

# DUNGEONS & GARDENS — SYNOPSIS



OUR ADVENTURE BEGAN WITHIN the salt-scoured winds of the far north, biting as a winter wolf's fangs, as a motley band of near-strangers disembark from the longship *Frostwind* onto the docks of Palebank Village. Each of them braved the perilous voyage across the Frigid Depths for their own reasons, lured by tales of lost cities, potent artifacts, and knowledge beyond mortal ken.

Palebank Village is but a ragged clutch of wooden hovels clinging to the cliffs like frozen barnacles, but has outsized importance as the northernmost outpost of Uthodurn, an independent city-state of dwarves and elves. Upon arrival, the party was greeted not with cheer but with a funeral procession. Urgan Wenth, a dwarven adventurer, lay encased in ice, a victim of a chilling malady contracted during his Eiselcross delve. A creeping frost stole all his warmth, leaving blue deathly veins in its wake. Elro Aldataur, the weathered elf leader of the village, tasked the newcomers with unravelling the mystery, for Urgan's curse had brought a halt to all expeditions north.

The party's investigation began in the shadow of grief. Urgan's ransacked cabin yielded a clue: a receipt from Pelc's Curiosities detailing the sale of Aeorian relics for a kingly sum of gold. Among the listed items, ominously, were two blue glass vials. Tracks led to the adjacent cabin of Tulgi Lutan, another villager succumbing to the icy affliction. Tulgi, her face a mask of frozen despair, confessed her allegiance to a Shadycreek Run syndicate, revealing she and her sister Hulil had plundered Urgan's findings from Pelc's Curiosities. She surrendered a single, exquisitely crafted dagger, claiming Hulil held the rest in a place of ill repute: Croaker Cave.

Pelc's Curiosities, its door ominously ajar, became the stage for their first bloody ballet. Elara, the aasimar bard, and Scarlet, the halfling druid, startled and blinded bandits

inside with a fury of sound and fog. Kragor, the orc warlock, and Halite, the goliath fighter, made quick work of the bandits, killing two and capturing the remaining two. Meanwhile Whisper, the tabaxi monk, scaled rooftops with feline grace and dealt with a lookout in a tangle of limbs and a sudden, bone-jarring plummet. The interrogation of the bandits confirmed Hulil's presence at Croaker Cave, and revealed she, too, was seeking a cure for the same frost-sickness. As the party searched the shop for remaining clues, they found the frozen corpse of Verla Pelc, the shop's proprietor, a grim testament to the curse's reach.

A brief respite at the *Jolly Dwarf* tavern, punctuated by Arl Bortock's wary tales of Croaker Cave— a place shunned for its giant, man-swallowing ice frogs— did little to soothe their frayed nerves. Elro, learning of their progress, urged them on. A visit to a wizened elf named Gramini at the docks yielded healing potions, bartered down in price with charm and a Scanlan Shorthalt shirt that sent the old elf into a fit of nostalgic glee.

Croaker Cave, its maw exhaling a chill deeper than the ambient frost, lived up to its name. Here, they found an unlikely— and perhaps untrustworthy— ally in the rogue Doctor Pepe, previously encountered on the roof of Pelc's Curiosities by Whisper. Doctor Pepe had shadowed them from there, claiming his own interest in the village's plague. An initial scout of the cave by Whisper and Doctor Pepe erupted into violence as monstrous, mastiff-sized ice frogs attacked. The ensuing melee saw the adventurers rush to their aid, trident, spell, and claw felling the amphibious horrors, but not before crossbow bolts fired by bandits deeper within the cave found their marks. These bandits soon fell to vengeance in the form of javelin, bullet, and radiant blast. The surviving assailant, a dwarf, retreated. A frigid pool separated him from the party, but skillfull



use of the grappling hook allowed them to cross and corner the dwarf. He confessed to serving Hulil Lutan, priestess of Tiamat, now also afflicted with the icy sickness. He also revealed Hulil's camp deeper within, and a treacherous pit trap.

The journey through the cave's depths led them past a bat-filled cavern to a vast underground lake, where "Old Croaker," a frog of truly titanic proportions, served as both ferry and ferryman. Scarlet's preternatural calm plus an offering of dead bats persuaded the behemoth to bear them across. On the far shore, Hulil and an elven acolyte knelt before a tapestry of Tiamat, the evil five-headed dragon queen. Battle was joined swiftly. Kragor's hexes and eldritch blasts, Scarlet's druidic fury, Pepe's unerring crossbow, and Halite's brutal javelin throws met Hulil's desperate dark magic. The priestess, her skin already marred by the blue streaks of the Woe, fought with the ferocity of the doomed, her spectral blade and life-draining spells a testament to her dark faith. But even Tiamat's favor could not save her. Halite's javelin pierced her heart, her dying breath a curse of endless desire and ruin upon her slayers. Old Croaker, disturbed by the commotion and Whisper's ill-timed splash, threatened to devour the tabaxi, only to be placated by Elara with a severed elf hand— a grisly offering to the subterranean beast. A chest yielded Urgon's remaining treasures: a scroll case, jade statuette, magical arrows, a jasper ring, and a significant sum of coins, alongside Hulil's journal. The journal spoke of selling one blue vial to an "Irven Liel", in a desperate bid for funds to find a cure.

Returning to Palebank Village, the adventurers confronted Elro with their findings. He confirmed the existence of Irven Liel, who, fate would have it, was a travelling bookseller staying at the Jolly Dwarf with his husband Fenton Tethwick and twin tiefling daughters. A tense conversation revealed Irven possessed the second blue vial, bought from Hulil, its surface ominously cracked. Scarlet confirmed it radiated the feared magical contagion. The

Liel-Tethwick family, having handled the vial, were now at dire risk. Elro, grasping the full horror, revealed the true name of the affliction— the Frigid Woe, an Aeorian weapon designed to destroy the gods. Yet, hope flickered: Elro discovered through his Uthodurnian contacts that a cure existed, a milky white liquid stored in golden vials, likely found where the blue vials originated. He then hired the party to go to Eiselcross to meet Urgon's partner in the discovery of the blue vials, offering passage on the ship *Remorhaz* and a substantial reward, including an immediate payout of 200 gold pieces for the recovered blue vials. That night, a palpable sense of deepening power settled upon each adventurer, their skills honed, their resolve hardened by the horrors witnessed and the trials to come. Kragor, however, wrestled with darker portents: unsettling dreams, waking with inexplicable dirt beneath his nails, a chilling premonition of his eldritch pact exacting a steeper price.

The *Remorhaz*, captained by the initially obsequious, then brusquely practical Stonebeard, set sail for Syrinlya, an Uthodurnian outpost on Eiselcross. The four-day journey was a microcosm of their larger quest: mundane tasks like fishing (yielding a barnacle-encrusted anchor from the lost ship *Snowy Plover*) interspersed with moments of unexpected camaraderie and sudden terror. Chef Ingrid, a gruff dwarf with a moon-and-rune amulet, revealed a talent for divine cookery, and, more alarmingly, a tendency towards lycanthropy, transforming into a winter wolf one night. Kragor's nightmares intensified, culminating in a vision of being entombed in crushing blue ice, again waking with inexplicably soiled hands.

The voyage climaxed in a terrifying encounter. Shrouded in dense fog, the *Remorhaz* stumbled upon the wreck of another vessel, its survivors clinging to flotsam, besieged by a colossal squid. A desperate battle ensued as the party warred against the beast's crushing tentacles and ship-rending beak.



They rescued three survivors: Gerhard Eisner, former captain of the lost *Frostfang*; his young crewman Rorik; and Bret, a cagey wizard of the Cerberus Assembly. It was noted that the defeated squid had seemed unnaturally focused on the wizard.

Syrinlya greeted them with a howling wind and a landscape of frozen yurts. Bret and Rorik went their own ways, while Gerhard followed the adventurers in some shock. Morgo Delwur, a stout dwarf woman, directed them to Orvo Mustave, Urgan's former companion. Orvo, scarred and grieving Urgan's death, revealed the source of the vials: Salsvault, a ruin two hundred miles northwest, guarded by ice mephits and animated armor. He warned of the Thin Sheets, treacherous ice, and the general misery of the journey. The party acquired snowshoes and supplies from Javel, an ancient, coughing dwarf trader, whose wares included a pair of ominously blood-stained halfling snowshoes— a yeti's leftovers.

As they prepared for the arduous trek, they received word that the *Remorhaz* required weeks of repair. Gerhard, broken by his loss but stirred by Scarlet's words of resilience, agreed to join their quest. It was then Kragor, his face a mask of dread, confessed the true nature of his disturbing nights. His pact, struck in desperation on Bladegarden's streets, now seemed to allow his patron influence over his sleeping form, leading to the terrifying visions and the inexplicable dirt. Fear of what he might become, or what his body might do without his consent, hung heavy in the yurt.

Their journey to Salsvault began under the baleful light of Ruidus. The endless white expanse, broken only by the occasional rock formation, tested their endurance. Halite's strength secured passage up an icy cliff. But the nights brought no peace for Kragor. Despite Elara's vigil, he thrashed in his sleep, waking once more with mud caking his fingernails— a horrifying, impossible portent in this land of eternal ice.

On the third day of travel, as they trudged

forward, the monotonous white landscape was interrupted by two rock formations, standing like silent sentinels approximately ten feet tall. Their sudden appearance was both a relief and a source of renewed tension, breaking the endless white with their dark, weathered surfaces.

Something is watching. Something is waiting.