took hold

He said his name was Kringle
A hero from afar away
He'd heard our plight in Iceville
Promising to hold the dark at bay

The evil feared the hero
And tried to trap him cold
But the children cheered for Kringle
And their love kept him from that hold

The evil swore to slay him
But Kringle was so bold
He slew it with his power
Bringing light to defeat our foe

As years passed he stayed near us
In the forest to the north
His workshop full of magic
Children toys do come forth

He brings them down to Iceville
And slips from house to house
Leaving toys and eating cookies
Not noticed by even a mouse

This day is a thanks to him
For bringing light to our town
And he thanks all our children
With presents that abound





The Darkest Night is a holiday themed adventure where players battle an ancient evil to save Kringlefest. This adventure can be used as an outline for any game system, but the specific details are for four 1st-level adventurers using 5th edition rules of the world's greatest roleplaying game.

BACKGROUND

Far to the north, the thriving mining town of Iceville survives long, cold and dark winters. When the nights are longest, the people of Iceville light up the darkness with candles, song and the exchange of gifts during Kringlefest. The celebration is named after the mysterious Kringle, who long ago brought light to Iceville, after the dark days. But Kringle is most loved, for giving every child in town a gift during Kringlefest, that he made in his magical workshop. It is believed by many, that Kringle travels into town on a red sleigh full with presents, drawn by eight flying reindeer. Kringle silently enters each house without ever being seen by children, or their parents. In exchange for the gifts, the children leave treats for Kringle, which are always gone when they awaken to find their gift.

Kringle is actually a benevolent gnome, named Nicholas Kris Klaas Kringle, who has made it his life's work to bring light to the people of Iceville. For nearly 500 winters, this ancient gnome has spent each year creating gifts in his workshop with his helpers. Kringle's workshop is said to be full of clockwork wonders and magical treasures, but its exact location is a secret.

Over the years, Kringle put on lots of extra padding, thanks to the treats, and he is no longer the young hero who saved Iceville nearly five centuries ago. This year, an ancient enemy has finally gained back his strength and decided it is time for the darkness to return. Krampus, a monstrous evil,

has a much different plan for this year's Kringlefest. Krampus has enchanted Kringle and his helpers and is forcing them to build an army of toys. This year, Krampus will finally return Iceville to the darkness that existed before his defeat to Kringle centuries ago.

INTRODUCTION AND HOOKS

The adventurers can arrive in Iceville the day of this year's Kringlefest, or they can be locals from Iceville. Either way, the adventurers should learn Kringle's story from a bard performing at the inn's tavern, or in the town square. The song/story should detail the exploits of Kringle long ago and his workshop full of magical wonders. The name of the evil should be kept a secret from the players. Use the adventure background as a base for your song/story.

One of the following hooks can be employed to entice your adventurers into action.

- **A young gnome** (one of Kringle's helpers named Holly), wearing a pointy green hat, red coat and green tights, and red shoes, has stumbled into town and collapses at the feet of the adventurers. She is in bad shape from the cold and only able to whisper "Must save Kringle" and points north, before collapsing unconscious to 0 HP. If the adventurers can stabilize Holly, one chance at DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine), she stabilizes – otherwise she dies.

You can choose to have the adventurers cure the stabilized Holly and have her act as a guide, but it may be better for her to remain behind and give the adventurers a map. Either way, Holly provides them with a rough, hand drawn map to Kringle's workshop.

- **A crazy hermit** (Knecht Ruprecht) wanders into town talking of the return of a dark evil. The hermit is a human with a long white beard and is wearing a brown robe. If the adventurers talk to the hermit, he hands them a tattered map to Kringle's workshop and tells them that only they can save Iceville from an ancient, unspeakable darkness. Further questioning of the hermit can result in nonsense, more details such as revealing his name, punching, screaming or other fun. The crazy hermit could be the avatar of a God of light.

STARTING OUT

A DC 15 Intelligence (History) check will allow your players to also find out that 480 years ago Kringle defeated a demon that enslaved the people of Iceville. The unspeakable evil had placed Iceville under a spell of eternal darkness, allowing it to feed off the fear and sadness of the people. The monster's name has been lost to time. If their check is a close failure, let them know the same details, just don't specifically mention the monster is a demon.

ENCOUNTER 1

As you leave town, you find the winding path through a pine forest to Kringle's Workshop. After traveling through scattered pine woods for an hour, the forest thins and you enter a large clearing lit by the partial moon. Suddenly four piles of snow start to rise into humanoid shapes that are 30 feet in front of you.

Roll initiative and start a battle against four **snow people**. The snow people will often choose to hide and drift to get to weaker enemies. Adjust the number of snow people up or down for groups that are larger or smaller than four players.

SNOW PERSON

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities Ice

Damage Vulnerabilities Fire

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened

Skills Stealth +5

Senses Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages Understands languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Snow Drift. The snow person gain advantage when hiding in a snowy environment. Once hidden, a snow person effectively becomes invisible and can drift up to 15 feet per round as part of its move until it surfaces. While drifting, a snow person can not attack.

ACTIONS

Ice Claw. Melee Attack: +4 to hit, Hit: 8 (1d6+4) slashing damage

Snowball. Range Attack: +2 to hit, Hit: 5 (1d4+2), Range 30'/60' bludgeoning damage



ENCOUNTER 2

Having survived the advance guard, the adventurers make it to the workshop without further incident.

On the far side of the clearing you find the path again. After a few minutes your group reaches the top of a small hill, you see a large building (120 feet wide by 40 feet deep) on the edge of a woodlot 200 feet away. Moving around the outside of the building are six short, silhouetted shapes that appear to be on patrol. On the front right of the building you can make out a door that appears to serve as the main entrance.

Your adventurers have a variety of options available to them to avoid a tough head-on battle with the toy soldiers. Some obvious choices are:

DEXTERITY (STEALTH)

- **DC 13** You keep to the treeline and are able to get close to the front door. The closest toy soldier is just over 50 feet away, patrolling between the adventurers and the building.
- **DC 16** You find a way around all four of the patrolling soldiers and get to the back of the building. You find a small entrance at the back of the building which is locked. To get past the door requires a DC 13 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check to pick the lock or DC 13 Strength (Athletics) to break the door open.

INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA)

- **DC 13** The guards are actually toy soldiers animated by transmutation magic.

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)

- **DC 13** Four of the toy soldiers appear to be patrolling the building in a clockwise fashion at regular intervals.

WISDOM (PERCEPTION)

- **DC 13** The figures appear to be soldiers. Two of them are guarding the front door.
- **DC 15** The figures are actually toy soldiers.

If they do not find a way to avoid a head-on battle, have them face six **toy soldiers**. The toy soldiers should simply attack their closest enemy or continue to patrol. The toy soldiers will detect anything that comes within 60 feet using their blindsight.

TOY SOLDIER

Small construct, neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 9 (2d6+2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened

Senses **Blindsight** Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
passive Perception 10

Languages Understands languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. Toy soldiers are incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the construct must save on a constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

False Appearance. While an animated toy soldier remains motionless it is indistinguishable from one of its non-animated cousins.

ACTIONS

Tiny Musket. Range Attack: +4 to hit, Hit: 8 (1d8+4) piercing damage. Ammunition (range 30'/90') loading

Bayonet. Melee Attack: +4 to hit, Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.



ENCOUNTER 3

Now that the adventurers are inside the workshop, the time for the final battle is near. Trying to sneak into the workshop from the storage warehouse without the notice of Krampus will be difficult and only possible if the group avoided fighting in Encounter 2. Each PC will need to pass a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If the majority of them are successful, then award a surprise round to the players. Otherwise, Krampus is waiting for them.

Opening the double doors on the west side of the warehouse, you find the main area of the workshop. The main workshop area is 60-foot wide and 40-feet at its deepest with a 30-foot high ceiling. The room is filled with a dozen gnomes, in pointy green and red hats, methodically working away on toy soldiers. At the far end of the workshop sits a six-foot tall monster covered in dark fur with cloven feet, a tail, two horns, pointed ears and a long tongue.

Roll initiative and begin the battle. The players will face off against two **toy soldiers** and **Krampus**. Krampus will use darkness early on and then focus on charging with his horns to gore them. The toy soldiers should simply attack the closest PC. If the battle is too tough for you players, you could have one or two gnome helpers (**commoner**) wake up from the enchantment using whatever they can find as weapons (using the stats for club) or throw a healing potion to a player.

The monster turns and looks right at your group and lets out a huge roar. The roar extinguishes the candles and plunges the large workshop into near darkness.

- Only the fireplace to the north provide dim light in a 20 foot radius, casting long shadows that end in the darkness beyond.
- Encourage your players to use pillars, crates, tables, and desks around the room for cover.

Have Krampus throw out some quotes each round.

- "I am Krampus and Iceville will live in darkness forever."
- Before casting Darkness: "Are you afraid of the dark?"
- "I will grow in power from the pain and sorrow of the children trapped in eternal darkness."
- "The children will be getting no presents this year, only pain."
- "I have been planning my return for centuries. What is a few moments to destroy all of you?"

KRAMPUS

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 30 (4d8+12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	15 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Gnomish, Abyssal

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Charge. If Krampus moves at least 15 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

Darkness. Magical darkness spreads out in a 20-foot-radius sphere around Krampus. The demon can cast this spell only once and it lasts until he is hit by a successful attack or three rounds pass. Like the spell darkness, darkvision can't see through this darkness and nonmagical light can not illuminate it. His innate spellcasting ability is Constitution (spell save DC 13).

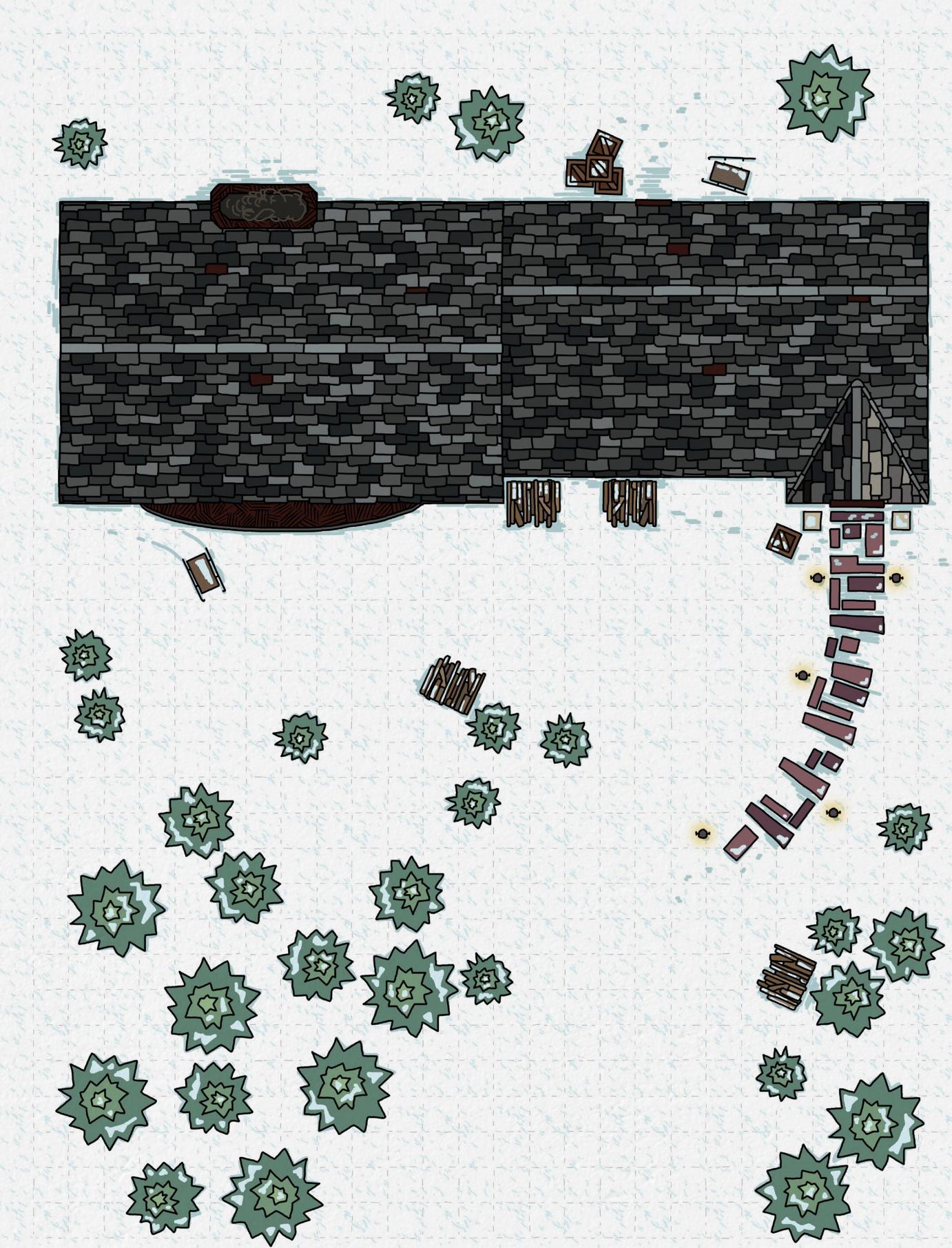
Enchant. Krampus is already using this power to control Kringle and his helpers. His enchant ability will end once he is knocked unconscious or is killed.

ACTIONS

Gore. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, Hit: 9 (2d6+2) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, Hit: 6 (1d6+2) slashing damage.







CONCLUSION

Congratulate your players on saving Kringlefest.

Most of the gnomes, no longer enchanted, cheer and thank each of the adventurers with hand shaking, pats on the back and hugs. The rest of them work to open a crate and an old bearded gnome is pulled out and untied. He introduces himself to the players as Kringle. Kringle is an old gnome with a kind, jolly looking face. Kringle is wearing a red coat and hat trimmed in white fur. He is tall and plump for a gnome and strokes his long white beard while talking.

Have Kringle thank each of the heroes by name and give them all a personal gift for their part in stopping Krampus. Try to make it special, magical and tailored for each player, like Kringle knew they'd be visiting him. You could have Kringle ask the PCs leading questions such as what is your favorite animal, hobby, or food to get ideas before you reveal the gift.

As you leave the workshop, you notice a crew of gnomes are readying the sleigh out front, loading it with bags and parcels and hitching eight reindeer to it.

Some ideas for Kringle's presents:

- a living clockwork of their favorite animal
- a "robot" companion... could be an owl, dog or even as large as a flying mount.
- a box with a lid, that when opened will fill with their favorite food (once per day)
- a musical instrument that plays on its own
- any magic item that ties into a PCs backstory



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