

A Midwinter Night's Nightmare

This festive scenario started as an attempt to write a 30-minute dungeon but it got out of hand. It's a 'siege' scenario where the waves of monsters are randomly determined but the NPCs you are protecting have their secrets and agendas too. The Big Bad will overwhelm a beginner party, but resourceful and thoughtful players could triumph without having to fight Krampus.



Background

Vadim and Vasilisa are the descendants of adventuring folk: Vadim's father defeated Krampus years ago and Vasilisa's mother kept the family safe with her witchcraft. However, Vadim and Vasilisa have turned their backs on the heroic life, which has in part led to their predicament. Vadim and Vasilisa have brought upon their family the wrath of a winter spirit, the Krampus, who resides in the nearby barrow. This was triggered when Vasilisa turned away a beggar, the elf Morozko. Morozko sheltered in the family's Timber Store and, when Nikita, the young daughter of the family, took pity on him, he encouraged her to steal a **snowglobe** from the barrow.

The Hook

The PCs are travelling down a winter trail, hoping for lodgings on the shortest day of the year, already drawing to an end, when a desperate woman accosts them at a stile. Her cottage, just a mile inside the woods, is under attack. Will brave adventurers help defend it from a terrible foe?

*The Referee needs to be familiar with the NPC family and their movements, the location and assembly of the **Snowmaiden spear** and the **Witchhazel Wand**, the role of the **Zagorvor book** and the random events that shape the night's perils. The NPC **Morozko** is a potential helper and source of information: he understands everything that is happening (and is largely responsible for events) but conceals his wisdom behind an antic disposition, appearing to be a raving simpleton.*

The Cottage

The cottage is home to Vadim and Vasilisa and their three children, teenage son Ivan, younger son Mikul and daughter Nikita. Last night a holy wreath was hammered to their door, a sign that the evil winter spirit Krampus has targeted their home for destruction. They expect Krampus to attack after sunset. Characters with *History* will know that the Krampus is a feared winter spirit that has not be heard from since a nameless adventurer defeated it half a century ago.

PCs can examine and make preparations in one room each before the sun sets. Vadim will gather his family in the **Hearth (A)** and won't agree to moving everyone to other rooms or splitting the family.

The Woods

Outside the cottage a trail leads deeper into the woods, rising to a bald hill overlooking the farm. PCs will barely have time to explore the trail as far as the **Holly Hedge (J)** before gathering darkness and more snow forces them back to the Cottage.



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- A. **Hearth:** The front door can be barred and has 9 structural points. Within is a stone fireplace with an iron pot warming a stew nearby, a solid oak table and five chairs, a workbench with chopping boards and 3 sharp knives. Rabbits and plucked birds hang from the rafters along with onions, radishes and beets; there are also 3 doses of Healing Root. The family gather here. A big iron poker hangs over the fireplace, etched with runes (spotted on a Search roll): it is the shaft of Vadim's father's spear **Snowmaiden**, which his father dismantled when he settled down and gave up adventuring. On the wall hangs Vadim's bow and a quiver of 20 arrows. Furniture can be boarded against the windows, forcing invaders to spend a round breaking through, during which time they can be attacked at +2.
- B. **Parlour:** The fireplace warms this room too. Buckets contain household supplies, including 2 padded armour repair kits and tools to use them if anyone has *Field Repair*. There is a bench with cushions for the children and a spinning wheel beside a big bucket of yarn. The distaff used for weaving belonged to Vasilisa's grandmother who was reputed to be a witch; anyone examining it will notice the arcane symbols on it (or make a Search test to notice the distaff is unusual) but Vasilisa does not understand that this is the **Witchhazel Wand**. Her mother used to weave in here but died last spring. Windows can be boarded up as in the **Hearth (A)**. A door leads to the **Byre (F)**.
- C. **Bedroom:** The parents sleep here, with warmth from the fireplace. There is a single big bed with cords knotted tight to support a down-filled mattress. There is a bag of 214 silver pieces under the bed: Vadim's savings. Vasilisa has a box of jewellery (value 20gp) and some cosmetics and perfume (value 5gp) and 5 binding kits. An embroidered sign on the wall (created by her mother Babushka) states: "*Blade baptized / In Winter's Breath / Wand and Ring / Bring Winter's Death.*" Windows can be boarded up as in the **Hearth (A)**. A ladder leads to the **Nursery (D)**.
- D. **Nursery:** The children sleep and play up here, although Ivan often sleeps in the **Byre (F)**. There's a box of dolls and carved wooden toys, including a **snowglobe** taken from the **Kurgan (K)** by Nikita who secretly plays with it when frightened at night. Ivan's old picture book shows a hand-drawn story of grandfather Dadushka fighting the two Winterfiends, Korschei and Borschei, with his fiery spear and then sealing them away in a house under a hill.
- E. **Babushka's Room:** Since Babushka died, her room has been closed up, but Mikul sometimes sneaks in here because he misses his grandmother. There is a narrow cot and a book of ancient runes: the **Zagorvor**. If read by someone with *Read/Write*, it appears to contain nonsensical gibberish in a cramped handwriting.
- F. **The Byre:** This lean-to houses Polkan the draft horse, Camcha the cow and the ferocious rooster Gorky who attacks anyone except Ivan, pecking for 1 point of damage whenever their back is turned. Ivan can drive him into the coop with the chickens using a broom. The materials here can function as 3 leather armour repair kits and 3 shield repair kits, along with the tools for a character with *Field Repair* to do the work. Several tools hang from hooks, including a scythe and a sharp awl that is really the blade from **Snowmaiden** (see **A**). Ivan likes to sleep here to get away from his siblings. The **Byre** door can be barred (9 structural points) but is not currently.
- G. **The Well:** This is frozen over but there is a mallet to break the ice and a bucket to lower in. If the ice is broken, the steam from the warmer water below can baptise **Snowmaiden**.
- H. **Babushka's Grave:** Marked by a single stone, as she wished. Babushka's body, which takes an hour to disinter, wears the **Rowan Ring**.
- I. **The Timber Store:** A ragged vagrant sleeps here, unknown to Vadim and Vasilisa (who refused hospitality to the beggar). Nikita knows him as 'Mr Frost' and brings him out buttered bread to eat or milk to drink; in return, he takes her up to the **Kurgan (K)** to look for trinkets and they found the snowglobe in the doorway to the barrow. He is **Morozko**, a mystical traveller who wishes to test the family for their poor hospitality.
- J. **Holly Hedge:** a trail winds up the hill to the **Kurgan**, passing through a dense wall of holly. At night, the holly hedge blocks the path unless magic is used to part it.
- K. **The Kurgan:** An old burial mound whose stone door has fallen away from the hinges. At night, an eerie light shines out and the Krampus is here along with sleeping prisoners. If the snowglobe is returned here, the curse is broken.

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Encounters each hour

Roll 1d10 for an event every hour. There are 10 events in total and when all have occurred, the Krampus will arrive in person. Each event only occurs once except for 1 and 2, which can occur twice.

1. **Winterelfs invade the house:** 1d4+1 Winterelfs invade each ground floor room (A-C) and destroy property (repair kits, healing roots, binding kits). They will steal the distaff from **B** if it is still there but avoid the spear shaft in **A**. Winterelfs try to abduct children. If this Encounter is rolled a second time, one of the Winterfiends accompanies the invaders to the room with the most characters in it.
2. **Winterelfs climb on the roof and invade the upper rooms:** 1d4+1 Winterelfs invade each attic room (**D** and **E**); any children in **D** or **E** will be captured and the Winterelfs will steal the **Book of Zagovor** (**E**). If this Encounter is rolled a second time, one of the Winterfiends accompanies the invaders to the room with the most characters in it.
3. **A snowfall down the chimney extinguishes the hearth fire:** restarting it requires a trip out to the Timber Store (**I**) for dry kindling. If it is not relit every character loses a Hit Point each hour from cold (cannot be healed with healing roots or binding).
4. **Ghostly footsteps upstairs in Babushka's Room E:** when the room is entered, the **Book of Zagovor** is laid out on the bed and open to helpful spells.
5. **A ruckus in the Byre (F):** Gorky the rooster is fighting off the one of the two Winterfiends, Korschei, who will shoot the rooster and flee with the blade to the Snowmaiden and possibly with Ivan as his prisoner.
6. **Howling in the night:** 2d4 white wolves (22HP each) besiege the house, attacking anyone outside. If killed, their blood burns on the snow and can baptise the blade of **Snowmaiden**. They remain outside for the rest of the night and attack anyone leaving the Cottage.
7. **Blizzard:** From now on, a thick blizzard makes travel outside the cottage dangerous. Anyone outside has a 25% chance of becoming lost and finding themselves at the Kurgan (**K**), unable to escape the wall of holly (**J**).
8. **Hammering at the door:** Morozko has fled from the timberhouse and begs for protection in the cottage. He will reward hosts with a gift from his sack.
9. **Shouting outside:** One of the Winterfiends, Borschei claims to have a captured or missing character as a hostage and a snow manikin illusion seems to confirm this. Borschei will give up the 'captive' if someone comes out to engage him in single combat. If no one has been lost, Borschei will claim he has a captive (roll 1d4: 1 = Ivan, 2 = Mikul, 3 = Nikita, 4 = Vasilisa) and the person in the house is a changeling.
10. **The grave opens:** Babushka's corpse is animated and rises from the grave (**H**). It will break into whatever place Vasilisa is present in order to kidnap her. It is a 18HP Magoul and wears the **Rowan Ring**.

Reactions after each Encounter

After each event, the NPCs will react in various ways: roll 1d8. If a reaction affects a NPC who has been killed or captured, re-roll. PCs never see a NPC leave unless they are personally guarding them, in which case they will notice their departure immediately and, if they pursue them, are considered to be at their location when the next Encounter begins.

1. **Nikita** sneaks away upstairs to the Nursery (**D**) to hide under her cot and play with the snowglobe. She will remain there until someone searches for her.
2. **Ivan** leaves the house and goes into the Byre (**F**), locking Gorky in the coop. He remains there until someone searches for him.
3. **Mikul** sneaks away to Babushka's room (**E**) to read his grandmother's book, discovering the page with the Spell.
4. **Vasilisa** leave to visit her mother's grave (**H**), convinced that Babushka has a message for her.
5. **Morozko** feel sorry for the family and leaves the Timber Store (**I**) to knock and place a gift on the doorstep and leave (if Morozko is already encountered, he volunteers a new gift).

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6. **Vadim** heads out to the Kurgan (**K**) to challenge the Krampus but if Vasilisa is still present she will alert the PCs who could catch him before he reaches the holly hedge.
 7. **Nothing**
 8. **Nothing**
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Key Items

THE SNOWGLOBE

This is a 2" diameter hemi-sphere of glass, hidden in the Nursery (**D**), contains a snowy scene. When shaken, the snowflakes swirl in a flurry. If examined closely, the scene inside the globe is the Cottage itself. The snowglobe has a faint magical aura (detectable by DUNNAR) and allows the bearer (only) to pass through the Holly Hedge (**J**).

THE SNOWMAIDEN SPEAR

Snegurochka or 'Snowmaiden' is the magic spear that Vadim's father Dadushka used to defeat the Winterfiends decades ago. It has been split into its iron shaft (the poker in **A**) and blade (the awl in **F**) which can be reassembled to make a +1 magic spear. If Snowmaiden is 'baptised' in winter breath (held in the steam from the well or from the blood of dead white wolves), the spear's full powers activate: magical +2, bearer gains immunity to cold/blizzards, able to cut through the holly hedge surrounding the Kurgan (**K**) and Krampus cannot regenerate its damage.

THE WITCHHAZEL WAND

The Wand was the possession of Vasilisa's mother Babushka and protected the Cottage until her death. Vasilisa has been using it as a distaff in the Parlour (**B**). It can be used to create a circle of protection in a 2' radius of the bearer that cannot be entered by Winterelves, Winterfiends or the Krampus; it guides unerringly through the blizzard. If used with the Rowan Ring, it can cancel the blizzard, open the holly hedge (**J**) and allows the bearer to repel the Krampus (spend 12SPTS, 30% success). The Wand also functions as a Spell Component (Minor Protection for Beast Magic or Necromancy, Minor Domination for Elementalism).

THE ROWAN RING

The Ring is on the finger of Babushka's corpse (**H**), which means it will be worn by the Magoul if she rises undead. It makes the bearer immune to cold and confers Night Vision. It confers additional powers if used in conjunction with the **Witchhazel Wand**. It functions as a Spell Component (Minor Knowledge for Beast Magic and Elementalism, Minor Domination for Necromancy).

THE BOOK OF ZAGOVOR

Babushka's spellbook is incomprehensible gibberish to other readers, but it will fall open at an important page for Mikul or be found at that page after the event of 'ghostly footsteps'. This page explains in detail how to baptise the **Snowmaiden**, wield the **Witchhazel Wand** and **Rowan Ring** and how to pass through the holly hedge (**J**) into the Kurgan (**K**). One character with *Pagan Magic* can benefit from reading this page by regaining 5d6 SPTS.

Key NPCs

THE KRAMPUS

The Krampus is a hideous beast who rarely emerges from the snow, but whose booming voice can be heard taunting the occupants of the cottage during every encounter. After all 10 Encounters, the Krampus smashes into the Cottage intent on killing everyone. It can only be harmed by magic or magic weapons. **65HP, AR 8, AV 10, 2 claws for 1d8+5 each, ST 7+, SPD 5, regerates 1d6HP at the start of each minute in wintry weather, undead, treat as Giant Skeleton.**

WINTERWINTERELFS & WINTERFIENDS: KIDNAPPING

WinterWinterelves and Winterfiends can snatch up NPCs with a successful 'to hit' roll. The Winterelves can only steal children. If successful, they flee combat next round. If the Blizzard is

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raging, they disappear the very next round; otherwise they run up the trail (J) and pass through the holly hedge. Kidnapped victims are found unharmed but asleep at the entrance to the Kurgan. Killing the Krampus or restoring the snowglobe will wake them, open the holly hedge and end the scenario.

WinterWinterelfs – 9HP, AR 2 (5 AP, 5 SP), AV 1, Sword for 1d6, ST 13+, SPD 4, repelled as Skeletons

Winterfiends (Korschei & Borschei) – 30HP, AR 4 (20AP), AV 4, Scimitar for 1d6+2 or Bow for 1d6+1, ST 13+, SPD 4

VASILISA: the Mother

Human Female; STR 6.1 DEX 8.4 STA 6.4 INT 7.1 INS 4.2 AWR 5.6; 12HP, DV1 1, DV2 0, attack for 1d3, ST 11+. SPD 3; skills *History, Read/Write, Binding, Plant ID, Move Silently 33%*

Vasilisa was raised by her witch mother but, since she never learned *Magic*, has grown up to be intensely superstitious and goes in dread of the tall, bald hill in the forest known as the Kurgan. She misses her mother greatly and has preserved her room untouched, but she has none of her mother's magical skill. She does not realise the distaff in B is a wand but recalls Babushka's Rowan Ring which was buried with her outside. However, her love for her children is such that, if any are kidnapped, she will acquire the ability to use the Rowan Wand.

VADIM: the Father

Human Male; STR 8.8 DEX 7.9 STA 10.1 INT 6.2 INS 7.2 AWR 8.3; 20HP; DV1 2, DV2 2, 20AP, attack for 1d6, ST 10+. SPD 3; skills *Field Repair, Hunting, Track ID, Melee Weapon 1, Missile Weapon 2, Hide 43%*

Vadim is the son of an adventurer, Dadushka, but he gave up adventuring and dismantled the magical spear Snowmaiden. Vadim does not believe the old tales of his father's magic spear but can identify the iron shaft in A as being from Snowmaiden. If Vadim's children or wife are lost, his steely heritage will assert its Winterelf; he acquires +1 to hit and damage and will remember that the awl in F is the blade to Snowmaiden.

IVAN: the elder son

Human Male; STR 6.9 DEX 7.2 STA 5.4 INT 5.9 INS 5.5 AWR 9.1; 10HP, DV1 1, DV2 0, attack for 1d3, ST 12+. SPD 3; skills *Brawling 1, Track ID, Backstabbing 1, Move Silently 48%, Hide 38%*

Ivan is a sullen teenager who is impatient with his siblings and angry with his parents. He has much of his grandfather Dadushka in him and likes to handle Snowmaiden's blade (F): he senses it is magical but does not know it fits the poker in A. He knows that Nikita often sneaks away to the Timber Store (I) where she has an imaginary friend. He knows that Mikul is always sneaking into Babushka's room (E). However, getting him to open up is not easy. He will idolise a strong stern warrior or an attractive, courageous woman among the PCs.

MIKUL: the younger son

Human Male; STR 4.4 DEX 5.9 STA 4.2 INT 5.9 INS 6.9 AWR 6.0; 8HP, DV1 1, DV2 0, attack for 1d2-1, ST 14+, SPD 2; skills *Read/Write, Magic 1, Move Silent 58%*

Mikul is 10 years old and was very close to his grandmother, who taught him much witch wisdom and gifted him the storybook in the Nursery (D). He has enough raw magical talent to use the Witchhazel Wand, knows that the distaff was Babushka's wand and knows too that Babushka was buried with her magical ring. However, he will never speak of these things in front of his mother, because she scolds him out of superstitious dread. He knows that an odd Winterelf is living in the Timber Store (I) that Nikita calls 'Mr Frost'.

NIKITA: the youngest daughter

Human Female; STR 3.9 DEX 4.4 STA 3.4 INT 6.1 INS 9.1 AWR 9.3; 6HP, DV1 1, DV2 0, attack for 1, ST 15+. SPD 1; skills *Move Silently 68%*

Nikita is 5 years old, with her grandmother's fey and independent spirit and her grandfather's boldness. She takes cakes and milk out to Morozko ('Mr Frost') but doesn't speak of him around her parents. Morozko offered her a gift, which she refused, so he took her instead up to the Kurgan one morning and she found the snowglobe there and brought it home. She keeps it secret and plays with it whenever she is distressed.

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MOROZKO (Mr Frost): peddler

Elven Male; STR 5.9 DEX 8.1 STA 8.2 INT 6.4 INS 10.9 AWR 9.2; 16HP, DV1 2, DV2 1, 10AP, AV 3, Sling for 1d3, ST 6+. SPD 4; skills *Hide 70%, Missile Assassination 3, Plant ID, Track ID, History*

A filthy tramp with verminous beard and hair, yellow teeth and rheumy eyes, Morozko wears a tattered red shirt and treads with an ermine trim that was once fine. He prattles nonsensically about the weather, his sisters the stars, the old warrior in the Byre, the cannibal twins and the wisdom of children; he has the ability to scold characters about their deep anxieties (Vadim that he is unworthy of his grandfather, Vasilisa that she does not protect her children from evil, Ivan that he will never amount to anything, the PCs on whatever weaknesses the Referee decides are appropriate). Morozko is a mystical character who remembers Vadim and Vasilisa's parents but is disappointed in how their children turned out and is angry at Vasilisa for refusing him hospitality. He encouraged Nikita to steal the snowglobe, knowing it would invoke the fury of Krampus. He hopes to see the crisis restore some mettle to Vadim and some wisdom to Vasilisa.

Morozko carries a sack with magical properties: although it appears empty, he can draw from it a gift for anyone who has shown him kindness or respect. Use this brief table or roll on an expanded table such as <https://basalt-dnd.tumblr.com/post/153238499847/random-trinket-table>

1. Clockwork toy: a monster will spend a round smashing it rather than attacking or escaping
2. Rag doll: her name is Katka
3. Bag of beans: plant them under the snow and they grow in the spring
4. A brass key: it fits no known lock
5. Tiny bird in a tiny cage: it sings sweetly, Winter Winterelves hate the sound
6. Mask like a lion: very fierce
7. Pair of furry boots: only 15% likely to become lost in a Blizzard
8. Telescope: you can see the light shining from the Kurgen from any window in the cottage
9. Penny whistle: a Winter Winterelf must Save vs Magic or spend a round dancing a jig
10. Broom: Ivan can wield it for +1 damage
11. Box of matches: light a fire if one goes out
12. Silver buckle belt: holds your trousers up
13. Wooden boat with sails and rigging: needs a bottle
14. Silver arrow head: can be fitted to an arrow
15. Woollen gloves: keep you cosy
16. Silver pin: prick a finger, blood falling on snow steams and Snowmaiden can be baptised
17. Silk handkerchief: 10gp value
18. Mistletoe: kiss someone under it and they must save vs death or fall in love with you
19. Mince pie: heal 1 hit point when you eat it
20. A hen's tooth: priceless; Winterelves and Winterfiends will exchange a prisoner for this

The Referee should keep Morozko safe from monsters: they will not target him for attacks unless there are no other targets. He can move safely through the blizzard. The Holly Hedge (J) will open for him but he will only intervene to save Vadim and Vasilisa if they have shown great fortitude or if Nikita is personally in danger.