

AGE 12+



## LEGACY OF THE CRYSTAL SHARD™

ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST – 3RD LEVEL

FORGOTTEN REALMS®



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# INTRODUCTION

Winter has come early to Icewind Dale. The people of Ten-Towns are on edge; with food and supplies scarce, each town looks jealously to its own survival. Beyond the walls, wolves and yetis prowl the wilds, and few travelers brave enough to venture there ever return. To the north, the Reghed tribes whisper stories of the Frostmaiden, manifested in the world to punish those who have strayed from her worship. And on the slopes of Kelvin's Cairn, an old enemy awakens to finish the conquest he started over one hundred years ago.

*Legacy of the Crystal Shard™* is an adventure for low-level characters and can be run either as a stand-alone adventure or as a sequel to *Murder in Baldur's Gate™*. The adventure allows players to explore the breadth of Faerûn's frozen north and face old foes as well as new threats to the people of Icewind Dale.

## BACKGROUND

As the memories of Akar Kessell and his Crystal Shard fade into legend, a young barbarian outcast named **Hedrun Arnsfirth** has accepted the mantle of Auril's Chosen and pledged to bring the people of Icewind Dale to the worship of the Frostmaiden. With the beasts and the snows at her command, this outcast has become the Ice Witch, visiting her fury upon the barbarian tribes and Ten-Towns. Left unchecked, she will help her mistress cast all of Icewind Dale into an eternal winter.

At the same time, **Vaelish Gant**—a member of the newly revived Arcane Brotherhood—has insinuated himself into the trade network of Ten-Towns with the aim of gaining a stranglehold on the entire region. Aided by the ruffians and scoundrels of Luskan's Ship Rethnor, Gant has established a protection racket in Bryn Shander, the trading hub of the region, and his agents are spreading throughout Ten-Towns to solidify his hold.

As if these two villainous forces weren't enough, the undead **Akar Kessell**, freed from a century of imprisonment in the snow and ice, has also returned to haunt Icewind Dale, seeking to finish his conquest and visit vengeance on all who opposed him. Spreading the influence of the black ice remnants of the Crystal Shard, he hopes to weaken Icewind Dale with infighting, giving himself a clear pathway to domination.

These villains' plots have spread and intermingled over the course of a month before the adventure begins, building to a climax that pulls the player characters into their midst. What follows is a summary of the key events that have transpired, leading up to the start of the adventure on Eleint 25, 1485.

# What Has Come Before

In the winter of 1484, Hedrun Arnsfirth was cast out of the Tribe of the Elk after the accidental death of her suitor, Olaf Tormhaalt, son of the tribe's shaman. Chosen by Auril, Hedrun learned of her wondrous abilities and began plotting her revenge.

## Eleasias (August) 1485

On the 21st, the first great storm of winter hit—about a month early. As usual, the people of Ten-Towns made sacrifices to Auril, presenting a larger share of their harvest than ever before and offering coins in cold streams and rivers. Davrick Fain wandered into the tundra in the hope of receiving Auril's blessing.

On the 22nd, Davrick Fain experienced Auril's "embrace" and returned to Bremen, proclaiming himself a priest of the Frostmaiden and calling on his neighbors to serve her.

On the 23rd, Hedrun the Ice Witch sent a simulacrum to lead a pack of rampaging beasts in an attack on the Tribe of the Elk, the largest of the Reghed tribes.

On the 24th, a caravan from Luskan arrived in Bryn Shander. Traveling with the caravan were Vaelish Gant, a number of thugs from Ship Rethnor in his employ, and a Harper agent named Aarun who trailed the Ship Rethnor agents here.

On the 25th, Vaelish Gant secured an audience with Speaker Duvessa Shane of Bryn Shander, posing as a friendly merchant from Waterdeep. He gained the speaker's trust even while the Ship Rethnor thugs secretly in his employ started establishing a protection racket in Bryn Shander. Meanwhile, Gant's apprentice, Pallidor, ran away from his master and hired a crew of miners from the dwarven valley. They climbed Kelvin's Cairn, looking for signs of Akar Kessell's corpse.

On the 26th, having discovered that several of the Ship Rethnor thugs were actually wererats, Aarun used magic to request help from Harper agents in Luskan. The Harper agents secured a supply of silvered weapons and made arrangements to put them on the next northbound caravan.

On the 27th, a pack of vicious wolves attacked a group of travelers on the road from Termalaine to Lonelywood. This was the first of the Ice Witch's attacks on the people of Ten-Towns, and over the following weeks the beasts seemed to grow bolder, venturing closer to civilization.

On the 28th, Pallidor and his dwarf miners uncovered Akar Kessell, now a wight, and freed him from his icy prison. Commanding Pallidor and the dwarves into his service, Kessell started toward the Spine of the World mountains in search of some scrap of the power of the Crystal Shard.

On the 29th, under the leadership of shaman Bjami Tengervaald, the Tribe of the Bear swore allegiance to

Hedrun the Ice Witch. Bjami led a group of warriors to Evermelt, where they established a camp at the hot spring and a makeshift temple inside Icingdeath's lair.

On the 30th, the last northbound caravan of the season left Luskan for Icewind Dale. Hearing reports of the early winter, the caravan masters were reluctant to set out at all, but the Harper agents ensured that the caravan set out as scheduled, with a crate of silvered weapons aboard. If the player characters traveled to Icewind Dale by caravan at the start of the adventure, they ride with this caravan as well.

## Eleint (September) 1485

On the 1st of this month, Davrick Fain befriended the "wild man" Rycher in Lonelywood.

On the 3rd, Akar Kessell discovered black ice on the site of the first Cryshal-Tirith in the Spine of the World. Though he was disappointed in its apparent lack of great power, he was pleased to see the strife it created among the dwarves. Baerrick Hammerstone killed the other miners and mined a supply of black ice. Kessell, Baerrick, and Pallidor traveled back to the dwarven valley, returning on the 8th. On that day, Akar Kessell killed a party of dwarf miners and, over the next few days, animated them into zombies.

On the 9th, the trapper Aglonell of Bryn Shander found several of his traps raided, the animals stolen. The culprits, unknown to him, are brigands recruited and organized by Vaelish Gant's Ship Rethnor agents.

On the 10th, Vaelish Gant began encouraging several of the more influential citizens of Bryn Shander to declare their lack of confidence in Duvessa Shane's leadership. These citizens include Myrtle (proprietor of Goldenstag's Rest), Scramsax (owner of the Northlook), Rendaril (owner of the Emporium that carries his name), and Sheriff Markham.

On the 11th, the last caravan out of Luskan reached the North/South Pass.

On the 12th, Akar Kessell's dwarf zombies attacked another mining party, killing several dwarves.

On the 13th, a merchant who came to Ten-Towns on the same caravan as Vaelish Gant was killed by cultists of Auril in Dougan's Hole. This was the first murder committed as worshipers of Auril grew stronger and more desperate in the face of the harsh winter.

On the 14th, the last caravan cleared the North/South Pass and came into a heavy winter storm in Icewind Dale.

On the 15th, Dain Stokely Silverstream of the dwarven valley had a loud public argument with Baerrick Hammerstone in which Baerrick questioned Stokely's leadership, his loyalty to the clan, and his dedication to protecting his people. After the argument, Baerrick gathered a group of similarly disaffected dwarves and established a sanctum on the eastern side of the valley—a place they called the Halls of Black Ice.

On the 18th, the “wild man” Rycher discovered a remorhaz egg and brought it to Davrick Fain, who established a lair in the old verbeeg cave on Kelvin’s Cairn.

On the 20th, the last caravan was expected in Bryn Shander, but it did not arrive. It was delayed by the winter weather. Also on this day, an emissary from Vaelish Gant arrived in the Halls of Black Ice, seeking an alliance with the dwarves and access to the black ice.

On the 21st (the day of the autumnal equinox), the Elk Tribe warrior Hengar Aesnvaard left his tribe’s encampment, heading for Bryn Shander to implore the Ten-Towners for aid.

On the 22nd, with more and more dwarves joining Baerick Hammerstone in the Halls of Black Ice, and more zombie attacks making the mines increasingly dangerous, Stokely Silverstream moved the dwarves who remained loyal to him into the west side of the valley, in what he called Battlehammer Hold.

On the 23rd, Baerick sold a ship’s ram made of black ice to a fisher of Caer-Dineval named Derrick Gaffner. On the same day, the leading citizens of Bryn Shander called for the election of a new Speaker. Duvessa Shane promised to call a public audience to answer their grievances. She scheduled the audience for the holiday of Highharvestide, the day after the 30th of the month.

On the 24th, zombies attacked another dwarf mining party in the nexus. In addition, Hengar arrived in Bryn Shander, where he was quickly identified by the cult of Auril as a suitable sacrifice to the Frostmaiden. He was falsely accused of theft and held in irons overnight. In his absence, the Tribe of the Bear launched an attack on the Elk Tribe encampment.

The adventure begins on the 25th of Eleint. On this day, the Bear Tribe raiding party returned to Evermelt with their Elk Tribe captives, and Hengar was sentenced to death by exposure in Bryn Shander. The crew of the *Howling Fiend*, bearing the black ice ram, attacked a fishing vessel on Lac Dinneshere. And finally, the last caravan from Luskan arrives at the gates of Bryn Shander where it is attacked by yetis, drawing the player characters into the action.

## PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before running *Legacy of the Crystal Shard*, you should read this book to familiarize yourself with the possibilities. It’s okay to focus on the prelude and Act 1 at the outset, but you should also read the information in the *Campaign Guide* to make sure you understand the adventure’s three villains and their goals. Knowing the setting and its characters will help you improvise when the players take the action in unexpected directions.

## THE CALENDAR

The Forgotten Realms has a calendar of twelve months, each thirty days long. Five intercalary holidays inserted between months bring the year to 365 days, with one additional festival day (Shieldmeet) added every four years. The month of Eleint, when the adventure begins, is roughly equivalent to September, and the autumnal equinox occurs on the 21st of that month. Winter comes early to Icewind Dale, however, and especially early this year.

After the 30th of Eleint comes the intercalary holiday of Highharvestide, a holiday of feasting to celebrate the autumn harvest—at least in southern lands. The following month is Marpenoth.

The years of the calendar are reckoned from the ratification of the Dales Compact, an agreement between the elves of the great forest of Cormanthor and the humans who had begun settling in the valleys among the forest. This system is called Dalereckoning, and years are sometimes followed by DR. The current year, 1485 DR, is also called the Year of the Iron Dwarf’s Vengeance, according to the ancient Roll of Years derived from prophecy.

Akar Kessell’s first appearance in Icewind Dale was in 1356 DR, over a hundred years ago.

Before running the adventure, also download the encounter and treasure information for the edition of the game you plan to play. To provide the greatest possible flexibility, *Legacy of the Crystal Shard* is designed to be run with any recent edition of the D&D® game, including 3rd edition (v.3.5), 4th edition, or the current playtest of D&D Next. Thus, this book contains no monster statistics and only general rules material—you’ll find what you need to run the adventure at [www.DungeonsandDragons.com/Sundering](http://www.DungeonsandDragons.com/Sundering). Throughout this book, references to the statistics available in the download are indicated with bold type and an asterisk. Thus, **marauding yetis\*** points you to the yeti statistics in the download packet.

## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

In *Legacy of the Crystal Shard*, it’s up to the players to decide what adventures they want to pursue, and their choices will determine what shape the story takes.

The adventure begins (Prelude: Arrival in Bryn Shander) when a group of heroes gathers near the southern gates of Bryn Shander just as an arriving caravan is attacked by yetis. After helping the townsfolk drive off the beasts, the adventurers begin to learn about the

strange events that have plagued Icewind Dale of late, including the recent increase in beast attacks on the towns and the driving snows that always seem to accompany them. The end of this first encounter provides three clear hooks leading to the three chapters of Act 1.

The adventure then unfolds in three acts. In each act, the three villains work their plans and schemes across Icewind Dale, and the adventurers must choose which threats to address and in what order. Throughout, they should feel a sense of terrible urgency, knowing that they cannot possibly deal with every threat to Icewind Dale.

In the first part of the adventure (Act 1: The Drawing Down), Vaelish Gant seeks to become Bryn Shander's speaker (The Arcane Brotherhood). In addition, the Ice Witch and her pawns seek to eliminate the Tribe of the Elk (Tribe of the Elk). Finally, Akar Kessell sows dissent and disorder among the dwarves of Kelvin's Cairn (Halls of Black Ice). The adventurers can respond to some of these threats, but not all.

Each of these three chapters also includes events that might cause the players to shift focus and pursue other leads. For example, while traveling to Kelvin's Cairn to help the dwarves, they might encounter a merchant fleeing Bryn Shander and decide that they need to visit that town and deal with Vaelish Gant's thugs.

Whichever threat the players don't stem erupts in catastrophe soon after (Interlude: A Sudden Squall), with lasting effects on Icewind Dale that reflect the progress of the villain's plans. You can decide when to move to this interlude. It's based on the assumption that the adventurers will not have time to wrap up all three parts of Act 1, and the villain they leave unchecked is the driving force behind the interlude. For example, if they focus on Vaelish Gant and Akar Kessell, leaving the Ice Witch relatively unhindered, she unleashes a massive attack on Icewind Dale with long-lasting repercussions.

After that catastrophic event, all three villains continue their schemes (Act 2: Deepwinter). The adventurers might respond to the events of the interlude and pursue the villain they have been ignoring, or they might continue to pursue the villains they opposed in Act 1. Regardless, the Ice Witch begins to work with the cult of Auril in Ten-Towns, and her cult leader attempts to unleash a remorhaz on the towns of Maer Daldon (Fangs of the Frostmaiden). Vaelish Gant's agents work throughout Ten-Towns, but his attention is focused on a group of fishers from Caer-Dineval whose use of black ice has turned them into bloodthirsty pirates (Pirates of Lac Dinneshere).

Finally, the adventurers must journey to the Ice Witch's black ice tower on the Sea of Moving Ice (Act 3: The Claw of Winter) and face her directly.

Ultimately, *Legacy of the Crystal Shard* is what the adventurers make of it—the whole of Icewind Dale is open for them to explore, with many plots to uncover and many allies and enemies to be made. Your players must

choose which evils they will vanquish and which they will allow to endure. The fate of Icewind Dale is in their hands—and yours.

## COMING EVENTS

If the adventurers do nothing, the villains' plans advance without them. This timeline summarizes important events that will occur unless the adventurers prevent them. You can adjust these dates if you wish, either to give the adventurers a little more time to accomplish everything they set out to do, or to increase the urgency they feel as they try to stave off all these evils at once.

On the night of Eleint 25, the same day the caravan arrives, a warehouse in Bryn Shander burns to the ground. The adventurers might see the flames—a strange green alchemical fire—but the town as a whole is powerless to stop it. The townsfolk do manage to keep it from spreading to any nearby buildings. (See “Aarun’s Weapons” on page 10.) In addition, Slim lures Aarun to the Northlook with a forged note from Mithann and murders him. (See “Confronting Slim,” page 9.)

On the 26th, Vaelish Gant sends Pyrse of Ship Rethnor to Caer-Konig with instructions to infiltrate the pirate crew that attacked a fishing boat the day before. (See “Pirates of Lac Dinneshere” on page 21.) Also, Marek the Shank and a group of Ship Rethnor thugs break in to Dunavan’s second warehouse to steal Aarun’s shipment of silvered weapons.

On the 28th, Hedrun (via her simulacrum) sends her captive father, Soren Arnsfirth, back to the Tribe of the Elk to demand their obeisance. (See “Dragon’s Lair” in “Tribe of the Elk,” page 14.) In addition, the pirate crew of the Howling Fiend attacks Caer-Konig.

On the 29th, the emissary that Vaelish Gant sent to Baerick Hammerstone seals an alliance with the dwarf and returns to Bryn Shander.

On the 30th, Helda journeys to the dwarven valley if the adventurers have not already accompanied her there. On the same day, the pirates of the Howling Fiend raid Caer-Dineval.

On Highharvestide, Slim and a group of Ship Rethnor thugs capture Duvessa Shane before her scheduled public audience. Since she doesn’t appear at the audience, the gathered notables of the town elect Vaelish Gant the new speaker of Bryn Shander. (See “Fall of Bryn Shander” in the interlude, page 19.) In addition, the Ice Witch leads a massive assault on the heart of Icewind Dale (“Howls from the North,” page 20). Also, Stokely Silverstream flees the dwarven valley with the few dwarves who remain loyal to him and uncorrupted by the black ice. (See “The Black Ice Spreads,” page 20.)

The next day, the 1st of Marpenoth, dwarf zombies spill out of the mines under Kelvin’s Cairn (“The Black Ice Spreads,” page 20). In addition, thugs of Ship

Rethnor begin establishing their protection racket in Caer-Konig and Caer-Dineval, painting allegedly magical symbols on protected boats. (See “Pirates of Lac Dinneshere,” page 21.)

On the 2nd, Vaelish Gant sends Ship Rethnor agents and sellswords along with ordinary citizens to lay claim to a reindeer herd and dwarven mines, attempting to expand his economic influence out from Bryn Shander. (See “The Fall of Bryn Shander,” page 19.)

On the 3rd, the pirates of the *Howling Fiend* launch a major attack on Easthaven, attempting to secure weapons from Rurden’s Armory (“Pirates of Lac Dinneshere,” page 19).

On the 5th, the remorhaz egg hatches, so Davrick Fain leaves his shop in Bremen and joins Rycher in the verbeeg lair.

On the 10th, the council of Ten-Towns, Stokely Silverstream, and King Jarund Elkhardt agree to declare war on the Ice Witch and her forces. Hundreds of warriors start across the tundra toward the Sea of Moving Ice in hopes of finding the Ice Witch’s lair and putting an end to her threat. (See Act 3, “The Claw of Winter,” on page 29.)

## CHARACTER HOOKS

Consider using one or more of these hooks to bring the adventurers together at the gates of Bryn Shander at the start of the adventure. You can weave these hooks into an earlier adventure (such as *Murder in Baldur’s Gate*) or present them as background to the players.

**Caravan Guards:** The adventurers have signed up as guards on a caravan making its way to Icewind Dale from whatever city suits the purposes of your campaign—perhaps Baldur’s Gate (if the characters played through *Murder in Baldur’s Gate*) or maybe Daggerford, Waterdeep, Neverwinter, or Luskan.

**Harper Agents:** The characters might instead be hired in Luskan by a woman named Emryn Dawe, who is secretly a Harper agent. She offers to pay them 300 gp, plus the cost of their trip north and supplies they might need, to make sure that a crate of goods safely reaches her friend Aarun (another Harper agent) in Bryn Shander. The crate can be delivered to a merchant named Dunavan, who can store it in his warehouse until Aarun can claim it. The crate contains silvered weapons that Aarun plans to use against the wererat members of Ship Rethnor.

**Bounty Hunters:** The adventurers have been hired by Obar Nevendil, a wizard from the Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors in Waterdeep, to follow the trail of a thief who stole a magic staff from Blackstaff Tower in that city. Obar’s sources indicate that the thief fled north to Icewind Dale (as so many thieves do). He tasks the adventurers with retrieving the staff and returning it to him in Luskan. Obar would like to have the

thief apprehended and brought before him as well, but he emphasizes that the adventurers’ primary concern should be retrieving the staff by any means necessary.

The wizard is willing to advance them enough coin to cover the cost of their trip north, along with enough to equip themselves with basic cold-weather gear (if the characters haggle, he might advance them an extra 50 gp per adventurer, at the DM’s discretion). The bulk of their reward will be paid upon return of the staff, plus a bonus if they return the thief alive.

The thief is none other than Vaelish Gant. Obar is not a member of the Watchful Order, as he claims, but a rival member of the Arcane Brotherhood hoping to take the staff for his own and see Vaelish humiliated for his failure in Icewind Dale.

**Chosen:** One or more of the adventurers is the Chosen of a god of Faerûn or perhaps is striving to become one. The Chosen receives a mission from the god, requiring the character to travel to Icewind Dale. The exact nature of the task depends on the personality and portfolio of the god in question, but it should be linked to one of the adventure’s main villains. For example, a Chosen of Amaunator or Silvanus might be tasked with dispelling the unnaturally fierce winter gripping the region, whereas a Chosen of Moradin or Dumathoin might be sent to root out the cause of the corruption afflicting the dwarves of Kelvin’s Cairn.

The Chosen active in the Sundering are not necessarily powerful, high-level characters—in a time such as this, even the least servants can make significant differences. Most of them have only minor abilities granted by their deities. A Chosen of Amaunator might have darkvision or be able to stave off the worst of the effects of the cold. A Chosen of Moradin might have enhanced dwarf racial abilities. Being a Chosen shouldn’t be unbalancing to the game.

**On the Run:** The adventurers are fugitives from the south, seeking refuge (as so many have before) in the remote frontier of Icewind Dale. They might be pursued by villains they failed to defeat in a past adventure (or by the friends of villains they did defeat), by paladins of Torm hunting them down for a crime they committed (or one for which they were framed), or by agents of Netheril seeking to kill a player character they suspect (rightly or wrongly) of being a Chosen. The characters might arrive in Bryn Shander with the ill-fated caravan from the south, or perhaps they are already established in town, having left their old lives behind, and happen to be near the gate when the caravan is attacked.

**Ties That Bind:** The adventurers have a close connection to someone who recently went missing in Icewind Dale—perhaps a dwarf who was killed in the mines or on the expedition that uncovered Akar Kessell, a Reghed tribesman killed in one of the Ice Witch’s attacks, or a Harper ally who was investigating the growing cult of Auril in Ten-Towns. The adventurers come

to Bryn Shander with a caravan making the trek north, seeking clues to their friend's fate.

**Other:** One or more adventurers might be native to the region and directly affected by Vaelish Gant's extortion, the Ice Witch's attacks, or Akar Kessell's activities in the dwarven valley.

## PRELUDE: ARRIVAL IN BRYN SHANDER

The adventure begins with the arrival of the long-expected last caravan from Luskan at the southwestern gates of Bryn Shander. You can read your players the following text to set the scene, altering it as necessary if their characters did not arrive in town with the caravan.

*What should have been a six-day journey along Ten Trail from the pass stretched into eleven grueling days of bitter cold, howling winds, driving snowfall, and beasts hounding the caravan's trail. As the wagons roll at last up to the gates of Bryn Shander, you see townsfolk watching with eager expectation, happy for the arrival of what will certainly be the last caravan from the south for months to come. The faces of the merchants and caravan guards show relief and anticipation that almost seem to outweigh the exhaustion, as they look forward to warm fires, hot food, soft beds, and sheltering walls.*

After you set the scene, proceed with the following encounter.

## YETIS AT THE GATE

The Ice Witch has sent a group of **marauding yetis**\* to attack the caravan. The open gates allow the yetis to spill into town, where they begin attacking everyone in sight. Depending on how they arrived on the scene, the characters might begin the encounter inside the town, outside the gates, or split between the two areas. The gates can't be closed until the caravan carts are moved, which is difficult since the yetis' presence sends the cart horses into a panic.

When the characters defeat all the yetis facing them, any remaining yetis flee back into the snowstorm. Characters attempting to give chase find that they quickly lose sight of the retreating yetis in the worsening weather. A character who succeeds on a moderate Wisdom check to track the yetis realizes that although the creatures fled to the south, they originally approached from the north. A character who succeeds on a hard Wisdom check to spot them can't make out the yetis but catches a glimpse of a woman dressed in white robes, apparently crowned with the antlers of an elk, standing in the middle of the storm. The woman quickly disappears, and any character

attempting to track her finds no trace of her passage. (The figure is the Ice Witch's simulacrum, through which she calls the storm and directs the yetis. Its purpose achieved, the figure crumbles back into the snow.)

## THE AFTERMATH

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, events in Bryn Shander can propel the characters in different directions for Act 1 of the adventure. The adventurers can't help but notice the hysterical apothecary, and their actions after the encounter can determine whether they overhear the grumbling guards or speak to Helda Silverstream. The intent here is to put the adventurers at the start of three different paths, representing the three portions of Act 1, and let them choose which one to start down.

**The Hysterical Apothecary:** An apothecary named Rierdon is in hysterics over the damage that the yetis did to his shop, situated just inside the town gate. He wails about the money he paid for protection, crying, "Where was that bastard Slim to protect my shop when it mattered?" If the adventurers talk to him, or if he notices them helping other people, he asks them to help him recover the money he gave to someone he calls Slim, saying, "I'll need it to repair this damage!" He offers to give them half of what he gets back from Slim; the original amount was 150 gp. In addition, he promises them a discount at his shop, which offers simple remedies for blisters, rash, and fever, as well as antitoxins and special unguents to protect against the cold. If the characters accept his offer, Rierdon asks them to meet him that night at the Northlook, the inn where Slim is known to hang out.

If the adventurers meet Rierdon at the Northlook, or later decide to investigate Slim and his protection racket, see "Arcane Brotherhood" (page 8), and especially "Confronting Slim" (page 9).

**The Grumbling Guards:** The adventurers overhear a pair of guards muttering about the attack, saying things like "Damn barbarian led them straight to us." If questioned, the guards tell the adventurers that a barbarian from the Reghed tribes was caught stealing something earlier in the day. Like many other Ten-Towners, the guards believe the Reghed barbarians are somehow to blame for the harsh and early winter and the beast attacks, and the barbarian tribesman in question is a convenient scapegoat for all his people. "No matter," one guard says, "he'll pay for what he's done." The tribesman, Hengar Aesnvaard, is currently chained to a post in the marketplace at the center of town, where he will surely die from exposure overnight.

If the adventurers decide to talk to the barbarian or investigate his crime, see "Tribe of the Elk" (page 12).

**The Dwarf Merchant:** A dwarf named Helda Silverstream, the owner of one of the wagons in the

caravan, thanks the adventurers for their efforts in protecting the caravan from the yetis. She offers to pay them (20 gp each) to accompany her and her wagon to her final destination—the dwarven valley on Kelvin's Cairn—to help keep her safe from further attacks. She plans to visit her uncle, Stokely Silverstream, and hopes to acquire some of the black ice carvings she's heard about. The attack on the caravan makes her unwilling to make the journey alone.

If the adventurers want to pursue other tasks or leads before leaving Bryn Shander with Helda, she is willing to wait as long as five days. If their attention strays for too long (for example, if they deal with the thugs in Bryn Shander and then accompany Hengar to his tribe), she hires a different group of mercenaries and sets out without the heroes.

If the characters accompany Helda to the dwarven valley, see “Halls of Black Ice” (page 15).

**The Sense of the Town:** Everyone in Bryn Shander knows that attacks by wild beasts and monsters like the yetis are nothing new. Similar attacks on travelers have plagued Icewind Dale for weeks, since soon after the early storm that marked the start of this harsh winter, but this incident is the first time the creatures have been brave enough to get so close to any of the towns in the dale. Normally, tundra yetis don’t venture south of Kelvin’s Cairn, and the wolves and bears of the wilds stay well clear of Ten-Towns and human travelers.

If the adventurers spend the evening talking to townsfolk and gathering information about recent events, they might hear rumors or concrete information about anything included under “What Has Come Before” (page 3). Of course, the townsfolk don’t know that Vaelish Gant is a member of the Arcane Brotherhood or that Akar Kessell is behind the zombie attacks in the dwarven valley, but rumors and whispers spread quickly in a small town like Bryn Shander. Various folk are talking about Duvessa Shane’s upcoming public audience to address the grievances brought by prominent city folk, the ruthless thugs from Luskan who are extorting money from honest merchants, the caravan’s long delay in reaching Bryn Shander, Aglonell’s empty animal traps, and above all, the early winter and Auril’s evident wrath.

If the adventurers decide to pursue these rumors instead of one of the more blatant hooks provided in the aftermath of the yeti attack, you should still have no trouble guiding them to one of the three main paths through Act 1. Most of these rumors will lead them to “Arcane Brotherhood” in one way or another.

# Act 1: The Drawing Down

Upon their arrival in Bryn Shander, the adventurers probably realize that Icewind Dale is not the peaceful retreat they might have been expecting. Instead, the region is beset by dangers great and small. Initially, three situations intrude on the characters’ awareness: the activities of Vaelish Gant’s extortionists in Bryn Shander, the threat faced by the Tribe of the Elk, and the unstable situation in the dwarf mines.

## ARCANE BROTHERHOOD

One of Vaelish Gant’s agents from Ship Rethnor, a wererat called Slim, is setting up a protection racket to secure Gant’s power base in Bryn Shander. Helped by a brutish hobgoblin named Marek the Shank, Slim has put the squeeze on Bryn Shander’s merchants. Those who are too foolish or too stubborn to submit to the Luskanites’ demands meet with misfortune.



Vaelish Gant

Ultimately, Gant aims to be elected town speaker, which will afford his operations a veneer of legitimacy as he attempts to bring the rest of Ten-Towns under his control. The only obstacle to his ambition is Bryn Shander’s current speaker, Duvessa Shane.

Killing Duvessa would deny Gant the legitimacy he craves, so instead he has encouraged several of the town’s leading citizens to declare their lack of confidence in Duvessa’s leadership, based in large part on her inability to contain the protection racket run by his own thugs. Although her political instincts tell her that these declarations are a gambit arranged by a rival, Duvessa doesn’t know who is behind them, so she has little choice but to answer the grievances in a public audience to maintain her good standing as town speaker.

When the heroes arrive in Bryn Shander, the public audience is six days away, scheduled for the holiday of Highharvesttide. Duvessa’s attempts to keep things quiet and orderly in the meantime have been frustrated by the yeti attack. Meanwhile, Gant’s operations are in danger of being unraveled by a Harper agent named Aarun, who tailed Slim and his gang up from Luskan. Aarun has discovered that Slim and some of his men are wererats, and he has arranged a shipment of silvered weapons into town. He hopes to arm a band of adventurers and put an end to the threat before the curse of lycanthropy spreads throughout the town. The Harper is being aided by Mithann, the cleric at the shrine of Amaunator (see page 16 in the Campaign Guide).

## Getting Here

The adventurers might be pulled into the conflict if they respond to Rierdon's plight following the yeti attack ("Confronting Slim"). Depending on the hooks you used to start the adventure, they might also try to deliver the Harpers' crate of silvered weapons to Dunavan and get involved that way ("Aarun's Weapons"). Otherwise, they might encounter a merchant from Bryn Shander while pursuing other adventures in the area and learn of the oppressive situation in town ("Confronting Slim").

## Confronting Slim

Whether the adventurers agree to help Rierdon immediately after the yeti attack at the gate or inquire around town about the extortionists running rampant through town, it is easy enough for them to learn the identity of their adversary: Slim, a seedy man from Luskan, is the one who always "negotiates" the protection payments, backed up by at least a half-dozen rough-looking thugs.

Rierdon is anxious to get his money back after his shop was damaged in the yeti attack. Other merchants in town resent the payments they've made, but are too afraid of Slim and his thugs to confront him. They can all point the adventurers to the Northlook, Bryn Shander's rowdiest inn, as Slim's current residence.

Scramsax, the proprietor of the Northlook, has been told to expect rough-looking types looking for Slim, since Slim is always collecting new recruits. Scramsax sends the adventurers right up to Slim's room, mistaking them for such recruits.

If the adventurers go looking for Slim on the night of their arrival (the 25th of Eleint), as Rierdon requests, they find Slim in his room, standing over the corpse of Aarun the Harper, with several thugs in attendance. If they go later, Aarun's body is long gone. Slim's reaction to their arrival depends on whether they have just caught him red-handed in murder.

If the adventurers arrive when Slim has just killed Aarun, they're witnesses to his crime and therefore must be silenced. Slim and his thugs (**Slim's ambush\***) try their best to take down the adventurers quickly and prevent them from escaping to raise a general alarm. Slim isn't one to prolong a losing fight, however. If the battle turns against him, he attempts a getaway out the window into the alley below. Slim tries to get out of sight before transforming into a rat and scurrying to safety. If the adventurers pin him down, he uses his animal form to escape. After Slim has fled, any remaining thugs attempt to do likewise. Slim has a further part to play in the adventure, so he is meant to escape this encounter. However, if he can't escape, another wererat can step up to take his place later in the adventure.

If the adventurers arrive in time to find Aarun's body, they might find a crumpled note in his belt pouch. It is

## VISITING DUVESSA SHANE

The first time the adventurers pay a visit to the Speaker's Palace to seek an audience with Duvessa Shane, they arrive at the speaker's palace just in time to see Vaelish Gant leaving. They overhear him assuring the speaker, "I will do my utmost to find the one you seek." Duvessa considers Gant an ally, and she hopes the wizard can discover the identity of her political rival. If the characters try to engage Gant in conversation, he makes it plain that he has better things to do than talk with them and brusquely takes his leave.

ostensibly from Mithann but was forged by Slim to lure the Harper to the Northlook. It reads, "Aarun—Problems have arisen. Please meet me at the Northlook to discuss. Mithann." (Slim intercepted a different note that Mithann actually sent to Aarun—see "Talking to Mithann"—and sent this forged one in its place.)

Arun's purse also contains two gems worth 50 gp each. Rierdon will happily accept both gems as recompense for his property damage. If he previously offered the adventurers a stake in whatever money they reclaimed, he will grudgingly make do with only one gem.

If the adventurers arrive later and do not find Arun's body, Slim does not attack them. His position is that the protection payments he's collecting are perfectly legal—Icewind Dale is a dangerous place, and his "agents" can provide legitimate protection. He's willing to pay Rierdon a portion of the payments he collected from the apothecary as a sign of good will, offering 50 gp. Rierdon is grudgingly satisfied with this settlement, especially with Slim's thugs looking on.

If the adventurers try to provoke Slim into a fight, the wererat protests that they're the ones engaging in extortion. However, if the characters attack, he and his thugs fight as described above.

## Talking to Mithann

The adventurers might end up interacting with Mithann for one of two reasons. If they confront Slim and find Aarun's corpse, the murdered Harper's body holds a note ostensibly written by the priestess. If they confront Slim but do not find Aarun's corpse, she seeks them out the next day, having heard of their actions.

Mithann is worried about her Harper friend. She explains that Arun had suspicions that some of these Ship Rethnor thugs were wererats, and in fact he sought to secure silvered weapons to combat them, and now

he has vanished. On the day of the yeti attack, Mithann wrote to Aarun to arrange a meeting between him and the hunter Aglonell, believing that the hunter had encountered the same thugs that Aarun had been seeking. She never heard back from him.

Mithann denies writing the note found on Aarun's body, and seems genuinely confused if shown the letter.

In any case, Mithann is pleased to make the adventurers' acquaintance and can help them piece together what they have learned so far about the situation in Bryn Shander. If they seem eager to help, she suggests that they meet with Aglonell ("Helping Aglonell") and secure Aarun's silvered weapons ("Aarun's Weapons") before confronting the thugs.

## Aarun's Weapons

Dunavan is a merchant who gave up caravan travel for a less lucrative and (he thought) less dangerous life trading in Bryn Shander's market. He also rents space in his two warehouses to other traders who lack a safe place to store their merchandise while they're in town. One of the possible adventure hooks asks the adventurers to bring a crate of silvered weapons to him, intended for delivery to Aarun. If they bring the crate to him on the day of their arrival in town, he thanks them, telling them he'll send word to Aarun and store the weapons in his warehouse until the Harper takes delivery.

That night, however, Marek the Shank (another of Vaelish Gant's thugs) breaks into Dunavan's warehouse in search of the weapons. He ransacked the warehouse but did not find the weapons, so he used a form of alchemist's fire to burn the warehouse down, covering the signs of the break-in.

After this fire, Dunavan is afraid for his other warehouse, where Aarun's weapons are safely stored. If the adventurers brought him the crate of weapons, he contacts them (if they are still in Bryn Shander); otherwise, Mithann urges them to contact Dunavan in order to secure Aarun's silvered weapons. In either case, Dunavan explains that he hasn't been able to contact Aarun, and he offers to hire them to watch over his other warehouse in case it is attacked the following night. In exchange for their services, he'll pay them 50 gp, and he'll also turn the crate back into their safe keeping.

That next night (the 26th of Eleint), Marek and his thugs stage another **nighttime break-in\***. If the adventurers are standing guard, Marek attacks them on sight while exhorting his thugs to find the weapons case. If Marek or his thugs find the carton, they try to make off with it, after which any remaining enemies attempt to flee. Otherwise, when Marek falls below half his hit points, the hobgoblin uses a smoke bomb to cover his escape as he turns and flees, leaving the rest of the thugs to their own fate.

The exact contents of the weapons case are left to your discretion. Ideally, the heroes should be able to equip themselves with silvered weapons they can use proficiently.

## Helping Aglonell

For weeks, the half-elf hunter Aglonell has been finding the traps he sets in the hills outside Bryn Shander raided, his kills stolen. Recently, a trio of thugs robbed him at swordpoint as he carried an elk back to town, forcing him to flee for his life. When Aglonell reported the incident, Sheriff Markham was reluctant to commit the town's resources to hunting down the thugs.

Although the sheriff imagines them to be a few ragged bandits, the outlaws poaching Aglonell's hunting grounds are the recruits assembled by Slim and Marek—a band numbering in the dozens. The thugs come into town by ones and twos to help Slim and Marek with their operations, but at any given time, most of them are holed up in a cave in the hills. When Vaelish Gant makes his power grab, Slim will move the rest of the thugs into Bryn Shander to help enforce the wizard's rule.

After Aglonell received no help from the sheriff, he spoke with Mithann at the shrine of Amaunator, knowing her to have a sympathetic ear and contacts among the region's adventurers. Mithann rightly suspected that Aglonell's outlaws were the same ones Aarun had talked to her about a few days earlier, and she arranged a meeting between the two at Geldenstag's Rest. Aglonell arrived at the appointed hour, but Aarun never came, so when the characters show up to help the half-elf, he is not optimistic.

Aglonell doesn't have any coin with which to hire the heroes, but if they offer to help, he gladly tells them what he knows, including the location of the cave where he suspects the outlaws are hiding. It lies on the southwestern slopes of Kelvin's Cairn, about seven miles north of Bryn Shander.

When the characters reach the hideout, they must get past the **hideout guards\*** before venturing into the lair. Not all of Slim's forces are present when the heroes arrive. Astute adventurers might notice that the number of sleeping pallets and provisions in the lair suggest that at least twenty more thugs stay here than are currently present (Slim recently moved more of them into town in preparation for Gant's coup). Slim has left a pair of his most trusted agents—both wererats—in charge of the main force of **hideout thugs\*** while he's gone, and they raise a formidable defense in an attempt to kill or capture the adventurers.

If the heroes overcome this main force, they still must deal with **Marek the Shank\***, who lives in a smaller cave deeper in the mountain with his pet wolf. The hobgoblin retreated here after his failed attack on Dunavan's warehouse (and if the characters fought him there, he is eager

to take revenge on them). Having resolved not to flee from another encounter, Marek fights to the death.

In the hobgoblin's lair, the heroes find two flasks of unusual green alchemist's fire and a small locked chest containing 220 gp (picking the lock requires a hard Dexterity check, but Slim has the key). They also find a crumpled sheet of parchment on the table bearing a note written in flowing black script:

"Slim,

*I presume the 'slight problem' you mentioned in your last report has been dealt with. We can't have any surprises interfering with the speaker's public audience—those not of our making, at least.*

*Duvessa has been doing a better job of courting public opinion than I anticipated. Bring a score of your best into town and come see me. We will need to act more decisively if I am to be assured of claiming her seat at the head of the Council of Speakers."*

In place of a signature at the bottom of the note is a strange symbol—Vaelish Gant's arcane mark. The adventurers have no immediate way to recognize this symbol.

## The Wizard's Gambit

When the feast of Highharvestide arrives (six days after the start of the adventure), Vaelish Gant takes action to unseat Duvessa Shane. That morning, the town is abuzz with gossip and speculation, and minor scuffles break out between Duvessa's supporters and her detractors (many of whom were planted by Slim to cause trouble). Slim and a group of other Ship Rethnor thugs kidnap the speaker and hold her in Gant's offices across the street from the council hall. If the adventurers have made themselves a thorn in Vaelish Gant's side before then, he also takes action to get them out of the way before the public audience.

In this case, a runner, one of Slim's gang, finds the heroes wherever they are and delivers a note that appears to be from Duvessa but is another of Slim's forgeries.

"Brave heroes,

*I have urgent need of your help. Please meet me in the council hall as soon as you can. Make sure no one knows where you go, nor why—all depends on secrecy.*

*Gratefully yours,*

*D.S."*

If the characters answer the summons, a group of **Ship Rethnor thugs\*** lies in wait to ambush them in the council hall.

Regardless of whether they go to the hall, the heroes are contacted soon after by Sheriff Markham, who reveals that Speaker Duvessa is nowhere to be found. Most of the leading citizens (including Gant) are at the town hall,

impatiently awaiting Duvessa's arrival, and if she does not appear soon, they will surely elect a new speaker in her stead. Although the sheriff doesn't care who claims the title of speaker, he knows Duvessa well enough to know that she wouldn't willingly abandon the position, so he fears that her absence is the result of foul play.

At this point, you can allow the players to follow a few different lines of inquiry, potentially resulting in red herrings or further encounters with Rethnor thugs, before Sheriff Markham suggests that they search the speaker's palace for clues (if the players don't hit on this idea themselves). A search of the palace reveals no signs of a struggle, but a note lying on the desk in Duvessa's office holds a clue to her whereabouts.

"Duvessa,

*I believe I have discovered the identity of your mysterious rival, though if I am correct, the situation is more dangerous than we had supposed. It is imperative that I speak with you before today's audience; please come to my office posthaste."*

In place of a signature at the bottom is a strange symbol, which the characters might recognize as the same wizard mark from the note in Marek's lair. If they haven't already figured it out, Markham can confirm that the sigil is that of Vaelish Gant. It adorns the door of the offices he moved into upon his arrival in Bryn Shander.

The characters can find **Gant's offices\*** easily enough, but the sigil on his door is actually a *glyph of warding*, which the heroes will set off if they aren't careful. Inside, Slim and several of his thugs hold Duvessa Shane bound and gagged in the wizard's study. Slim tries to goad the heroes into a fight, threatening to kill Duvessa if they leave to summon help. Gant's quasit familiar, which lurks invisibly in the study, joins the fight, though if the battle goes poorly, it attempts to escape and warn its master.

**Resolution:** If the characters rescue Duvessa, she leads them to the town hall, where she exposes Gant as a villain. Gant, in turn, mocks her and the heroes for thinking he has been defeated: "While you've busied yourselves fighting my forces here, I've woven my plans throughout Ten-Towns, and Easthaven is about to feel my wrath. Can you be in ten towns at once? Perhaps not . . . but I can." And with that, Gant teleports away. He only teleports as far as the street outside the hall, but he flees quickly from there.

Slim, if he survives, flees to Lonelywood. He might make trouble for the heroes if they show up there, but the wererat avoids any further dealings with Gant, fearful of the wizard's wrath.

# TRIBE OF THE ELK

The inhabitants of Icewind Dale have been caught off guard by the unusually harsh and early winter this year, and the Reghed barbarians have borne the brunt of it. Thanks to its size and strength, the Tribe of the Elk has managed to survive so far, but every day its situation worsens. On top of that, the mysterious woman the barbarians call the Ice Witch has been leading bands of wild beasts in attacks against their camps. Every time the Elk Tribe warriors strike her, the Ice Witch vanishes into the storm, only to reappear a few days later during the next attack.

At a loss as to how to combat the Ice Witch, King Jarund has allowed Hengar Aesnvaard, one of the tribe's warriors, to venture to Ten-Towns to seek aid. Upon his arrival in Bryn Shander, Hengar was targeted by local members of the cult of Auril as a suitable victim to be offered as a sacrifice to the Frostmaiden. The cult fabricated an accusation of theft, and Sheriff Markham convicted and sentenced him. Hengar now stands bound to a post in the middle of Bryn Shander's market square, where he will almost certainly die of exposure during the night. The yeti attack solidified the sheriff's belief, shared by many in the town, that the barbarians of the Reghed tribes are responsible for the beast attacks and the harsh winter weather.

In Hengar's absence, the Tribe of the Elk's situation has become even more perilous. Their greatest rivals, the Tribe of the Bear, have pledged themselves to the worship of the Frostmaiden at the urging of their shaman, Bjami Tengervaald. Though their normal haunts are far to the north, the Bear Tribe warriors have set up a shrine to Auril in the long-abandoned ice caves beneath Evermelt. Energized by the growing power of their patron god, Bear Tribe warriors made an overwhelming raid on the Elk Tribe encampment, capturing a number of warriors and dragging them off to be sacrificed in Bjami's bloody rites.

Beset by the Bear Tribe's warriors from the east and the Ice Witch's monstrous forces from the west, and with increasingly violent storms hindering their ability to flee, the members of the Tribe of the Elk are in a desperate fight for survival. If help does not come soon, it is a fight they might not win.

## Getting Here

Following the attack on Bryn Shander's southwestern gate, the adventurers overhear town guards speculate that the yeti attack following so close on the heels of Hengar's arrival in town is more than coincidence. When the heroes enter Bryn Shander's market square, they see a



Hengar Aesnvaard

tall, muscular man lashed to a thick wooden post in the center of the square. He has the fair skin and bright blue eyes typical of a northerner, with light brown hair that hangs past his shoulders. He has been stripped of all his belongings except for a pendant on a thong around his neck, fashioned from two pieces of antler to look like the rack of an elk.

The prisoner is Hengar Aesnvaard, and as the people of Bryn Shander go about their business, he periodically calls out to them in a hoarse voice, protesting his innocence and begging to be released. Locals who don't jeer or spit at the barbarian simply ignore him, so when he notices the heroes, Hengar cries out to them: "Please help me, travelers! I came here seeking aid for my people, and I fear without it they will perish. If my tribe falls, nothing will shield the people of Ten-Towns from the wrath of the Ice Witch!"

If the heroes approach Hengar, he hurriedly relates as much as he can about his quest and the events that led to his predicament. The guard standing watch in the square discourages lengthy conversation, suggesting that if the adventurers have any concerns regarding the prisoner, they should see Sheriff Markham.

## Hengar's Crime

Hengar's accuser is a merchant named Brinna Alcott, whose store sells wools, linens, and sewing supplies. Brinna is secretly a disciple of Davrick Fain, a self-proclaimed priest of Auril who runs a resale shop in Bremen. She believes that Auril's fury can be diverted from Ten-Towns if it is redirected elsewhere—specifically, at outsiders like the barbarian.

At first, Brinna told the townsfolk that the barbarian had stolen goods from her shop, but unable to explain why a Reghed barbarian would want bolts of cloth, she switched her story, saying that he actually swiped personal effects she kept in the store. Finally, realizing that the sheriff probably wouldn't do more than take the fingers from the barbarian's left hand for such an act, Brinna switched her story again, telling Sheriff Markham that Hengar stole her lockbox, which held a sizable sum of money.

## Freeing Hengar

Heroes who decide to help Hengar might attempt to secure his release in any number of ways. Whatever approach they take, be sure they understand that time is of the essence. If they don't free him, the barbarian will almost certainly die before the next sunrise.

**Prove His Innocence:** The party might learn of Brinna's conflicting stories by talking to her neighbors or the sheriff, somehow extracting a confession from Brinna, or securing evidence that the theft never took place. Persuading Sheriff Markham to free the barbarian requires

a significant weight of evidence and some amount of persuasion, since he is predisposed to blame the barbarian for the yeti attack if not the theft.

**Appeal to the Speaker:** Speaker Duvessa Shane was not involved in Hengar's arrest or conviction. She is inclined to trust Sheriff Markham's judgment, but she also worries that the Elk Tribe might retaliate if Hengar dies. She can be persuaded to secure the barbarian's release, particularly if the adventurers promise to take him out of town, effectively commuting his sentence to banishment.

**Break Him Free:** If the adventurers neutralize or bypass the **town guards**\*<sup>1</sup>, they can break Hengar's bonds. If anyone sees them escorting him out of town, Sheriff Markham declares them outlaws.

Whatever approach they take, if the adventurers secure Hengar's freedom, they earn the enmity of the cult of Auril. The cult might attempt to frame them for a crime or simply stir up resentment against them for freeing the barbarian. Because the adventurers were seen fighting yetis at the gate, the people of Bryn Shander are less quick to condemn them. If the cultists are driven to desperation, they send **cult assassins**\*<sup>2</sup> to attack the adventurers.

If the heroes want to investigate the cult further, you can use the information in the *Campaign Guide* about Auril's worshipers (Davrick Fain in particular) to create additional adventure opportunities.

## Crossing the Tundra

If the heroes free Hengar, he begs them to return with him to his tribe's camp on the tundra. Hengar is willing to wait a day if the party has other business to attend to first, but if the characters take longer than that, he sets out on his own. Before he goes, Hengar presses them to follow as

### HENGAR'S DEATH

If Hengar dies, the adventurers still can help the Elk Tribe before its hunters journey to Evermelt and fall in battle with their Bear Tribe foes. Other Elk Tribe characters they meet as random encounters in their travels (such as the barbarian sympathizers in Ten-Towns) can deliver the same message as Hengar, urging the characters to act immediately to help save their tribe. Alternatively, Duvessa Shane, learning of Hengar's demise, might ask the adventurers to travel as ambassadors to the Elk Tribe in an effort to prevent any reprisal for his death. If the characters don't act to help the Elk Tribe, they will feel the repercussions of that decision in the interlude.

soon as they can and reminds them that delay imperils not only his tribe but the people of Ten-Towns as well.

The tundra is hazardous in the best of times but especially so now that winter has come. The Elk Tribe camp is about twenty miles north of Kelvin's Cairn. With no road to follow, the adventurers risk losing their way if they don't travel with a guide (such as Hengar). Check for random encounters using the Open Tundra Encounters table on the DM screen.

The exact amount of time needed to reach the camp varies depending on how hard and fast the characters travel, but on average, it takes a group of humans on foot one day to travel from Bryn Shander to one of the northernmost towns, and another two days to cut across the tundra to the camp. (The harsh winter weather makes the journey take twice as long as normal.)

## The Elk Tribe Camp

The *Campaign Guide* offers an overview of the Reged tribes' lifestyle, a typical Elk Tribe encampment, and key personalities of the Elk Tribe. Use that information to help flesh out the adventurers' experience at the camp.

When they reach the camp, Hengar and the characters learn about the Bear Tribe raid that occurred in his absence. The Elk Tribe is readying a group of warriors to follow the raiders and rescue their prisoners before they are sacrificed to the Frostmaiden. Hengar plans to accompany this group and invites the adventurers to join him. If they meet with King Jarund Elkhhardt, the king likewise urges them to help (perhaps as payment of a blood debt if Hengar died in town).

Folnor Hagbarthe, the Elk Tribe's best tracker, leads the adventurers and a band of a dozen Elk Tribe warriors to the Bear Tribe's camp at Evermelt. The hot spring is about ten miles east of the Elk Tribe's camp, and getting there takes at least as many hours—possibly more, depending on whether the group is slowed by storms blowing down off the glacier. Check for random encounters using the Open Tundra Encounters table on the DM screen.

As they travel, Folnor tells the adventurers about his encounter with the Ice Witch when his hunting party was attacked by a pack of wild beasts. With evident fear and awe, he tells of how he shot the witch straight through the heart and yet somehow failed to kill her, having found no trace of her body after the fight. Folnor also stresses that the Tribe of the Bear usually haunts the far north, at the shores of the Sea of Moving Ice, so their presence in Evermelt is strange.

# Key to Evermelt

See the *Campaign Guide* for an overview and map of Evermelt and the ice caves beneath it.

## Sacred Pool

The Tribe of the Bear has made its new camp on the edges of the sacred pool. From here, Wolvig Barrundson, the tribe's nominal chieftain, directs the warriors in their raids across the tundra, while the tribe's true leader, the shaman Bjami Tengervaald, performs rites of sacrifice in the icy caverns below.

Bear Tribe scouts watch for returning raiding parties and incoming threats from their perches atop the glacier. Unless the adventurers and their Elk Tribe cohorts approach stealthily under cover of darkness, the **Bear Tribe camp\*** is alerted to their presence, and Bear Tribe warriors heave boulders down on the party while scouts loose arrows. After the group scales the glacial moraine to the level of the sacred pool, Wolvig Barrundson enters the fray, engaging whomever he deems to be the invaders' greatest warrior.

The camp has no sign of the Elk Tribe prisoners. All the Bear Tribe warriors know that Bjami took the captives into the caverns beneath the pool. Folnor or any character who succeeds on a moderate Intelligence check to search finds a pile of furs and necklaces of Elk Tribe manufacture sitting by the edge of the pool. The prisoners were stripped of their belongings before being dragged into the waterfall cavern.

## Waterfall Cavern

Bjami Tengervaald brought the Elk Tribe prisoners to the **waterfall cavern\*** to offer them as sacrifices to the Ice Witch's simulacrum, which has come to receive the offering on behalf of the Frostmaiden. The simulacrum waits in the dragon's lair beyond while Bjami and his followers prepare for the rite. The prisoners are lashed to icy stalagmites scattered around the room and are half dead from exposure, having been stripped of their furs.

As soon as Bjami becomes aware of the heroes' presence, he decries their trespass into the sacred chambers of Evermelt and promises that they will share the prisoners' fate. Emboldened by the presence of the Ice Witch's simulacrum in the next room, Bjami attacks the party without hesitation and fights without fear, alternately taunting the characters and calling on the Frostmaiden for her blessing during battle.

Fighting alongside Bjami is a group of Bear Tribe furies—women of the tribe dressed as animal spirits who aid the shaman in his rituals and are deadly with their pairs of long, curved knives. Driven by their zealous devotion to Auril, Bjami and the furies fight to the death.

Releasing the captured members of the Elk Tribe is simple, although they are in no shape to fight. They

inform the adventurers that the Ice Witch lurks in the room beyond, and that one of their number—Soren Arnsfirth—was already taken there by Bjami as the witch's first victim.

## Dragon's Lair

Here in the dragon's lair, next to the bones of the dragon Icingdeath, the Ice Witch's simulacrum converses with Soren. The Elk Tribe warrior begs his daughter to accept his life as a sacrifice to appease Auril and to spare the other prisoners, but it is not his life the Ice Witch wants. She intends to kill the prisoners as an example and send Soren back to the Elk Tribe to demand their utter subservience to her and devotion to Auril, starting with the banishment of their shaman, Mjenir.

When the heroes appear and it becomes evident that they have broken the Bear Tribe's hold over Evermelt, the Ice Witch becomes enraged and a cold wind begins to whip around the cavern. “*Witness the power Auril has granted her Chosen, and taste winter's fury!*” she cries, as the ice-encrusted bones of the long-dead dragon shudder to life. The party must face the **dragon and witch\***. The skeletal Icingdeath, unable to fly or use a breath weapon, fights with tooth and claw while the Ice Witch's simulacrum hurls spells at the characters.

When the simulacrum is reduced to 0 hit points, it crumbles into a pile of snow and the animated remains collapse. As the wind blows out, the adventurers hear the Ice Witch's laughter as if from afar: “*The form you have defeated is a mere vessel for my power—as hollow as your victory this day. Soon I will send forth another, and if you destroy that, another, until all of Icewind Dale knows the terrible wrath of my mistress!*”

**Resolution:** With the Bear Tribe scattered, the Tribe of the Elk moves its camp to Evermelt, where its members find refuge from the winter storms and the beasts of the tundra. King Jarund proclaims the heroes honorary members of the Elk Tribe, and Hengar (if he is still alive) offers to join them for the remainder of their adventures in Icewind Dale. Although Icingdeath's original hoard was plundered generations ago, the Bear Tribe brought many treasures to the dragon's lair as offerings to the Frostmaiden. For their part in rescuing the Elk Tribe captives, the heroes are allowed to claim Icingdeath's treasures as their own.

Hedrun is not injured by the destruction of her simulacrum, but it will be several days before she can recover the strength she spent to animate Icingdeath's remains and create a new simulacrum. This delay buys the barbarians and the people of Ten-Towns a brief respite from the Ice Witch's fury.



Ice Witch

# HALLS OF BLACK ICE

During Akar Kessell's reign of terror over a century ago, he used the Crystal Shard to erect crystalline towers at three sites around Icewind Dale. One was just outside the walls of Bryn Shander, where all trace of it has long since vanished. The other two were nestled in the Spine of the World and far off on the tundra to the east, where the crumbled remnants of the towers lay undisturbed for more than a century. With the return of Akar Kessell to Icewind Dale, the evil of the Crystal Shard has also come to trouble the region once more.

Although the towers of Cryshal-Tirith, as it was called, had crumbled to dust and been buried under a hundred years of snows, time has not washed them away completely. On the slopes of the Spine of the World, where the first tower once stood, Kessell found a great slab of black ice, which he recognized as a remnant of the Crystal Shard that was infused with its evil and at least a fraction of its power.

The black ice was not all that Kessell had hoped, however. It appeared to lack the flashy, destructive power of the original Crystal Shard, and it refused to raise a tower for him. As he wrestled with it, attempting to discern what it could do, he noted the dwarf miners arguing over the black ice, until one of the miners killed the other three and claimed it for himself. Kessell stretched his frozen and desiccated skin into a smile, believing he had found the key to using the black ice. If he couldn't use it to dominate Icewind Dale, perhaps he could use it to destroy the region instead. He entrusted the surviving miner, Baerick Hammerstone, with the care of the black ice and encouraged him to take some back to the dwarven valley, to experiment with it and craft items from it.

The black ice does indeed contain a significant echo of the Crystal Shard's great evil, which influences those who come near it. As Baerick Hammerstone crafted more and more items—arms, armor, trinkets, and statuettes—its taint began to spread. Initially, its worst effects are felt among the dwarves of Kelvin's Cairn, where most of Baerick's craft has been sold.

## The Situation in the Valley

About ten days ago, Dain Stokely Silverstream had a loud public argument with Baerick Hammerstone in which Baerick questioned his leadership, his loyalty to the clan, and his dedication to protecting his people. After the argument, Baerick gathered a group of similarly disaffected dwarves and established a sanctum on the eastern side of the valley—a place they call the Halls of Black Ice. Over the days since, more and more dwarves



Akar Kessell

have drifted to Baerick's side. At this point, about half the dwarves of Kelvin's Cairn have been thoroughly corrupted by the black ice. Greedy, selfish, and amoral, they ignore the laws of the community and its leader. Instead, they follow Baerick Hammerstone, who leads them in brigandry and riot.

Among the other half of the population, the influence of the black ice has also been felt, but these dwarves keep its evil under control and remain loyal to Dain Stokely. Between the zombie attacks and the threat posed by Baerick's followers, Stokely decided to gather the loyal dwarves into a smaller, more easily defensible area. Three days ago, he uprooted many families and brought them to a single hall on the west side of the cleft (in what they call Battlehammer Hold). The dwarves of Stokely's faction are not immediately hostile to the others, who are, after all, their kin. Baerick's dwarves are belligerent bullies, and they attack anyone if they think they have good odds of coming out on top.

Meanwhile, Akar Kessell lurks in the abandoned tunnels of the dwarves' mines, spreading his own form of chaos by animating dead miners as zombies and sending them to attack Stokely's dwarves in the western tunnels. He has begun urging Baerick to sell his black ice wares beyond the dwarven valley, and through his agent Pallidor, he sold a keel for a fishing boat to a fisher from Caer-Konig—who is now becoming known as Derrick the Drownder (See “Pirates of the Howling Fiend” on page 25 of the Campaign Guide).

## Getting Here

Immediately after the initial encounter of the adventure, Helda Silverstream—a dwarf merchant who is also Stokely Silverstream's niece—offers the adventurers an additional reward if they accompany her wagon to Kelvin's Cairn, where she plans to visit her uncle Stokely and hopes to acquire some of the black ice carvings she's heard about. The attack on her caravan left her reluctant to make the journey alone, so she is willing to wait while the characters explore other trails, at least for a while.

In addition, as the characters explore other threads of the adventure, they pick up on leads that point to the evil unfolding in the dwarven valley. For example, Helda is staying at the Northlook in Bryn Shander, where the characters might encounter her as they deal with Vaelish Gant's thugs. Further, a random encounter with a dwarf selling black ice trinkets in town can point them to the troubles in the valley.

# Key to the Dwarven Valley

See the *Campaign Guide* for an overview and a map of the dwarven valley with its halls, mines, and abandoned tunnels.

While the characters explore the area, check for random encounters using the Dwarf Mine Encounters table on the DM screen. No random encounters occur within Battlehammer Hold or the Halls of Black Ice. Encounters are described in the download packet.



Stokely Silverstream

## 1. South Guard Post

At the southern end of the valley, where a road leads south to Bryn Shander, the dwarves of the Halls of Black Ice have established a guard post to warn travelers out of the valley. The initial response of this **dwarf patrol\*** to the arrival of Helda's wagon is to turn her—and the adventurers—away, but if anyone puts up a fuss, they start getting other ideas. First they wonder if the wagon holds anything of value they could claim (it does not—Helda sold her goods in Bryn Shander), then they consider whether anyone would pay a ransom if they kidnapped Helda and her companions. If they learn of Helda's relation to Stokely, kidnapping is a likely course.

The adventurers can try to defuse this situation before it develops into combat. Turning away from the dwarven valley works. All the guards carry trinkets of black ice and have been affected by its corrupting influence, so the adventurers might be able to get past them by playing off feelings of suspicion, doubt, or paranoia. Helda might attempt to use her connection to Stokely to get past the guards, but they dismiss the mention of their nominal ruler and say, "Stokely may say ye can enter, but Baerick says ye cannot, and so ye can't."

If combat breaks out, the dwarves are more interested in capturing the adventurers and Helda than in killing them, although they forcibly rebuff any attempts to enter the valley.

## 2. Battlehammer Sentries

The dwarves of Battlehammer Hold, mostly untainted by black ice and still loyal to Stokely Silverstream, have four guard posts set up around the valley: at the southernmost entry to the western mines, at the main entrance to Battlehammer Hold, nested between forking tunnels at the west end of the hold, and on the side of the valley, where the path forks. Each post is watched by a **dwarf patrol\*** at all times.

These dwarves are cautious and pay particular attention to questioning any dwarves in an approaching party, including Helda. "Who's the rightful leader of this valley?" they ask, and any response other than "Stokely

Silverstream" makes them highly suspicious (although "I don't know" is acceptable).

These dwarves know all about the recent zombie attacks and the conflict with Baerick's dwarves, but they don't readily share such information with strangers. Instead, if they can be convinced of the party's good intentions, two of the dwarves escort the characters into Battlehammer Hold to meet Stokely (see area 4).

If attacked, the dwarves fight to defend themselves. Nothing short of death can convince them to abandon their post.

## 3. Black Ice Sentries

The dwarves loyal to Baerick Hammerstone, corrupted by black ice, have established their own guard posts in the valley: at both entrances to their halls, between the forking passages at the east end of the Halls of Black Ice, and at the Daledrop that leads from the eastern tundra down into the valley. Each of these posts is watched by a **dwarf patrol\***.

Like the dwarves at the southern post, these dwarves are hostile and under orders not to let strangers into the mines. A dwarf who proclaims Baerick Hammerstone's leadership of the valley and shows an item of black ice can gain admittance to the Halls of Black Ice to see Baerick. With some negotiation, intimidation, or bribery, a dwarf admitted to the halls can also persuade the guards to admit his or her companions as well.

These corrupted dwarves are selfish, extremely avaricious, impatient, highly suspicious, quick to anger, and prone to violence. They don't know anything about Akar Kessell or any zombie attacks (those have been limited to the western mines). As far as they're concerned, the only threat to the valley is Stokely Silverstream, who "refuses to protect our treasures" and "holds us back."

If attacked or provoked into aggression, these dwarves fight to the death with relish.

## 4. Battlehammer Hold

If the adventurers gain admittance to Battlehammer Hold, they are escorted to the forge and meet with Stokely in full view of the gathered community.

Stokely (see page 48 in the *Campaign Guide*) can tell the adventurers everything he knows about the zombies in the mines and the problem with Baerick, and if the characters seem like they might be interested, he offers them a reward if they help him deal with these problems.

**The Zombies:** Several mining expeditions have encountered dwarf zombies in the mines. Most of these encounters have occurred in the northwestern part of the mines, including the most recent (and most devastating) attack, which left no survivors. Other attacks have occurred everywhere in the mines, including the eastern side of the valley (before Baerick and his followers

established themselves on that side—and maybe afterward, but Stokely doesn't know).

The zombies were dwarves of Kelvin's Cairn before their death, mostly victims of earlier zombie attacks, which leads some dwarves to call this a spreading "zombie plague." Most of the zombie dwarves still have kin either in Battlehammer Hold or across the valley among Baerick's allies. Stokely has never heard of a plague or anything else that would make a person killed by a zombie turn into a zombie, unless a necromancer were animating the dead, so he assumes that such a necromancer lurks in the mines somewhere.

Stokely promises the heroes a reward of 100 gp if they root out the necromancer and clear the mines of zombies. If the adventurers agree to investigate, he suggests they begin at the nexus (area 7).

**Baerick Hammerstone:** Stokely feels as if he handled his argument with Baerick badly and has been beating himself up over it ever since.

Although he doesn't know where the black ice came from or what it did, Stokely sensed something about it that didn't feel right, which is why he never held on to any. On reflection, it has occurred to him that Baerick's odd behavior began around the same time as he started working with the black ice, but Stokely can't offer any more insight into the situation than that.

Stokely doesn't want Baerick or any of the other dwarves slain, although he admits that Baerick in particular might be so volatile that violence is unavoidable in any confrontation with him. He asks the adventurers to try to persuade Baerick to turn aside from the destructive path. If they can help Stokely reunite the clan, he will grant them a reward of 250 gp and declare them friends of Clan Battlehammer forever. They will have the aid of his clan whenever they need it, and he will write them letters of introduction if they ever travel to Mithral Hall.

## 5. Halls of Black Ice

Dwarves in Baerick's favor are marked by the black ice axes they carry or the helms they wear. The corrupting influence of the black ice has planted the idea in Baerick's mind of leading his people to war against the rest of Icewind Dale, though he's not yet conscious of having such ambitions. If asked why he's arming his people, his answer (which he truly believes) is that he seeks to protect the valley from incursion by the covetous people of Ten-Towns who lust after the black ice.

In fact, Baerick's deep suspicion is not entirely unfounded. An emissary intercepted a few days ago by the guards at Daledrop is now a guest—or perhaps a prisoner—in his home. The emissary comes from Vaelish Gant, who is interested in securing the production source of the black ice. The emissary is a silver-tongued woman named Baccha, a rogue of Ship Rethnor who

brought expensive gifts from the markets of Bryn Shander. Although Baerick is initially suspicious of her, the emissary knows how to play off the feelings engendered by the black ice to bring the dwarf leader around to her way of thinking. Left to his own devices, Vaelish Gant eventually succeeds in convincing the dwarf to ally with him against the people of Ten-Towns.

Whether the adventurers are captured and dragged before Baerick or they come to see him of their own volition, his initial reaction to their appearance is hostile. He refers to them as "Ten-Towns spies" and believes they were sent by the council to assassinate him in advance of a general invasion of the valley. The party is hard-pressed to convince Baerick otherwise, although—as with the dwarves at the south guard post—any ploy that capitalizes on the fear and suspicion bred by the black ice has a better chance of working. Baerick has been so heavily influenced by the ice, however, that any attempts at persuasion might push him to extremes of fear, rage, and suspicion. Meanwhile, the emissary works to counter the characters' arguments and reinforce Baerick's suspicions of their intentions. If the characters are wily, they might be able to make Baerick see reason and stop his self-destructive course of action, or at the very least buy some time.

If the party fails to talk Baerick down (or doesn't try), the dwarf orders his **black ice guards\*** to execute the characters on the spot. The dwarves fight to the death,

### TALKING BAERICK DOWN

To convince Baerick to reconsider his present course, the characters can cast doubt on the intentions of the emissary's master and relate anything they might have learned about the black ice's origins or its connection with Akar Kessell (and, by extension, the zombies in the mines). As the verbal tussle for Baerick's soul goes back and forth, you might allow the characters to make moderate Wisdom checks to sense motive, gaining insight into his vulnerabilities or the emissary's aims, or ask them to make hard Charisma checks to intimidate the emissary into silence or make an outrageous bluff. By and large, though, the weight of the characters' words—not the roll of the dice—should carry the scene. Checks can allow the party to gain an edge when dealing with Baerick, but don't let checks decide the outcome one way or the other. The characters' arguments should do that.

and if Baerick falls, the emissary attempts to flee so she can relay the news to her master.

If the characters talk Baerick down, or if they defeat him and spare his life, the dwarf remains enslaved by the black ice, and it's only a matter of time before the corruption drives him completely insane. There's still time for the heroes to bring Baerick and the other dwarves back from the brink of madness, but doing so means breaking the hold over their minds—probably by ridding them of the black ice completely. That is no small task, given how much of the stuff the dwarves possess. Further, owners of the ice try to protect their pieces, hiding them from sight or lying about their existence. Even after the black ice is removed, the dwarves suffer pangs of regret and make efforts to reclaim it, forcing the party to go to extreme lengths to keep the substance out of the dwarves' hands.

## 6. Temple

There is a 30 percent chance of an encounter with a **zombie pack\*** in the temple, independent of the normal chance for random encounters in the mines.

## 7. The Nexus

Stokely believes that the nexus is the wisest place to begin an investigation of the zombie attacks, since it was the site of the last assaults. The nexus is littered with the remains of the lost mining expedition. Abandoned mining carts and equipment lie strewn about the chamber. Signs of a battle are evident, including dropped weapons and spatters of dried blood, but there are no bodies, and any characters who look for tracks find that the combatants seem to have stood up and walked away (having risen as zombies).

One pair of tracks leads to an overturned mining cart and goes no farther. Under the cart hides the only surviving member of the expedition, Paldrinor Granitehelm. After witnessing his companions being slain and rising as zombies, Paldrinor was driven mad with fear and fled blindly into the tunnels. He barely survived ambushes by more of Kessell's zombie minions, and eventually he found his way back to the nexus, where he has been hiding ever since, with a diminishing supply of food and water hidden under the cart with him.

If anyone disturbs the cart, Paldrinor starts screaming uncontrollably, thinking the zombies have found him. It takes some effort to calm him down, and still more to get a coherent story out of him. If the party can get Paldrinor talking, he describes what befell his crew and how the zombies are being created by a human-sized undead creature that roams the tunnels, seemingly looking for prey.

Paldrinor can show the characters the direction Kessell's attack came from, leading them back toward the temple about a half mile and then pointing north. He

refuses to leave his hiding place in the nexus unless the adventurers promise to escort him safely out of the mines. He's no good in a fight, and if the party encounters zombies with Paldrinor in tow, he starts screaming again and attempts to flee by whatever path he can find.

Scattered around the nexus is a wealth of mining gear, including picks, shovels, hammers and chisels, carts, and rations that have been sustaining Paldrinor for the last few days.

## 8. The Deep Mines

After the heroes venture into the deepest tunnels to the northwest of the nexus, it's not long before they attract the notice of Akar Kessell. The wight can smell the presence of the living in these otherwise dead tunnels, and he begins shadowing the characters, observing their movements. Kessell is curious about who has come looking for him and wary of facing anyone strong enough to have fought their way this far into the mines. He can't help but bait the adventurers, though, so as they wander through the tunnels, they hear Kessell's soft, ruined voice echoing from the dark, asking if they have come here to die. He alludes to his plans to turn Icewind Dale against itself, starting with the towns of Lac Dinneshere. He also taunts the party with veiled references to his past, asking, for instance, how the heroes imagine they can survive an encounter with someone who once brought all of Icewind Dale to its knees. (If you want to draw out this sequence, you can punctuate the taunts with one or two encounters with a handful of zombies or other mine denizens before the wight springs his trap.)

Much as Kessell enjoys bedeviling the characters, he doesn't intend to fight them himself. Instead, he attempts to lure them into **Kessell's trap\***: a lair where a pair of giant spiders can attack with surprise before Kessell orders his zombies to join the fray. If the characters realize they're being led on or if they enrage the wight (perhaps by calling him out for being too scared to face them), Kessell loses his patience and commands his minions to attack immediately. In either case, he doesn't stick around to get caught up in the fight. He promises to make the heroes suffer at their next meeting and then flees through a series of passages that eventually let out onto the northwestern slope of Kelvin's Cairn. From there, he makes his way to safety.

**Resolution:** After Akar Kessell leaves the mines, the zombies, bereft of his influence, wander the tunnels aimlessly and are dispatched by the dwarves remaining in Kelvin's Cairn. If the party fails to drive Kessell out, the wight pushes farther and farther into the dwarven valley until most of the dwarves join his undead army. The only holdouts are Stokely Silverstream and his cadre, and maybe Baerick, depending on how the characters leave matters with him.

# INTERLUDE: A SUDDEN SQUALL

This interlude is an interruption to propel the adventurers into Act 2 without allowing them to resolve everything in Act 1. It sends the message that there is more going on in Icewind Dale than they can handle all at once, and it should heighten their sense of urgency to deal with these threats as quickly as possible.

**Timing:** As the DM, you are the best judge of when to launch the interlude. This section assumes that the characters have had time to get at least somewhat involved in two of the three sections of Act 1, but not enough time to resolve all three.

This section presents three short interludes tied to the three villains. Normally, you'll run one of them to serve as a bridge from Act 1 to Act 2. If you need to steer the players back on course, you can use one interlude to yank their attention back to the material in Act 1 and another interlude to bridge them into Act 2. You might even decide to use all three interludes to keep up the pace of the adventure. It's up to you.

**What Happens:** The interludes assume that the heroes could focus on only one or two villains in Act 1, leaving at least one villain free to scheme unhindered. Essentially, the interludes present the consequences of the adventurers failing to complete one of the sections of Act 1.

**Vaelish Gant:** If Vaelish Gant's plans are unchecked, run "Fall of Bryn Shander" for the interlude.

**The Ice Witch:** If the characters have not yet opposed Hedrun the Ice Witch, use "Howls From the North."

**Akar Kessell:** If Akar Kessell remains in the dwarf mines, use "The Black Ice Spreads."

**Reporting Results:** When you reach the interlude, you can share your results with other Dungeon Masters running this adventure. If you're running the adventure as part of the D&D Encounters™ program, you're strongly encouraged to do so. The aggregate results from everyone running this adventure will be incorporated into future storylines about Icewind Dale and the North. Go to [www.DungeonsandDragons.com/Sundering](http://www.DungeonsandDragons.com/Sundering) to report your results.

## FALL OF BRYN SHANDER

If Vaelish Gant's schemes in Bryn Shander have come to fruition, he becomes a serious threat to the whole of Icewind Dale. Bryn Shander's citizens lose confidence in Duvessa and strip her of office. Gant steps in to help quell the uprisings and "rescue" Duvessa, for which the citizens elect



Vaelish Gant

him as their new speaker. Duvessa realizes too late that she's been played, and Gant is quick to silence or discredit any accusations leveled against him. With few allies remaining in Bryn Shander, the former speaker hires a few swords and quietly slips out of town to try to rally opposition to the wizard's coup.

Meanwhile, Gant's agents spread throughout Ten-Towns, and he starts taking steps to place some of the dale's most valuable resources under his control. He sends large, well-armed groups to mine the dwarven valley and plunder the tundra of meat and pelts.

If the adventurers are with the Elk Tribe, warriors rush to King Jarund to tell him that a group from Ten-Towns is slaughtering a herd of reindeer that the tribe considers theirs. Jarund sends a trusted warrior (Hengar, if he is still alive) with a band of warriors to investigate, and he asks the characters to go along and help mediate any dispute with the townsfolk. (If you need statistics for the Elk Tribe warriors, use the **Bear Tribe raiders\*** encounter.)

Similarly, if the characters are in the dwarven valley, Dain Stokely receives word that a group from Ten-Towns has entered the mines at the south end of the valley and started digging. Stokely sends a **dwarf patrol\*** and the adventurers to investigate.

When they arrive, the leader of the group of **poachers\*** explains that the newly appointed speaker of Bryn Shander has allied Ten-Towns with the Arcane Brotherhood, and has sent them to set up operations on behalf of the trade alliance "for the benefit of all of the dale's inhabitants." What's more, the Rethnor agent says that Speaker Gant has authorized him to negotiate the sale of their lands (the dwarven mines or the Elk Tribe's open tundra), which the speaker will allow them to continue to live on as a token of goodwill. Naturally, the residents of the land will be required to pay a tax on any ore they take from the mines or game they hunt on the tundra. Of course, neither the dwarves nor the Elk Tribe barbarians want to do any such thing, and unless the adventurers do some quick talking, the situation escalates to violence.

In the course of the encounter, the Rethnor agent warns the dwarves or barbarians that Gant won't take no for an answer. He calls them fools for not accepting the wizard's offer of friendship, reminds them that the Arcane Brotherhood has a broader power base and deeper pockets than anyone in Icewind Dale, and warns that the next group Gant sends will be much larger, better armed, and instructed not to negotiate but to drive them from their land.

Regardless of the outcome of this encounter, the adventurers find that they are no longer welcome in Bryn Shander—the guards at the gate turn them away if they try to enter. Wherever they go next, they find evidence of Vaelish Gant's schemes in motion. Around Maer Dualdon, he is buying fishing boats from cash-strapped

fishers and town collectives, negotiating a share of the knucklehead trade as payment for allowing the fishers to continue using the boats. His agents are working in Good Mead as well, buying beehives that are in danger of failing in the long winter. Dougan's Hole is spared from his schemes, so far, but the towns around Lac Dinneshere are suffering the worst. The adventurers soon encounter a **displaced fisher\*** who is fleeing the pirate activities on the lake as the situation there grows increasingly dire.

## HOWLS FROM THE NORTH

If the Ice Witch has been unchallenged until now, she has become a terrible force. With the Tribe of the Bear firmly in her camp, the bones of Icingdeath raised as a skeletal terror, and Auril's favor secured with the sacrifice of Elk Tribe warriors, the witch launches a massive assault on the heart of Icewind Dale. The howling wind, a constant sound in the dale, grows even more intense as it comes down from the north ahead of the Ice Witch's forces.

Packs of wolves (**wolf attack\***) and yetis (**yeti attack\***), angry bears (**bear attack\***), and bands of **Bear Tribe raiders\*** accompany another simulacrum of the witch and the animated skeletal remains of Icingdeath (**dragon and witch\***) as they sweep into Ten-Towns. Wherever the adventurers are, they can't avoid being caught up in battle—or perhaps trapped in the besieged walls of Bryn Shander.

The fight against these monstrous dangers is a military matter, not something the characters can handle alone. That said, heroes always have a place in a conflict of this scale and importance. You can let the players choose their own course of action in the midst of the frenzy or have leaders such as Duvessa Shane or Stokely Silverstream call on them to undertake a vital mission. Some examples are presented below, but feel free to improvise based on what the adventurers want to do.

**Hunt the Ice Witch or Confront Icingdeath:** The Ice Witch's simulacrum is part of the horde sweeping through the dale, and hunting it down is a suitably heroic task for the adventurers. Likewise, they might decide to take on the huge skeletal dragon excavated from Icingdeath's old lair and animated by the Ice Witch. In either event, they find the two together (**dragon and witch\***) and can confront them in the midst of the battle. You can complicate this combat with other encounters (bear, wolf, or yeti attacks, or interference from the Bear Tribe).

If the simulacrum is slain, it turns into snow and scatters in the wind, leaving no trace.

**Clear the Daledrop:** The Ice Witch's forces spill into the dwarven valley along a narrow descent called the Daledrop. It is quite defensible, and the dwarves will



Ice Witch

gain a much-needed respite from battle if the adventurers can fight their way up the Daledrop and keep it clear long enough for scattered patrols to come back to the valley and bolster the defenses. The enemies come in erratic waves as you see fit. You can use the Battlefield Encounters table on the DM screen to generate waves of foes and complications.

**Buttress the Gate:** While Bear Tribe warriors and fierce tundra yetis hammer at the North Gate of Bryn Shander, the townsfolk desperately try to reinforce it with anything they can find. If the adventurers try to help, the best aid they can provide is to stop the incessant pounding on the gate. They can go over the wall and drop to the ground in the midst of the press, driving the enemies back from the gate long enough for the defenders to strengthen it.

**Rally the Refugees:** Dozens of members of the Elk Tribe seek shelter in Ten-Towns ahead of the advancing horde. Weak and demoralized after the Bear Tribe's savage attacks, these barbarians offer little help in the defense of the towns. If the characters can rally them against their common foe, they might help to turn the tide of battle. This effort can be a purely diplomatic one, but the Elk Tribe warriors might be more likely to fight with heroes in their midst.

**Aid Embattled Forces:** Having finished off a pack of beasts or a party of barbarians, the adventurers spot a nearby group of allies that is surrounded by another threat. These allies might be a **dwarf patrol\***, Elk Tribe warriors, or **town guards\***.

Regardless of the characters' success in the interlude, the rise of the Ice Witch has lasting effects. The cult of Auril grows stronger in Ten-Towns and among the barbarians, and it will probably be a lasting influence in the north for years to come. Furthermore, the remaining people of the Elk Tribe settle in the cities of Ten-Towns as they did after Akar Kessell's first attempt to conquer the dale. Tension between them and the other residents rises and might erupt in violence at any time.

## THE BLACK ICE SPREADS

If Akar Kessell is left unhindered in the dwarven valley, the fate of the dwarf community looks grim. Baerrick Hammerstone's black ice spreads throughout the valley, and Stokely Silverstream flees the mines with a small group of dwarves who remain loyal. Corrupted dwarves carry black ice trinkets into Ten-Towns, spreading the vile stuff far and wide.

Depending on where the adventurers are when the interlude begins, they might have to deal with one or more significant encounters:



Akar Kessell

- ◆ Large numbers of dwarf zombies spill out of the mines and wander the area. Some stray near the towns, while others venture into the tundra. The characters might have to deal with two or more waves of zombie attackers (each a separate **zombie pack\*** encounter) threatening the Elk Tribe or attacking travelers on one of the roads.
- ◆ Venturing too near the dwarven valley leads the characters to a confrontation with a belligerent **dwarf patrol\*** (use the Halls of Black Ice patrol). The dwarves all carry black ice weapons.
- ◆ Within Ten-Towns, an encounter with a **band of ruffians\*** points to the spreading influence of the black ice. The ruffians wear amulets or rings made of black ice, which have made them stronger and more aggressive.

This interlude need not be a single, discrete event. The encounters might take place over a span of a week or more as the adventurers pursue other leads around Icewind Dale. The prevalence of the black ice should eventually lead them to Lac Dinneshere, where tales speak of pirates sailing a ship whose keel is formed from the stuff. Also, the black ice makes the cultists of Auril more aggressive and violent, perhaps lending more urgency to the heroes' investigations into murders and disappearances around the region.

## Act 2: DEEPWINTER

As the interlude comes to an end, the adventurers are free to pursue whatever threats they deem most dire. If they follow up on leads from Act 1 and the interlude, they probably investigate Gant's activities in Easthaven (and the role of black ice in recent reports of piracy on the lake) or try to find where Akar Kessell went after he fled the dwarf mines. They might also want to pursue the threat of the Ice Witch, but at this point, they probably have no clear idea of her location. (If the characters insist on trying, you can skip to Act 3. The threats in Act 2 won't go away, and you can always come back to them later.)

The adventure assumes that the player characters can address both of the issues presented in Act 2—the pirates of Lac Dinneshere and the scheme of Davrick Fain.

## PIRATES OF LAC DINNESHERE

At Lac Dinneshere, the plots of Vaelish Gant and Akar Kessell collide—or coincide. Both of them focus on the volatile situation around Lac Dinneshere, where Easthaven's growth has put the uneasy agreements between Caer-Konig and Caer-Dineval onto even shakier ground.

Just before the start of the adventure, Baerick Hammerstone crafted a ship's ram from the black ice and sold it to Derrick Gaffner, a fisher of Caer-Dineval. Under the influence of the black ice, Derrick and his crew have become notorious pirates, attacking fishing vessels on Lac Dinneshere regardless of their town of origin and occasionally raiding the towns themselves. (See the *Campaign Guide* for more information about the pirates of the *Howling Fiend*.)

By inserting the black ice remnants of the Crystal Shard into that situation, Akar Kessell hopes to create such havoc and disorder around the eastern lake that he can establish himself as absolute ruler of Lac Dinneshere. From there, he plans to pursue the same dream that impelled him at the end of his life—to become the Tyrant of Icewind Dale. After the ram is in place on the *Howling Fiend*, he steps back and lets it work its mayhem, leaving the area for now.

Meanwhile, Vaelish Gant has sent Pyrse Auliff, one of his allies from Ship Rethnor, to infiltrate the pirate crew and steer its activities toward his own ends. Rethnor agents in Caer-Konig and Caer-Dineval have begun a variation on the theme used in Bryn Shander: agents offer to sell “protection” to private craft owners and town fisher collectives in the form of supposedly magical wards. For those who pay, the agents paint large, elaborate (but meaningless) symbols on the boats, and Pyrse ensures that the pirates don't attack boats thus warded.

As Act 2 begins, Gant has decided to expand this operation to Easthaven, and Pyrse has convinced the pirate captain, Derrick the Drownder, to launch a massive attack on the town's docks. Gant, meanwhile, uses agents from Ship Rethnor to get messages to Pyrse.

## Getting Here

A number of events in other parts of the adventure might point the characters to Easthaven or the pirates:

- ◆ If they discovered Akar Kessell in the dwarven mines in Act 1, they heard him gloat about the spread of the black ice to Lac Dinneshere.
- ◆ If they drove Vaelish Gant out of Bryn Shander in Act 1, he taunted them with suggestions that his schemes are already unfolding around Ten-Towns, with Easthaven about to feel his wrath.
- ◆ Conversations with town speakers or merchants in any part of the adventure, including random encounters as the heroes travel around Icewind Dale, can call their attention to the difficulties in the towns around Lac Dinneshere. If Bryn Shander fell in the interlude, complaints about the situation on Lac Dinneshere are particularly loud. And if the black ice spread far and wide, tales of pirates who sail a ship with a keel made of the stuff are also widespread.

## Easthaven

See the *Campaign Guide* for an overview of Easthaven. On the 3rd of Marpenoth, Derrick the Drownder launches an attack on the town. You can adjust the exact timing of this attack based on the players' actions and the pacing of your game. It might occur right as the adventurers arrive in Easthaven, or it could come a day or two later, after they've gotten their bearings in the city (and possibly befriended key people such as Speaker Danneth Waylen or Rurden the smith). If the characters go to Caer-Konig or Caer-Dineval without stopping in Easthaven, they might hear about the attack second-hand—or you might interrupt their journey by telling them they see smoke rising from Easthaven.

If the adventurers ask around town about Vaelish Gant after driving him out of Bryn Shander, they learn that he is staying at the White Lady Inn. He is not in his room when they come looking for him, and the pirate raid (see “Raid on the Docks”) should interrupt any attempt to wait for him. Speaker Danneth Waylen constantly hurries them to stop the pirates. If the characters refuse to move on with the adventure before dealing with Gant, see “Confronting Vaelish Gant” (page 25).

### WHAT IF DERRICK DIES?

If the party manages to take down Derrick in the initial raid on Easthaven, the fight's not over. Any remaining pirates immediately retreat to their boats and attempt to make it back to their hideout. Presuming Derrick dead, Pyrse takes over as captain of the *Howling Fiend*, directing the pirates' attacks with far more cunning than his predecessor.

Meanwhile, if the characters captured Derrick alive, he readily volunteers information about Pyrse to save his own skin (having suspected the man all along and now convinced he was sold out). Derrick tries to conceal his relationship with Creedon, hopeful that the ferryman can still be of some use to him. If the characters ask about the location of his ship or hideout, Derrick instead offers to take them there, hoping that once they arrive, his crew will rescue him. (He'd also relish the chance to put a knife in Pyrse's gullet for supposedly betraying him.) Derrick doesn't reveal the hideout's location even under threat, instead reminding the characters that the remaining pirates will avenge the loss of their captain if the party doesn't take him up on his offer.

## Raid on the Docks

This part of the adventure begins with a **pirate raid\*** on the town of Easthaven. About twenty pirates, led by Derrick the Drownder, have sailed up to the Easthaven docks in the *Tundra Hawk* and the *Silversprit*, a pair of boats captured from Caer-Dineval. (Derrick left the *Howling Fiend* back at the hidden cove, along with Pyrse and the rest of the pirates.) The dockworkers don't realize the boats have enemies aboard until the pirates leap onto the docks and start attacking.

The adventurers can hear the commotion on the docks; if they delay in responding, they see smoke rise from where the pirates have set fire to some houses. The pirates' main objective is Rurden's Armory, which holds an ample supply of weapons and armor. (See the *Campaign Guide* for more information about Rurden and his shop.)

Unfortunately for the town, most of Easthaven's guards and sellswords are out on the lake when the attack takes place, strategically hidden among the fishing fleet in a ploy to turn the tables on the pirates when the *Howling Fiend* next strikes. The pirates were tipped off to the plot by the ferryman, Creedon, and formulated the surprise raid to capitalize on the town's lack of defenses. As the pirates make their way toward the arsenal, a handful of brave citizens take up whatever weapons they can find and try to fight off the raiders, but they're no match for the preternaturally strong and bloodthirsty pirates. Rurden puts up a noble fight, but the dwarf is knocked unconscious. Unless the party stops them, the pirates succeed in raiding the armory and escaping back to their hideout with ample equipment.

In the wake of the attack, the adventurers might want to talk to Rurden or any captured pirates, and Speaker Waylen is very interested in meeting with the heroes who so ably defended the town.

## Rurden the Smith

The inside of Rurden's Armory is in shambles when the pirates are through with it, and Rurden lies unconscious in a pool of blood near one of the walls. He gave at least as good as he got before sheer numbers overwhelmed him: three pirates lie dead inside the shop.

If an adventurer brings Rurden around (by healing his wounds with magic or stabilizing him and giving him a few hours to recover), the dwarf describes the assault from his perspective. Most of his information is self-evident—the pirates poured into his shop through the front and back doors, and some of them kept him busy while the rest carried off armloads of weapons and armor.

Rurden also has two pertinent pieces of information. First, he reports that an “oily sort o' man from down Luskan way” came to his shop just three days ago. Trying to scare Rurden with the vague threat of the pirates on the lake, this fellow said he could protect the armory

from such dangers in exchange for a large quantity of weapons. The dwarf believes that this Luskanite is in league with the pirates, but he hasn't seen the man since.

Rurden also overheard a snippet of conversation that can point to the identity of the pirates' informant in town. As a pair of pirates carried out weapons, Rurden recalls, one of them said, "The ferryman didn't steer us wrong, did 'e?" The other replied, "Didn't tell us the dwarf was such a fighter, though. He's worse'n a tundra yeti, an' twice as mean." (It's possible that Rurden invented that last part.) Anyone in the town can identify Creedon as "the ferryman" in question.

## Captured Pirates

If the heroes capture one of the pirates from the raid on the Easthaven docks, they might be able to interrogate the captive—but it won't be easy. The black ice has twisted most of the pirates' minds to the degree that getting any useful information out of them is a difficult task, since threats of pain and death are not necessarily effective. Even if the adventurers get one of the pirates to talk, none of them other than Derrick knows Creedon's name. Most just know him as "the guy from Easthaven," though some know that he's the ferryman, and all of the pirates can identify him on sight. They know that he provides them with current information about activities in all three of the coastal towns and helps the captain identify targets for their raids.

The pirates don't know anything about a Luskanite threatening Rurden before the raid. They think Pyrse is from Caer-Konig, and they don't know that he works for Vaelish Gant.

## Speaker Danneth Waylen

If they helped drive the pirates off, the adventurers earn the gratitude of Danneth Waylen, who offers to put them up at the White Lady Inn. Even if the characters didn't intercede, their reputation soon brings the speaker around to ask whether they might be willing to help put a stop to the pirate menace, offering 500 gold pieces as a reward if they succeed.

If the party agrees, Danneth outlines a few possible courses of action: discovering whether the pirates have an informant, which he is sure they do (see "The Informant"); locating the pirates' hideout (see "The Hidden Cove"); or luring the pirates into a confrontation on the lake (see "Battle on the Lac"). The following sections elaborate on these possibilities, although the characters don't need to do each one and might have their own ideas about how to deal with the pirates.

If the adventurers drove Vaelish Gant out of Bryn Shander in Act 1, they might wonder if Danneth Waylen knows anything about Gant. The speaker heard about the incidents in Bryn Shander, but he is too preoccupied

with the pirate raids to care about the wizard and brushes off the questions.

## The Informant

The informant is Creedon Connelly, the ferryman, whom the party might be able to identify in several ways. The easiest is the report of Rurden the smith, who overheard two pirates discussing the information provided by "the ferryman." If the characters don't learn this from Rurden, they might be pointed toward Creedon by a captured pirate or by asking around town about unusual shipments or movements of goods. Creedon ferries a lot of merchandise that belongs to other people. Lately, though, he's been buying supplies in bulk to deliver to the pirates, and although the goods themselves aren't suspicious, a few of the local merchants have wondered about the size and frequency of his purchases. Finally, asking around about the Luskanite who threatened Rurden also points the adventurers to Creedon—he deals with many travelers.

If the party confronts Creedon, he caves easily, revealing that the pirates forced him to become their accomplice after capturing him on the lake (a lie he hopes will win him merciful treatment for his complicity). He tells the characters everything he knows, including how to find the hidden cove, though he refuses to accompany the party there—he is (rightly) afraid the pirates will kill him on sight if they suspect him of betrayal.

If the party tells Danneth about Creedon's treachery, the speaker insists that the ferryman be hanged for his crimes. If Danneth believes that Creedon was coerced by the pirates, the speaker allows him to bequeath his "blood money" to his wife before he meets justice; otherwise, Danneth donates it to families who have lost their kin to the pirates' attacks.

## Caer-Konig and Caer-Dineval

The pirates' activities have not been limited to Easthaven. The fishers of the other towns on Lac Dinneshere have suffered greater losses, and the pirates have raided both of the smaller towns before their assault on Easthaven. If the adventurers decide to visit Caer-Konig or Caer-Dineval, they might gather additional information from the speakers of those towns.

Caer-Dineval is about eight miles from Easthaven around the western shore of the lake. A rough path runs between the two towns, but the harsh winter has left it heavily covered with snow, making the journey a full day's walk. Caer-Konig is another three miles beyond Caer-Dineval. While the adventurers are on the journey, check for random encounters using the Eastway Encounters table on the DM screen.

Fishers in both towns grumble about the pair of Luskanites who have been trying to extort protection money out of them recently. A few boats are painted with elaborate sigils, supposedly magical wards that guarantee protection from pirate attacks. These boats belong to private owners who agreed to pay the Luskanites. They transferred ownership of the vessels to the extortionists and now pay a modest monthly "rent" to continue using the boats.

The speakers of both towns confirm that these Luskanites approached them with a similar deal for boats that belong to the towns. Both speakers refused, although Alden Lowell is reconsidering his decision.

**Speaker Crannoc Siever:** The speaker of Caer-Dineval blusters with rage when asked about the pirates. He has good reason to be angry: he used town funds to pay for a significant portion of the black ice ram that adorns the bow of the *Howling Fiend*, and he feels betrayed that the ram is now being used against the people of Caer-Dineval. Crannoc knows the name and history of Derrick Gaffner (as described in the *Campaign Guide*), up to the point where the black ice corrupted him.

**Speaker Alden Lowell:** The speaker of Caer-Konig is curious to know Crannoc's response to recent events, and he reiterates everything the adventurers tell him they heard from Caer-Dineval's speaker. However, he also knows that the extortionists (**Ship Rethnor thugs\***) are currently staying in the Northern Light inn in his town.

## Lac Dinneshere

If the adventurers run out of things to do on land, they might head out onto the lake and try to confront the pirates there. After all, putting a stop to the raids probably entails a showdown with the pirates, either at their hideout or on board the *Howling Fiend*.

## The Hidden Cove

If the characters don't have information or a guide to lead them to the hideout, simply finding the pirates is quite a challenge. The hidden cove is concealed from the view of passing boats by natural rock formations. It's difficult to spot even when passing close by, and approaching in anything larger than a rowboat risks running aground on the cove's shallow rocks (the pirates and Creedon have navigated the cove enough times to know how to avoid the rocks). Worse, if the party hasn't discovered Creedon's complicity, the treacherous ferryman is likely to be the one who takes the group on its tour of the lake, and he stays far enough from shore to keep the characters from spotting the cove's entrance.

Circling the lake to approach the hideout on foot is a fairly sure way of finding the pirates, but this method has its own drawbacks: the extra time involved in traveling through rough terrain, and the possibility of more dangerous encounters.

After the adventurers locate the hideout, they find themselves up against the entire **pirate crew\***. The pirates' numbers are probably overwhelming in a straight-up fight, so the characters might need allies or a clever strategy to come out on top. Finally, if the pirates have reason to expect the party's attack—perhaps having been warned by Creedon—they set up an ambush, rigging the area around the camp with snares and keeping half their numbers hidden in the forest nearby.

The cove is a roughly circular harbor, about 200 feet across, almost completely encircled by high rock outcroppings. Inside, the cove is sheltered from the howling wind, and a frozen beach about 20 feet wide provides space for the pirates to set up tents and light fires for warmth. The pirates have two pairs of guards posted at the edge of the cove to watch for anyone approaching over the tundra, and the rest are quick to notice any boat entering the cove from the lake.

## Battle on the Lac

If the party manages to lure the pirates into a **fight on the lake\*** (perhaps by posing as fishers and sailing in a marked boat), the odds are more even. If the fight goes poorly for the pirates, Derrick tries to sail back to the hideout to regroup; if captured, he bargains for his life by offering to show the party the hideout's location.

In any case, if the adventurers go to the hideout, they encounter the remainder of the **pirate crew\*** there, including Pyrse. If the party doesn't press on to the hideout, the pirates there eventually disband after hearing that Derrick was defeated and the *Howling Fiend* taken. Pyrse, meanwhile, communicates the developments to Vaelish Gant, who might send him to aid a fellow agent elsewhere in Ten-Towns or make further trouble for the characters in another way.

## Seizing the Howling Fiend

Being aboard the *Howling Fiend* for even a few moments makes characters feel edgy and irritable, thanks to the influence of its black ice ram. If the adventurers are foolish enough to claim the vessel as their own and sail it, they quickly succumb to the black ice's influence and take a marked turn toward evil. How you deal with this situation is up to you—if you're comfortable running a campaign where the adventurers have become marauding pirates in Icewind Dale, go with it. Otherwise, you might want to have the players start new characters, or urge them to get off the vessel before their corruption is complete.

If the characters want to destroy the ram, their best bet is to load it on a wagon and take it to Baerick Hammerstone's forge in the dwarven valley (see page 15), although any forge—heated to the proper temperature—can melt the black ice. Of course, they can also let it sink to the bottom of Lac Dinneshere, but it might still cause trouble from there.

## Confronting Vaelish Gant

With his plots in Bryn Shander and Lac Dinneshere foiled, Vaelish Gant is no longer a major threat to Ten-Towns. But if the adventurers failed to oust him from Bryn Shander in Act 1, he might remain an influential presence in Icewind Dale. Unlike the other two villains in the adventure, dealing with Gant might not be as simple as barging into his lair, weapons bared and spells at the ready.

Under pressure from the characters, the Rethnor extortionists in Caer-Konig or Pyrse on the *Howling Fiend* can reveal that they take their orders from Vaelish Gant, and they know his current whereabouts. If the characters ousted him in Act 1, he is staying at the White Lady Inn in Easthaven; if they did not, he is still in Bryn Shander.

Bringing **Vaelish Gant\*** to justice requires finesse. He doesn't attack the adventurers—otherwise, they could plead self-defense after killing him. If they attack him, he tries to escape to a public place (possibly teleporting from his room to the street) so that witnesses will see him fleeing from mad killers. If the characters collect evidence about his criminal activities in Bryn Shander, his extortion attempts around Lac Dinneshere, and his connection to the pirates, it is fairly easy to convince Speaker Waylen to convict Gant, sentencing him to exile, hard labor, or perhaps death by exposure.

If the heroes defeat Gant in battle, they can retrieve the staff he stole from Blackstaff Tower in Waterdeep. He might also attempt to use the staff to bargain for his life.



Vaelish Gant

## FANGS OF THE FROSTMAIDEN

Capable of swallowing an elk whole, a remorhaz is an enormous worm-like creature native to the coldest regions of the world. Nearly forty feet long, with dozens of insectlike legs, a remorhaz hunts elk, reindeer, polar bears, frost giants, and even young white dragons, and it eats any living thing it comes across in the frozen wastes it calls home. The intense heat generated inside its abdomen can melt metal weapons that strike its back. Among the Reghed tribes, nothing—except perhaps a dragon—is more feared. Some people of Icewind Dale believe that the appearance of a remorhaz is a clear sign of Auril's wrath, even more than biting winds and endless blizzards.

Perhaps their superstition is grounded in fact. Davrick Fain, proprietor of the Nine Knuckles resale shop in Bremen and leader of the cult of Auril in Ten-Towns, has concocted a plot to unleash a remorhaz upon the region.

Ten days ago, Rycher, a local "wild man" who lives on the edge of civilization, secured a remorhaz egg. (Minutes before, the mother had been killed by a white dragon, and her body was still keeping the egg hot.) Rycher brought the egg to Davrick Fain, who began working on a plan to hatch it and unleash the monster on the inhabitants of Ten-Towns. With Rycher's assistance, the cult leader has laid the groundwork to tame the beast when it hatches and bind it to his will. Then Davrick Fain will wait for several months for the creature to grow large enough to be a serious threat.

## Getting Here

Several events in other parts of the adventure might point the party toward Lonelywood and the activity of Davrick Fain in the area:

- ◆ Wherever the adventurers happen to be, they hear of a foreign merchant or recent arrival disappearing overnight—and a helpful local warns that they might be the next victims of the "crazed folk" who worship Auril. Ever since "that Davrick Fain" began his apocalyptic preaching about Auril's wrath, acts of random violence have become more common, and many folks blame them on desperate people seeking to appease the Frostmaiden. A town speaker might hire the characters to find evidence that the missing person was slain and bring the killers to justice.
- ◆ If the Ice Witch's forces attacked in the interlude, Auril's cult is growing rapidly and attracting some high-profile members, including the speakers of Dougan's Hole, Lonelywood, and Caer-Konig. Cult activity rises, more and more outsiders disappear, and a group



Ice Witch

of **cult assassins\*** might attack the heroes wherever they are.

- ◆ If the black ice spread in the interlude, the cult doesn't grow in size, but it does grow in aggression and violence. People don't simply disappear—they are found brutally murdered.
- ◆ If the adventurers have made friends with the dwarves of Kelvin's Cairn, a dwarf tells them about a pair of white-furred cats that have started hunting on the southern slopes of the mountain. The dwarf suspects the cats are living in a cave on the mountainside somewhere. Further, the dwarves have spotted a thin plume of smoke rising from that area of the mountain.

Whether the characters start their investigation with the cave on Kelvin's Cairn, the missing persons in Ten-Towns, or the plots of Davrick Fain, they soon find that they are tugging on one of several interconnected threads.

## Nine Knuckles

Player characters who are suspicious of Davrick Fain and the cult of Auril, or who talked to Rycher in the verbeeg lair (see “The Wild Man,” below), might decide to hunt down the cult leader in Bremen. If the adventurers first pursued other threads after the interlude (such as the pirates of Lac Dinneshere), Davrick Fain is long gone by the time they come to look for him in Bremen, already having joined Rycher in the verbeeg lair. If the characters start investigating these events immediately after the interlude, Fain is still operating his shop in Bremen.

Just about everyone in Ten-Towns knows that the man preaching apocalyptic news of Auril’s wrath is a merchant from Bremen. Most of those living in the towns around Maer Dualdon know that he runs the Nine Knuckles, a resale shop with high prices.

If the adventurers find Davrick Fain in his shop, he greets them civilly, as potential customers. If they become confrontational or threaten him with violence, he tries to move the conversation outside, in front of as many witnesses as possible. He boasts of his devotion to Auril, claiming to have experienced “her embrace.” (See page 53 in the *Campaign Guide* for more about him and his beliefs.) He protests his innocence regarding any crimes and reveals nothing about the remorhaz egg.

If Davrick Fain has already left Bremen by the time the characters come looking for him, they find Nine Knuckles in the care of a shopkeeper named Gemp, who explains that Fain has left town, heading east to Targos or maybe Bryn Shander. Gemp is not a devotee of Auril and has no particular insight into Fain’s plans. He expects Fain back within ten days.

## Missing Persons

The adventurers might decide to investigate outsiders who have gone missing in any one of the ten towns. Anywhere they go, the story is the same: a traveler came to town, secured a room in the inn or took shelter in a stable, and was never seen again. Some bodies have been found, usually frozen to death just outside of town. Others are presumed drowned in one of the lakes. A few, like Hengar in Bryn Shander, have been accused of crimes and publicly sentenced to die of exposure—particularly in Lonelywood and Dougan’s Hole, where the speakers are sympathetic to the worship of Auril.

The quickest way for the characters to confront the perpetrators of these crimes is to make themselves targets, which they can do by simply asking too many questions about the disappearances and murders. If the party makes too much noise about the missing persons, Auril, or Davrick Fain, soon enough a group of **cult assassins\*** tries to attack the nosy heroes while they sleep.

If the fight goes poorly for the cultists, they try to flee and warn Fain. If captured, the cultists break easily and confess to the murders. The cultists show no remorse for their actions, maintaining that the party should be thankful. “*They died that the rest of us may live. Only the strong survive the coming of winter—it is Auril’s way.*”

## The Wild Man

The man who brought the remorhaz egg to Davrick is a rugged human named Rycher, who keeps to himself in a cave on the west face of Kelvin’s Cairn, overlooking Bremen’s Run. Rycher is one of the dwindling number of humans in Icewind Dale who can trace their lineage back to the first explorers to visit the region. Like his father, who raised him, Rycher mostly avoids civilized life, believing that those who reside in Ten-Towns have sacrificed the liberties that drew people to Icewind Dale in the first place, and that life in the wild is a truer expression of what it means to be human. The few people in the small towns around Maer Dualdon who have reason to interact with him—merchants who trade him steel or medicine for the pelts and meat he brings—call him the Wild Man.

Rycher first met Davrick on one of his infrequent visits to Lonelywood. The simple kindness Davrick extended to him that day, and the respect he showed for the Wild Man’s way of life—combined with a shared sentiment that the people of Ten-Towns were too complacent in believing themselves safe from the forces of nature—won Rycher’s trust. Since then, the Wild Man has done favors for Davrick in exchange for small gifts, such as a new hunting knife or an open tab at the local taproom. Naïve to the ways of the civilized world, Rycher doesn’t understand that he’s being duped by the shrewd

cult leader. Rycher is as loyal as a hound, and he does Davrick's bidding without question.

Rycher is a cunning hunter with a way of handling—if not quite taming—beasts. He shares his cave on Kelvin's Cairn with a pair of white-furred crag cats, beasts feared throughout the Frozenfar. While Rycher stays in the verbeeg lair, tending the egg and waiting for Davrick, he leaves the restless cats on their own to hunt for prey on the mountain slopes and in Icewind Pass. With the early, harsh winter, game is scarce, and the cats range farther and farther from Rycher's cave in search of food.

The adventurers might hear from the dwarves of the valley or from people in Caer-Konig or Termalaine that these two crag cats are wandering close to civilization. The dwarves can steer the characters to the general location of the verbeeg lair, betrayed by the smoke rising from the fire that keeps the egg warm. Alternatively, the cats might attack the heroes as they travel toward Lac Dinneshere for another reason.

Pursuing the fleeing cats after an ambush on the road, searching for their tracks near where they have been seen, or scouring the mountainside for signs of their passage can all lead the adventurers to the verbeeg lair.

## The Verbeeg Lair

This excavated complex on the slopes of Kelvin's Cairn was home to Akar Kessell's giant minions during his first attempt to conquer Icewind Dale. The verbeegs (more intelligent cousins to ogres and hill giants) of that time are long gone, but one young giant has moved back into the old lair with a band of goblins.

Davrick Fain's demonstration of Auril's power cowed the goblins and convinced the verbeeg to consider an alliance with the cult leader. Now the giant, the goblins, and a handful of devotees of Auril guard Rycher and the remorhaz egg, keeping a fire constantly burning in the kitchen to warm the egg. Secretly, Davrick Fain plans for

them all to serve as the remorhaz's first meals, strengthening the beast for the carnage ahead.

The verbeeg lair is described and mapped in the *Campaign Guide*.

### Front Entrance

Letting out onto the mountain's southern face, the main entrance is the most accessible way into the lair. It's not immediately evident, though, shabbily concealed by a screen of dry brush. If the characters come up the slope looking for the lair, they will probably spot (or be spotted by) the **goblin guards\*** outside the main entrance before they notice the entrance itself. The goblins attack the party on sight, raining missiles down from afar while taking cover behind the rocks. The guards fight fiercely but attempt to flee into the lair if the fight turns against them.

### Barracks

The barracks are where the goblins live and spend most of their time when not on guard duty. Incurious and cowardly, they don't respond immediately to sounds of fighting outside. If the adventurers do not proceed quickly into the lair, half of the **barracks goblins\*** come outside to investigate one minute after the first sounds of combat, having been rousted by the verbeeg. The rest remain inside the barracks, ready to repel any intruders, while the verbeeg lurks down the side passage. If the heroes sneak past the exterior guards, they can surprise the goblins in the barracks, with the verbeeg coming to investigate the clamor in the third round of combat.

The barracks is filled with mounds of untanned animal hides that the goblins use for bedding, as well as piles of rotting food and filth. Any furniture that once was here has been chopped into kindling for the small hearth fire, which lights the room and takes a slight edge off the chill.

### Captain's Quarters

This suite of chambers belongs to the **verbeeg giant\***, Dardo, who styles himself the captain of this ragtag band. The anteroom is bare, watched by two additional **goblin guards\*** who are under strict orders not to aid their fellows at the main entrance or in the barracks, but instead to alert the captain at the first sign of a disturbance.

In the “sleeping room,” Dardo sleeps on a heap of moldering summer grass covered with furs. He is a heavy sleeper, and if the lair is disturbed at night, it takes the goblins  $1d4 + 1$  rounds to wake him. When he awakes, he sends the goblins to assess the situation so he can decide whether to confront the threat or to escape out the secret door.

### FINDING DAVRICK FAIN

If Davrick Fain is not in the verbeeg lair when the adventurers arrive, he is still in his shop in Bremen (see “Nine Knuckles,” page 26), and they can confront him there. If they reveal that they have found the remorhaz egg, he flies into a rage and calls down Auril's curse on them. He attacks them on the spot, justifying the characters' use of violence in self-defense. Still, the speaker of Bremen would prefer to have Fain arrested and brought to trial rather than killed in the street.

Down a short hall is a small room where Dardo keeps the rest of the treasure he has amassed. A few large sacks hold 2,360 sp, 328 gp, and five gems worth 10 gp each.

A secret door in the bedchamber's wall lets out onto the mountainside, providing an avenue for escape if the lair comes under attack. The verbeeg does not hesitate to use this secret exit if an encounter turns against him. Finding the door from the inside or the outside requires a successful hard Intelligence check to search, although after it's discovered, the door can be opened easily—it's neither locked nor trapped.

## Main Hall and Storage Rooms

The lair's main hall is lit by a soft blue, magical light near the end of the passage. The chambers off to either side were originally built as storage rooms, although Davrick Fain's loyal **cult assassins\*** use four of them as sleeping quarters. These rooms have crude pallets laid out on the floor, with scant personal effects tucked into satchels in the corners.

The remaining storage rooms hold an assortment of broken furniture and ruined supplies. A few show signs of having been animal lairs at one point, with dirty nests and frozen spoor scattered among the detritus. The lair's serial residents have combed through the supplies dozens of times, leaving little of use. Still, the party might find something of use or value hidden in a forgotten nest.

The cultists spend as little time as possible in their dingy, smelly rooms, preferring to socialize in the dining area when they aren't sleeping.

## Dining Room

When the **cult assassins\*** aren't resting or out on missions, they spend most of their time in the lair's dining room, eating, gambling, joking, and sparring. The room is adorned with a long table flanked by trestles and is lit by whale-oil lamps in sconces along the walls. A long tunnel framed with wooden struts runs off to the side, leading to the scrying room. The kitchen has a pair of hewn stumps that serve as work tables and a large hearth lit with a roaring fire.

If the party intrudes on this area, the cultists leap to the attack. Any cultists that are resting in their quarters off the main hall respond to cries for help in the fourth round of combat. The cultists use careful tactics to attempt to flank their adversaries, split the party between the two rooms, and draw the fight down the main hall if reinforcements are available there. If the fight goes against the cultists, they attempt to break off the engagement to warn Rycher or the verbeeg in his quarters.

## Kitchen

The contents of the kitchen depend on whether Davrick Fain has come to the lair yet. If the adventurers began

this part of the adventure immediately after the interlude, Fain is still in Bremen. Otherwise, he is here.

**If Fain Is Not Here:** The kitchen is **Rycher's lair**, where he constantly tends a fire in the oven and keeps an eye on the remorhaz egg within. The goblin guards at the back entrance are tasked with keeping an eye out for danger and bringing him wood, usually from the smashed furniture in the storage rooms.

If the adventurers followed the crag cats to the lair, Rycher is tending to their wounds (and might have had time to heal them to full hit points). Otherwise, there is a 50 percent chance that the cats are in the cave when the party arrives.

Rycher is not immediately hostile unless the characters attack him or his cats. He might initially assume that they are fellow survivalists, and although he doesn't welcome competition for furs, he respects such people more than he does the "soft" residents of Ten-Towns. If the adventurers converse with him, he shares what he knows about Davrick Fain but says nothing about the remorhaz egg—Fain has impressed on him the importance of keeping the egg a secret. Asked where to find the cult leader, Rycher says that he thinks Fain is still in Bremen, and he isn't willing to say where Fain might be going next.

The kitchen contains the simple effects of someone who lives off the land. Rycher's bed is a heap of furs, and all his worldly possessions are stored in or attached to the large backpack he wears everywhere he goes. Those goods include nine foothold traps in three different sizes (appropriate for otters, wolves, and bears), a tinderbox and iron pot, a set of four skinning knives of various sizes, a tinderbox, 30 feet of hempen rope, a tin bucket, a spool of fishing line, a collection of metal and ivory hooks, sewing needles and thread, a miner's pick, and a pouch of dried meat.

**If Fain Is Here:** The kitchen is the **remorhaz lair**, where Fain and Rycher struggle to bring the young remorhaz (already the size of a dwarf) under control. Their efforts are quickly aborted when the adventurers arrive, at which point Fain tries to put the intruders between himself and the remorhaz while Rycher prods the creature to attack the characters.

## Back Entrance

The verbeeg lair has a back entrance that comes off the kitchen and lets out onto a small ledge that drops onto the mountain slope. The back entrance isn't intentionally concealed from view, but it's tucked into an inaccessible rill of the mountainside. The characters aren't likely to notice it on their approach unless they specifically circle around to look for other entrances or they're tracking Rycher's cats, and even then, reaching the ledge requires a successful moderate Strength check to climb up the broken mountainside.

A group of **goblin guards**\* watches the back entrance, although unless they're under scrutiny, the goblins' idea of "guarding" is to poke their heads out the door every so often. At your discretion, if Rycher had reason to suspect the arrival of hostile adventurers, he might have dismissed the goblins and set three bear traps in the cave entrance, but only if his two cats are safe with him inside the lair.

## Scrying Room

This room has a single furnishing—a silver-rimmed mirror about three feet tall, held at face height by a wrought-iron stand. This is Akar Kessell's scrying mirror, formed from the essence of the Crystal Shard, which Kessell used long ago to communicate with the verbeeg leader, Biggrin. Now it is linked to a similar mirror within the Ice Witch's Black Ice Tower so Davrick Fain can communicate with Auril's Chosen.

A character who examines the mirror can determine, with a successful moderate Intelligence check relating to arcane lore, that it has properties of communication and transportation. (It also radiates a strong aura of divination and conjuration magic.) With a successful moderate Charisma check to use this magical device, a character can see into the Audience Hall in the Ice Witch's tower. Looking through the mirror for more than a few moments brings Hedrun to her side of the mirror, where she can see the character.

A second successful moderate Charisma check allows the character to open a portal to the location of the matching mirror. Adventurers who enter the portal appear in the temple of the storm in the Ice Witch's tower. See the description of that room on page 30.

If the characters are successful, they might claim the scrying mirror for themselves. The mirror is a powerful item, but retaining possession of it is hazardous. Like the black ice, the mirror carries the taint of the Crystal Shard, and prolonged possession of the item begins to twist the user's mind.

## ACT 3: THE CLAW OF WINTER

On the Sea of Moving Ice, the Ice Witch sits in her tower of black ice, directing her army of beasts, barbarians, and cultists against the people of Icewind Dale in Auril's name. If the dale is to be spared the bleak fate of unending winter, the party must confront the witch in her tower.

## GETTING HERE

Eventually, the situation in Ten-Towns becomes so bleak as to demand action. The increasing frequency of beast and barbarian attacks, along with the heightening fury of the winter storms, makes it obvious that the people of Ten-Towns will perish if they do not capitulate to the Ice Witch or stop her once and for all. If the party does not take up the task of its own accord, the council of Ten-Towns, King Jarund of the Elk Tribe, or Stokely Silverstream of Kelvin's Cairn (or all three) declare war on the witch and ask the adventurers to be their champions. Without heroes at the forefront, they believe, any struggle against the Ice Witch is doomed to failure.

By now, the characters or their allies have probably figured out that the manifestations of the Ice Witch they have faced and defeated are magical constructs, not the witch herself. The trick, then, is to find her true form and deal with her for good. Clues throughout the adventure point to her tower's location on the Sea of Moving Ice (or at least in the far north), culminating in the scrying mirror in the verbeeg lair, which not only reveals the tower but allows easy transport to it.

Without the use of the mirror, the heroes must trek about twenty miles across the tundra. Depending on your preference, you can gloss over that journey, roll random encounters on the tundra, force the adventurers to sneak through masses of Bear Tribe warriors and packs of beasts, or let them lead hundreds of warriors of their own against these dangers, though no army will follow them across the dangerous floes of the Sea of Moving Ice.

## SEA OF MOVING ICE

The last stage of the journey is the most dangerous: navigating the Sea of Moving Ice to reach the witch's tower. The sea itself seems intent on blocking the adventurers' progress. For example, as they walk across one iceberg, another smashes into it, tilting it or shattering it; as they paddle a kayak across the churning waters, two great icebergs lurch together; or what they take to be a solid sheet of ice breaks beneath their feet, plunging them into the icy water. The Sea of Moving Ice Encounters table on the DM screen presents several potential obstacles for the adventurers, detailed in the download packet.

The characters and key NPCs (such as Hengar or Helda) can cross the Sea of Moving Ice if they are skilled and persevere, but no additional force will dare. If the characters led Elk Tribe hunters or Ten-Towns militia soldiers across the tundra, those warriors stop at the edge of the sea and wish the adventurers the best of luck. They might help the characters secure or build kayaks, but they won't—indeed, can't—follow across the sea.

How the adventurers reach the tower is up to them. They can build kayaks, barter with a friendly group of hunters, or use rope, spikes, and physical prowess to cross from iceberg to sheet ice to island. The challenges depend on whether they travel by foot or by boat, but the journey is possible either way.

## TOWER OF THE ICE WITCH

From the outside, the Ice Witch's tower resembles a great black spike jutting up from the icy sea, jagged and draped with snow. Hedrun raised it from the surface of the iceberg using only a small seed of Baerrick Hammerstone's black ice, brought to her by Akar Kessell, and created a fortress reminiscent of Cryshal-Tirith. One difference between the witch's tower and the original is that the entrance to the black ice tower stands wide open—as Auril commands all buildings should be—to let the winter winds inside.

See page 55 of the *Campaign Guide* for an overview and map of the Ice Witch's tower.

### Audience Hall (Level 1)

Upon passing through the pointed black archway, the characters come to the tower's audience hall. Two rows of columns stretch down the length of the room to a flight of steps on the far side. At the top of the steps is a landing that holds a small throne, beside which is the mirror that allows the Ice Witch to communicate with Davrick Fain in the verbeeg lair. More stairs rise to the left and right of the throne, ascending along the wall to the level above. The columns, stairs, and throne are carved of black ice, and the chamber is lit by torches that burn in sconces set around the walls, casting a latticework of shadows between the rows of pillars.

The Ice Witch almost never deigns to visit this chamber, instead leaving **King Günvald\*** of the Tribe of the Bear in charge of sending barbarian raiding parties against the towns. Günvald appreciates that he has been allowed to maintain a nominal position of authority in the Ice Witch's army, though he chafes at having to stay in the tower while his warriors range across the dale, murdering and pillaging. He is spoiling for a good fight, so he doesn't hesitate to throw down a challenge to any intruders who show up at the tower. Günvald is accompanied by a small force of Bear Tribe warriors and orcs from the Spine of the World who have sworn fealty to the Ice Witch, and all of them join in the fight.

Günvald used to be an honorable king, but under the influence of the tower's black ice he has become cruel and merciless. He orders his warriors to continue fighting even if it is clear they are beaten, sacrificing them to gain any advantage against the party. If Hengar is with the party, he notes that such reckless bloodthirst is out of character, even for the notoriously bellicose king, and

posites that Günvald might be under some kind of ensorcellment. (A successful moderate Wisdom check can lead to the same conclusion.)

Although overcoming the black ice's influence is difficult, the party can appeal to Günvald's better nature and remind him of his sense of honor. Doing so won't stop him from testing the characters to their limits, but it causes him to relent if one side is clearly beaten rather than forcing a fight to the death. If the adventurers lose, Günvald might allow them an audience with the Ice Witch—as his prisoners.

### Temple of the Storm (Level 2)

This 80-foot-tall chamber represents about two-thirds of the tower's height and is where the Ice Witch commonly appears to King Günvald, Akar Kessell, and anyone else she cares to communicate with in person. The chamber is wide open, adorned only by six large statues of the Frostmaiden that ring the chamber, and a central dais that is shaped like a diamond with Auril's snowflake symbol etched in its surface and inlaid with silver. A hole in the chamber's ceiling, the same size and shape as the dais below it, allows entrance to the level above. The room is dark except for whatever light source visitors bring with them.



Akar Kessell

Akar Kessell has taken to lingering in the **temple of the storm\***, trying in vain to make contact with the consciousness of the Crystal Shard within the black ice walls of the tower. He notices the approach of any intruders (unless they are silent and have no light source) and hides behind one of the statues.

The Ice Witch resides in the chamber above this one and likewise notices activity below her. After a brief moment, the air inside the temple begins to blow as if in a storm, and the witch descends from the opening above, levitating through the air to stop about 40 feet above the party. She demands to know why the adventurers have come.

The party's encounter with the Ice Witch can go in several directions. Even if the characters have opposed her before now, she isn't immediately hostile toward them—she'd rather convert them to the worship of Auril, knowing that they would make capable and useful servants for her goddess. If the heroes have significantly weakened the Ice Witch's grasp on Icewind Dale, they might be able to negotiate with her, agreeing to perform tasks on her behalf or making concessions to the Frostmaiden's worship in Ten-Towns in exchange for a cessation of hostilities or aid against a foe. If the party has brought Soren from the Elk Tribe with them, he begs his daughter to make peaceful accord with the people of Icewind Dale, and the adventurers receive a +4 bonus on

any checks they make to negotiate with her. If the party has brought Mjenir, the Elk Tribe shaman, he insists that the only road to peace is paved with the Ice Witch's blood, and if the characters try to negotiate with her, they take a -4 penalty on their checks.

As the adventurers talk with the witch, Akar Kessell emerges from his hiding spot. He remains silent unless they involve him in the discussion. The Ice Witch doesn't put much weight on the agreement she made with Kessell, feeling to some extent that he outlived his usefulness as soon as her tower was raised from the ice—and suspecting (correctly) that he is scheming to unseat her.

If the characters fail to reach an accommodation with the Ice Witch, she swears to teach them respect for the Frostmaiden and summons an air elemental to attack the party. She then rises back up into her sanctum, buoyed by the winds that rage in the chamber. The elemental takes advantage of its flight and the cover provided by the statues to harry the party while avoiding retaliation. Akar Kessell joins the fray as well.

Any characters who step onto the central dais are carried aloft by the storm, gaining a fly speed equal to half their normal speed and the ability to hover (both effects are dispelled when a character ends his movement on a solid surface).

The elemental fights to the death but does not chase the adventurers beyond the temple. The storm subsides after five minutes, at which point the elemental disappears if it is still alive.

## The Witch's Sanctum (Level 3)

This chamber is the Ice Witch's sanctum, where she spends time offering prayers to the Frostmaiden, communicating with her followers, and plotting her domination of Icewind Dale. The room is sparsely furnished with shaped black ice: a slab against one wall serves as the witch's bed; a table and stool for meals are set against another; a few shelves adorned with tribute from Günvald and the cultists (much of it acquired from raids on the towns and other barbarian tribes) line the third wall; and a small shrine to Auril, consisting of a plinth flanked by smaller versions of the statues from the temple below, is set against the fourth wall. The room is dimly lit by cold blue flames that burn atop the table and shrine. A diamond-shaped hole in the center of the floor drops into the temple below.

If the characters enter the sanctum, they probably have already encountered and defied the witch in the temple, so she wastes no time with further negotiation. Instead, she calls to her goddess for protection and unleashes her



fury on the characters. The Frostmaiden heeds her **Chosen's call\***, causing the two statues flanking the shrine to animate and attack the party. The Ice Witch gives no quarter and fights to the death; if she is defeated, the statues wail in dismay and crumble to the floor.

## POSTLUDE: THE MELTING

Neutralizing the threat of the Ice Witch does not bring immediate relief to Icewind Dale. Auril's wrath is unrelenting, and the rest of winter is no less harsh than its beginning. But the beast attacks cease, the Bear Tribe warriors are scattered or pacified, and the people of the dale settle in to wait out the winter, as they do every year.

Depending on the party's success in Act 1, Icewind Dale might still suffer under other burdens. If Vaelish Gant managed to take over Bryn Shander, even temporarily, the Arcane Brotherhood has secured a foothold in the dale, and rooting it out might be a significant challenge. If the Ice Witch went unchecked in Act 1, the cult of Auril could remain a substantial threat in the dale and across the north after the adventure ends.

Likewise, the death of Akar Kessell doesn't put an end to the threat he represents. Black ice items have been sold throughout Icewind Dale. If the characters failed to thwart Kessell in Act 1, the black ice is so widespread that it soon finds its way down the Sword Coast, bringing chaos with it. Rooting out the black ice wherever it has spread—and persuading those who possess trinkets or weapons made from it to give them up—might form the basis for future adventures.

The characters might be trapped in Icewind Dale until winter's end because the North/South Pass will be virtually impassable until the snows melt. You can use the *Campaign Guide* as a resource to develop further adventures for them until winter's fury finally abates. Consider the events of the Sundering, too, as fuel for adventures. Perhaps another Chosen could arise in Icewind Dale, or maybe Netherese or Thayan agents arrive in the dale looking for Auril's Chosen (or one of the player characters who is also the Chosen of a deity).

Even though some troubles might remain, the adventurers are heroes in Icewind Dale. People toast them in taverns, thank them on the streets, and give them places of honor in mead halls. They have every reason to be proud of their achievements.



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