

4-6 PCs



Levels 4-5

WINTER FLOWER



A5

Winterflower

A 5th Edition compatible adventure for four to six 4th to 5th level PCs

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Credits

Author: Jonathan G. Nelson

Creative Director: Jonathan G. Nelson

Art Director: Alex Tallon

Cover Artist: Todd Gamble

Publisher: Jonathan G. Nelson

Cartographer: Todd Gamble

Interior Artists: Jacob Blackmon, Nicholas Cloister, Jacqui Davis,

Rick Hershey, Eric Lofgren, Malcolm McClinton, Louis Porter Jr.

and Public Domain

Layout: Alex Tallon

AAW GAMES LLC

Jonathan G. Nelson

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Adventure Background

The annual Winterflower Festival and Dance was started in Rybalka in 1340 by Jean Luc Louis. Since its inception eight years ago, the festival and dance have grown and evolved. What originally started as an event to honor the rare Winterflower has grown into an annual gathering for all families, soldiers, and hunters to eat, drink, and dance the night away.

The Winterflower, for which the festival is named, is the rarest flower in the world. It thrives in cold mountainous regions and has a reputation for growing on difficult-to-access mountain peaks and cliffs. It is the only known flower to grow through layers of snow to reach the sunlight. The one to retrieve a Winterflower and transplant it near Rybalka receives great praise from the entire village. The Wildflower is considered a blessing which protects the village from harm. Only once in the past eight years has this feat been accomplished.

It is customary for the men of the village to ask the women to accompany them to the festival by presenting them with rare, hard to obtain gifts. A woman will usually select from the men based on the rarity of the gift with which she is presented.

This year, a beautiful maiden by the name of Gwendolyn has come of age and many men vie for her attention. Three such men are Nicoli Vrodle, Alem Dulgra, and Vladimir Pelchonal- all of which are willing to go to great lengths to attend the Winterflower Festival and Dance with the maiden Gwendolyn on their arm.

The Winterflower Festival and Dance starts in just 5 days!



Adventure Synopsis

The PCs are approached by Nicoli Vrodle who hires them to travel to the edge of the Rybalkan Peninsula and retrieve treasure from an old shipwreck.

Immediately after they speak with Nicoli, another man named Alem Dulgra approaches with a similar offer. He wishes to win the maiden Gwendolyn's accompaniment to the village celebration dance by obtaining a rare gem. The gem is to be purchased from the dwarves who live in the caves under the nearby jagged crags.

As the PCs prepare to leave for these quests (or quest if they accepted only one), another man approaches. Vladimir Pelchonal tells the PCs that he is planning on venturing into the nearby mountains to scale the most dangerous peak. Atop this peak grows the Winterflower, the rarest flower in the world. He wants the PCs to accompany him for protection and assistance, but he wants to be the one to scale the final peak and pick the flower.

Depending on which quests the PCs accept they may take any of the following paths:

Nicoli's Path

Nicoli gives the PCs a rough map showing the location at the edge of the Rybalkan Peninsula where the shipwreck is located. He requires a rare broach from the lost treasure onboard the vessel. The shipwreck is half in the water and half on land; accessing the wreck by boat is not advised as the water is fairly turbulent with an unpredictable current. (If the PCs played A04: Forest for the Trees the current will either be very weak or very strong depending on if the lumber pond dam is still in place. The water has since been redirected by the Hamadryads away from the former logging camp.)

On the way to the shipwreck the party spots a Vikmordere scouting party which attempt to escape into the forest.

The PCs reach the shipwreck which they are able to safely enter from shore. In order to obtain the treasure the PCs must traverse some dangerous areas and combat undead sailors. Once the treasure is in hand, the PCs return to Rybalka.

Alem's Path

Alem rudely orders the PCs to travel into the hills and around the edge of the jagged crags. He shows them a poorly drawn map and repeats his directions many times. He requires a rare gem, Alexandrite, which must be retrieved from the dwarves.

The PCs follow the directions which although vague lead them in the correct direction. As the PCs pass between the jagged crags and the former lumber pond they are surprised by a trap and kobold archers in the hills.

After finishing off the kobolds the PCs proceed to the dwarf cave where they must solve a complex puzzle to gain entry. Once inside they meet a guardian dwarf who promises the retrieval of the Alexandrite should they help him with a brief task. After the PCs return from their secondary task the dwarf gives them the Alexandrite. The PCs return to Rybalka with the rare dwarvish gem.

Vladimir's Path

Vladimir approaches the PCs as equals and asks for them to accompany him on a quest. Vladimir is very kind and pays the PCs well. He hopes to retrieve the rarest flower in the world- the Winterflower from a towering crag. He asks the PCs to follow him into the jagged crags to the north of Rybalka. On the way there the group is attacked by an evil harpy as they travel past a small section of the Dark Wood. After the battle the group proceeds into the mountains using an old Vikmordere trail. The trail becomes more dangerous and has been washed out in places by rock slides and small avalanches. Many obstacles are overcome and Vladimir is injured, yet he continues without fear.

Finally the group reaches the mountainous peak upon which grows the rare Winterflower. Vladimir and the PCs begin the dangerous climb to the top of the solitary giant. As Vladimir climbs to the top, the PCs must protect him by engaging in a dangerous battle while hanging suspended high above the ground.

Vladimir finally reaches the rarest flower in the world - the Winterflower. He carefully retrieves it and climbs down. The story changes at this point depending on if the PCs were diligent in protecting Vladimir. If the monster is still circling it will attack Vladimir, killing him. If the monster was killed or withdrew then Vladimir makes it safely down and the group returns to Rybalka with the rare flower.

Remember that each adventure will take time, and the festival is in 5 days. Make sure the party understand any time constraints.

Adventure Hook

Rybalka is hosting the annual Winterflower Festival and Dance. It is customary for a man to ask the woman he would like to join him by offering a unique gift.

The PCs are approached separately by three men requesting assistance in retrieving obscure treasures. Each wishes to ask the beautiful maiden Gwendolyn to the festival and dance.

Adventure Path: Transition from A04 to A05



If you are running the "A-series" adventures and played A04: Forest for the Trees prior to this, you may wish to use the following arc:

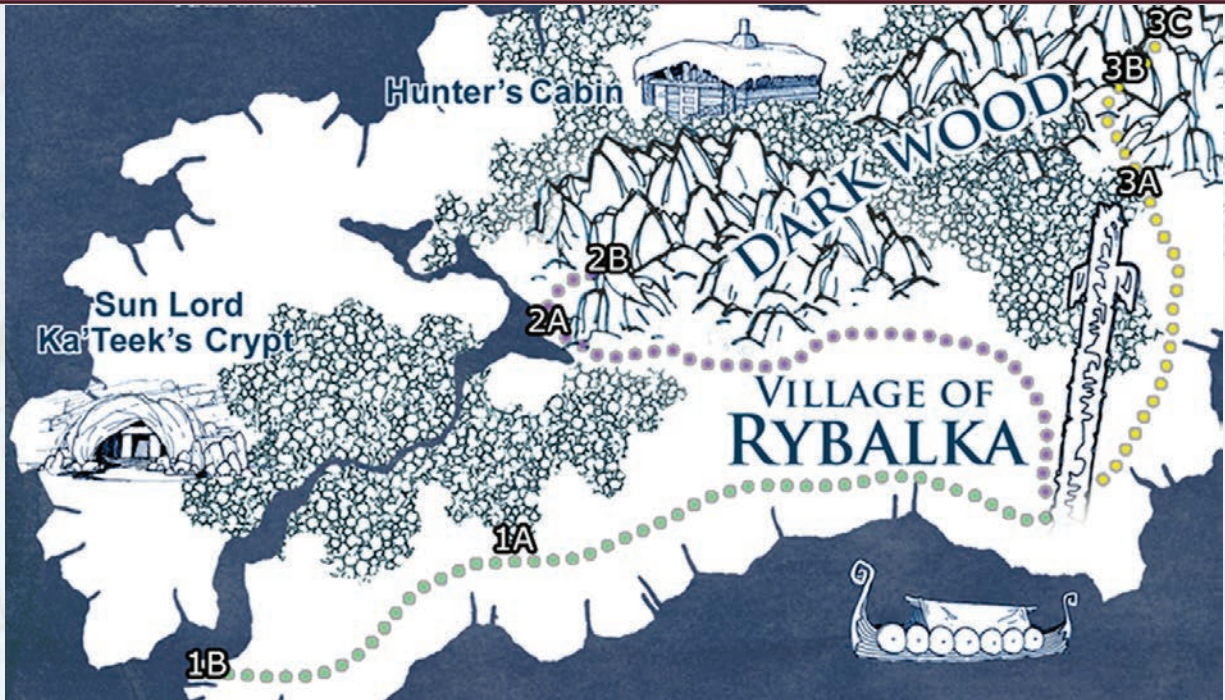
If the PCs are near outcasts after A04 (path of the druid), Alem may be their way back in. He has a measure of control over a number of important residents because of the drugs, and could offer to reintegrate the PCs back into the village if they help him. If the PCs are still part of village life (path of the lumberjack), he may be the person who can offer the most money to get his quest completed.

Once the PCs have completed this task, they see they've made a mistake as they catch Alem harassing Gwendolyn on their return. They decide to help Nicoli at a reduced rate in order to give Gwendolyn another option. After finishing this, they realize that Nicoli is just thinking of Gwendolyn as part of an overall lifestyle image and, whilst not a bad person, isn't particularly a good one.

This leads them to Vladimir as listed. Of course, all this time out the village means they miss Gwendolyn's actual choice her heartfelt one rather than gift-driven one. Perhaps even Vladimir can't win her over then, but the three men might each get the women they deserve as a result.

Possible Conclusions

What happens and who Gwendolyn chooses isn't entirely up to the PCs, but obtaining gifts for some and not for others will definitely sway her vote. In this adventure the PCs play the unlikely roles of matchmakers!



Green = Nicoli Vrodle | Purple = Alem Dulgra | Yellow = Vladimir Pelchonal



Nicoli's Quest

Nicoli Vrodle is a typical Klavekian. He wears a tall, bear fur ushanka and carries a short sword at his side, although he does not know how to properly wield the blade. Nicoli likes to drink, gamble, and fight. He has come to Rybalka looking for work either as a miner or fisherman. He currently spends his time hunting in the grassy tundra around Rybalka.

While most of Nicoli's hunting excursions have been fruitless, he did stumble upon a shipwreck on the western end of the Rybalkan Peninsula on this side of the river. The shipwreck has visible treasure, including an elaborate sparkling red ruby brooch. As Nicoli attempted to climb inside the former crew started to emerge, flesh hanging from their bones. Nicoli fled the area vowing to someday return and claim the treasure. It has been hard for Nicoli to keep his mouth shut regarding the shipwreck, but he has managed to do so.

Two weeks ago Nicoli saw the maiden Gwendolyn for the first time walking through the snow wearing a bright red dress and carrying a basket of potatoes and squash. It was love at first sight. Well, love at first sight for Nicoli, Gwendolyn didn't even notice him. Ever since that day Nicoli has been trying to get the courage to ask her out on a date. Lucky for Nicoli it turns out that the Winterflower Festival and Dance is just around the corner!

When Nicoli heard that a new adventuring group had arrived in town he realized that he could hire them to retrieve the treasure from the shipwreck for him. He covets the brooch he saw in the shipwreck most of all so that he may present it to Gwendolyn as a gift. He also dreams of being rich and using the rest of the treasure to build a fine estate nearby. Gathering up what is left of his measly life savings Nicoli approaches the PCs.

Nicoli gives the PCs a rough map showing the location at the edge of the Rybalkan Peninsula where the shipwreck is located (area 1B). He doesn't bring up the undead he encountered unless the PCs specifically ask if there is anything dangerous in the area.

He offers to pay them **100 gold total or they may keep half of the treasure giving the other half and the brooch to Nicoli.**

DM Note: If the PCs approach by land it will take them 1 day to arrive. If they go by sea, they can arrive in 4 hours, but there is a 45% chance they will suffer a setback.

1A. Vikmordere Scouting Party

A group of 8 Vikmordere lurk on the edge of the northern forest.

A Vikmordere scouting party has been sent to this area by the Snoqua tribe based far to the north. It is there to determine the Rybalkan effects on the region and report back to the tribal chief.

Skill Check

Wisdom (Perception) check DC 16

Success = “Movement near the forest up ahead catches your eye. A group of Vikmordere are ducked down low to the ground and making for the forest. It looks like they have seen you and are trying to hide in the underbrush.”

If the PCs do not engage the Vikmordere in combat they will continue following the PCs to the shipwreck, all the while keeping hidden and watching from the forest.



Combat

(6) Tribal Warriors, CR 1/8; Adjusted encounter Easy 500 XP; See official entry for full statistics.

Tactics

The Vikmordere attempt to withdraw and flee into the forest. These men are honorable warriors, but their mission is to obtain information and relay it to the chief of their tribe. If they are engaged they will fight valiantly to protect 1 of their men who will flee deeper into the forest as the battle ensues. The lone survivor will attempt to make it back to the Snoqua and warn them of the roving adventurers.

1B. Rybalkan Shipwreck

A ship slammed into this shore almost 10 years ago. Most of the wreck is still intact despite a huge gash in the side of the vessel.

This ship is named “Freedom” and was a troop transport vessel that served as a fishing ship in its later years. “Freedom” was contracted out by a group of treasure hunters who were searching the local ruins for valuables left by the Ancients. They were sure that a great trove spoken about in ancient texts was buried in the forest adjacent to aging ruins. The ship sailed off in search of the treasure and was not seen for many months.

Finally a local hunter reported to the Mayor of Rybalka that “Freedom” had wrecked and was resting at the end of the peninsula. The mayor personally took a crew of men and soldiers to the site to attempt to recover the vessel along with its crew and cargo. The mayor found something very unexpected indeed. Undead swarmed from the ship enveloping the would-be rescuers, killing everyone including the mayor. The slain men then rose as undead to join the rest of the throng.

This vicious process has repeated many times over the years increasing the undead throng at each encounter.

Read the following:

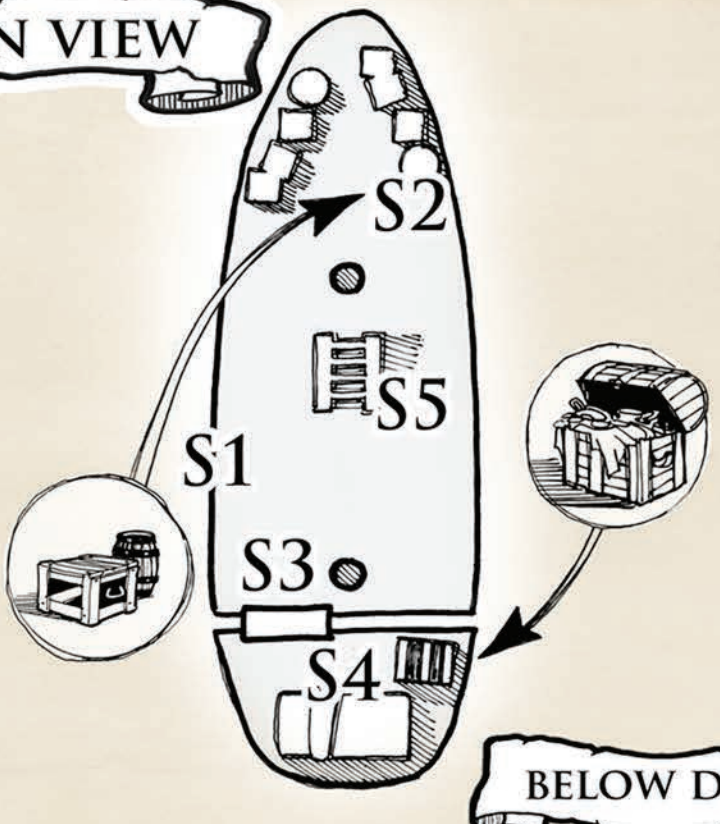
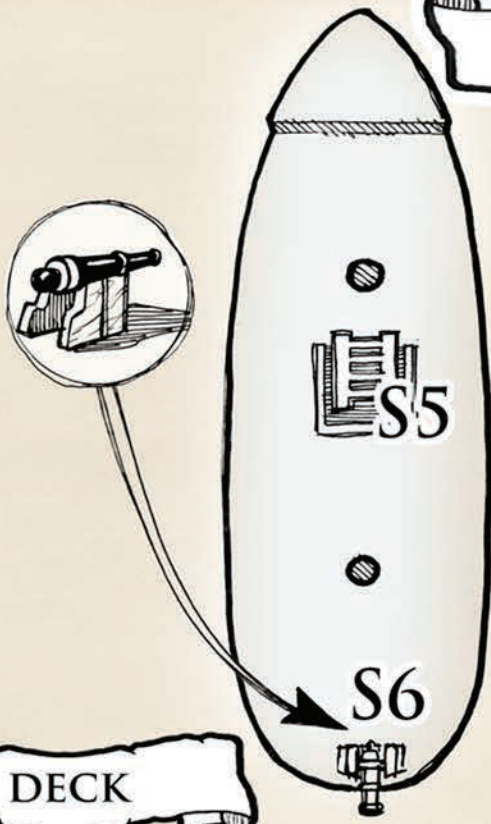
“As you approach the end of the Peninsula the immense Serpent Lake greets you with chill winds and the sound of birds. The real shoreline here is non-existent, with ice reaching out over the choppy waters of the giant lake. The wind whips at your body devouring what little heat you have left. Dark clouds begin to gather while thick fluffy snowflakes fall over the forest to the north.”

Up ahead a large wood vessel of Klavekian make rests crashed into the shore, broken right down the center so that the stern now rests upon the ice and rocks while the bow lurches out over the water. The ship was crafted in the old Klavek style before more advanced Vikmordere shipbuilding was introduced to the Rybalkans.”



OLD RYBALKAN SHIPWRECK

PLAN VIEW



When the PCs approach the wrecked ship read the following:

“As you near the ship you hear the creaking of the boards as ship gently rocks in the water. A large hole caused by the shearing of the ship almost in two provides an entry point. Suddenly, through the icy mist, you spot sailors in tattered clothing up on the deck of the vessel, staring in your direction. Their faces are white and there are no eyes in their sockets; two of them lift eerie transparent sputtering torches into the air and the sound of shuffling feet from below deck begins to echo through the empty carcass of a ship. Other skeletal figures begin to emerge from the mist above deck armed with swords and bows.”

The ship contains an abundance of skeletons and zombies. Most of the undead are sailors although the PCs will encounter the undead adventurers and townsfolk as well.

Combat



(5) Skeletons, CR ¼, 50XP; plus (5) Zombies, CR ¼, 50 XP; Adjusted encounter Medium 1,250 XP; See official entries for full monster stats.



S1. Gaping Hole

A gaping hole in the side of the ship provides an entry point. The adjacent rocks are slippery and covered in ice; one wrong move can send one flailing into deathly chill water.

S2. Cargo

Crates and barrels full of long since rotted cargo are tossed haphazardly toward the front of the ship.

S3. Door to Captain's Quarters

This door is unlocked and partially ajar.

S4. Captain's Quarters

The Captain's Quarters are full of strange black mold and the bed's posts are rotten. A solid and expensive looking chest rests in the corner of the room. The chest was once locked and trapped but was knocked open during the shipwreck. It is filled with a great amount of treasure.

Treasure



- 1,200 gold
- Figurine of eagle with fish in talons (Silver) - 100 gp value
- Figurine of bear with fish (Silver with Gold Plating) - 200 gp value
- Figurine of Great Serpent rising out of water (Platinum) - 400 gp value
- 10 short swords
- 10 short bows
- 100 arrows

S5. Ladder

This ladder connects the two decks. The wood is in surprisingly good condition.

Here, resting upon the ground is the red ruby brooch.

Treasure

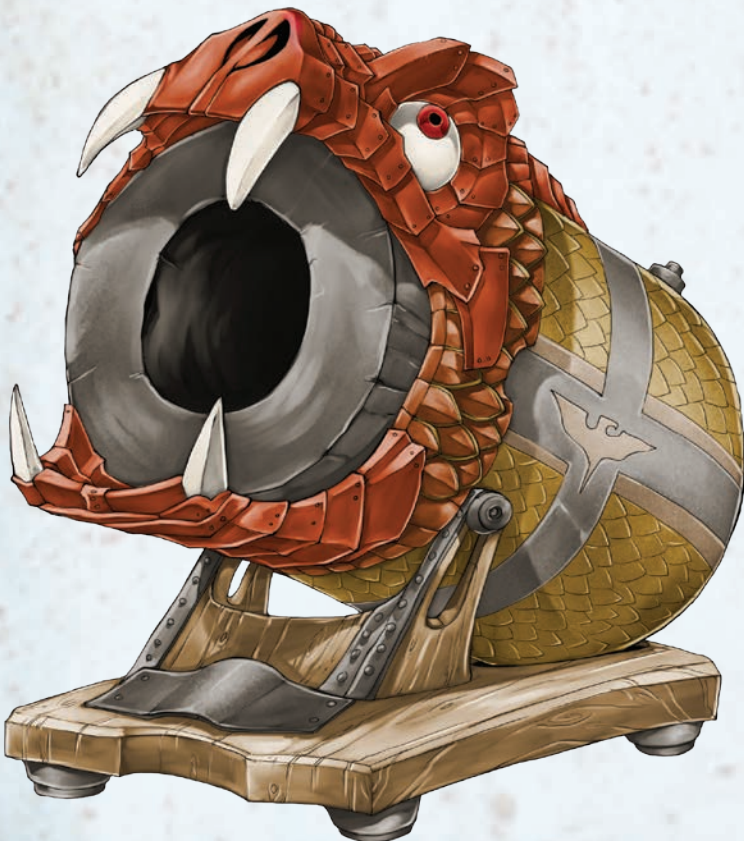
Rare Red Ruby Brooch (for Nicoli)

1,000 gp value



S6. Cannon

Designed and constructed in Pradjna for the Klavekian monarchy, this cannon is worth more than the entire ship. Should one retrieve this they could easily sell this back to the Klavekian monarchy for 2,000 gold pieces. Moving it should prove challenging though since the saying “worth its weight in gold” is spot on in this instance. (weight = 2,000 lbs./907 kg)



Alem's Quest

Alem is known for always speaking his mind, which tends to be quite dirty. He wears heavy wool clothing and a wide brimmed hat. A long mustache curled at both ends and a gaudy ruby ring add to his eclectic nature. Alem walks with a cane although he has no use for one. His profession is unknown to most despite being dubbed the “town blabbermouth”; Alem deals in illicit narcotics which he assist in smuggling into hidden tunnels in Rybalka.

Alem has been in love (lusted after) Gwendolyn since he first set eyes on her gazing into her window using a spyglass while she was changing late one evening. Although he has approached her before she always turns away and rushes off. Alem is determined to win her heart no matter the cost.

Alem approaches the PCs with the demanding stature of a nobleman, requesting their services. He shows them a poorly drawn map of the surrounding area, pointing at the jagged crags to the northwest of Rybalka. He orders the PCs to travel to a specific spot on the map and gain entry to the Dwarf Cave. The Dwarves, he says, love humans and especially warriors. They can negotiate with the Dwarves for a rare gem, a Alexandrite gem. It should look red by incandescent light and green in daylight, he tells them. Alem repeats his instructions over and over again as if the PCs are not capable of remembering basic orders.

Alem finally pays them a total of **50 gold** for their troubles and offers another **50** should they return with the Alexandrite. If the PCs wish they may negotiate and raise Alem's total offer to **150 gold**.

The trip will take the better part of a day to the mountain.

2A. Hungry Kobolds

Kobolds hide among the rocks and wait patiently for the right time to strike.

Read the following:

“You climb through rough rocky terrain into higher elevations and pass by a section of the forest you visited not all that long ago. A great, clear cut sits as a reminder of what terrible destruction Man can cause when he takes too much. You pass by the logging pond which was filled to the brim with fallen trees the last time you saw it. Now it has emptied and the dam is gone. A smaller pond filled with fresh water and christened with a thin layer of ice reflects your image back at you; a group of adventurers dressed for cold weather, with packs on their backs and weapons at their side, tromping through the snow alongside glistening pines and menacing mountains.

As you turn to head away from the pond and toward the crags an arrow slams into the ground at your feet! Then another! You’re under attack!”

Combat

(15) Starving Kobolds, CR 1/8; 25 XP; Adjusted encounter Medium 1,500 XP; See official entry for full statistics.

Tactics: The kobolds seek only food. They are nearly starving and will take whatever they can get - be it old military rations or raw human flesh! They attack with bows from 100 feet away at an elevation +30 feet higher than the PCs. They attempt to draw the PCs into a large pit trap at their feet.

If the kobolds are reduced by 1/3 they will attempt to flee unless at least 1 of the PCs is down. In case of the latter, they will continue their assault.

Concealed Pit

Wisdom (Perception) check DC 15 to find, Dexterity check DC 15 to disable; affects all targets entering a 10 ft. square area, **Dexterity saving throw DC 16** save or take 4d10 damage.

2B. Entrance to the Dwarf Cave

A large settlement of dwarves lives in a hidden underground city accessible through this secret entrance.

This location is revealed on the crude map the PCs received from Alem.

As the PCs near the location marked on the map read this:

“Following the map leads you to the entrance of a small box canyon where surprisingly both snow and ice are absent. The box canyon itself is full of small round pebbles that allude to uncertain footing. Scattered about, resting on the small rocks, are the skulls of dozens of animals, from birds to mountain goats. A few humanoid skulls are scattered about as well, it’s hard to tell from this distance but they look like orc... and human.

At the end of the small box canyon are three stone steps that lead to a flat wall in a recessed alcove. You are too far away to make out what is hidden there.”

A magical trap is responsible for the plethora of skulls scattered about the pebble path into the canyon. Beyond the magical trap is a covered alcove. The alcove contains a puzzle which must be solved to reveal the doorway to the Dwarvish Realm.

Stone Walk

“Death by pebbles”

Description: When a living creature sets foot into the pebbles they sense the creature’s presence and wait until they get around the halfway point to the door. Then, ever so slowly, the creature’s feet start to sink into the pebbles. When they pull their feet out, the next step they take pulls them deeper. This continues until the creature is submerged in the pebbles up to their neck. Once they are to this point there is no way out. They are trapped and can only be freed using powerful magic or an ingenious plan.

Solution: The secret to the pebble trap is to stop struggling. Every time a step is taken one must wait, stay calm, and take a breath. This must be repeated as the person cautiously approaches the alcove. It should take one at least 10 minutes walking at this pace to reach the alcove.

Effect: Sink 2” for every foot traveled/struggled up to neck of creature. Once trap has hold of a creature’s neck it no longer releases. Magical spells or ingenuity must be exercised. If creature walks at 1/4 speed, they will not sink.

R A R O O
N H T O T
E O A E S
N H G F R
R E E T H

UNSOLVED PUZZLE

H E H F S
O A E O T
N R A R O
O T R G N
R H T E E

SOLVED PUZZLE



Door to the Dwarf Realm



Dwarven Puzzle

At the end of the small box canyon is a large stone puzzle which functions as the door to enter the Dwarf Realm.

The Puzzle is made up of large stone blocks inlaid in grooves in the wall. These grooves allow one to freely slide the pieces up and down, left and right. A symbol is carved into the face of each stone block, if aligned properly the symbols combine to translate into words.

The correct word combinations must be displayed and a stone button pushed in order for the door to open. Incorrect answers will result in a burning hands spell targeted on the PC which pressed the button.

Once the following words are displayed (in any order) the door will open and the trap will be disarmed.

HONOR
EARTH
HEART
FORGE
STONE

Note: For British English feel free to replace "HONOR" with "DWARF", "STEEL", "BEARD" or any other 5 letter word which Dwarves may hold dear to them.



Trap: Puzzle - Burning Hands

Wisdom (Perception) check DC 10 to find, Dexterity check DC 10 to disable; affects all targets within a 20 ft. cone, Dexterity saving throw DC 14 save or take 2d10 fire damage



Skill Check

Wisdom (Perception) check DC 15

Success= Someone attempted to solve this puzzle and left some markings on the stone wall nearby. It looks like they deciphered a few of the letters.

Give the players the solution to letters H, A, and R. This should start them off in the right direction!



GM Tips: Puzzles

Puzzles are a great way for your players to interact and find a solution as a team. Let them work on the puzzle without any hints. If they get stuck, offer a hint at the cost of sacrificing a portion of their XP. Most will refuse and continue trying to solve the puzzle.

If the players come up with a solution that is different than what you expected, honor their keen observation and reward additional experience points!

Remember that part of problem solving is ingenuity and taking an unexpected path. Reward and encourage that behavior in your players.

A gaming group that works as a team plays as a team!

Read the following once the players have the solved the puzzle:

"You press the stone button on the wall; almost instantly, the entire stone puzzle slides into the wall and folds upwards, revealing a dark and dusty passageway."

The passage leads down a huge flight of stone stairs for almost 1 mile before opening up into a small cavern. The cavern is fairly plain although the temperature here is much warmer than above which encourages the growth of various forms of fungi and vegetation upon the cave walls. (Light sources will be required for those without darkvision.)

A dwarf named Wequeon is the guardian of this cavern and spend his days posted here in case anyone makes it past the pebble trap and the puzzle above. Obviously his job can be quite boring at times, so he fills his days with combat exercises and workout routines. Over time he has become quite muscular and skilled with his blade and flail. He is so startled that anyone has made it this far that he forgets what he is supposed to say and merely leaps out in front of the party, flail in hand.

Read the following:

"A dwarf leaps out of the darkness directly into your path. He is clad in full battle armor, clutching a flail in one hand and a shield in the other. A helm with sharp protruding horns adorns his head whilst a thick, lustrous reddish-brown beard flows out and over his armor. The dwarf says nothing but is breathing heavily and looks prepared to attack!"

If the PCs make any move for their weapons he will attack clumsily and then feign exhaustion. He will yield and explain that he is the guardian here and was so surprised by the PCs' presence that he didn't know what to do.

Moss Cave



As long as the PCs remain calm, Wequeon will quickly regain his composure.

“Hail, travelers. I am Guardian Wequeon, protector of this cavern. You are not permitted any further.”

The PCs may speak with Wequeon and explain that they are on a mission to obtain Alexandrite. When Wequeon hears this his eyes light up.

“You are not permitted entrance to our city, but I could get you this gem you seek. There is a cave where I go to collect moss. Recently a large creature started roaming my moss cave. You kill this creature, I’ll get you this gem.”

If asked about the dwarven city Wequeon will state “Stoneholme is the epitome of beauty, a city of earth and granite. A stalwart and honest place, where truth and justice are honored above all else.”

Wequeon will move a large rock which he uses as a secret door to access the nearby moss cave. He leads the PCs into the cavern, which is only about 500’x1000’ with ceilings full of stalactites 100’ above. The temperature in this room is a steamy 60F/15C (steamy for this region). The cavern is quite damp and misty with a hidden stream cascading in waterfalls down a large rock structure in the middle of the cavern. The waterfall-rock area is too steep and slick to climb, but the creature Wequeon is talking about uses the natural opening as a way in and out of this cavern. Thick green and gray moss hangs throughout the cavern in long clumps not unlike a dwarf’s beard!

He will bid them farewell and ask them to please wait in this room until he returns. If the other dwarves catch them wandering about they may attack and ask questions later.

The PCs may use a large rock structure located in the middle of the room to hide behind should they need it. There are also a few stalagmites which will provide ample cover for rogues attempting to sneak up on the creature.

Combat

Grick, CR 2, Easy 450 XP. See official entry for full statistics.

Tactics: The grick hides in the shadows surrounded by rocks and moss, waiting for prey.

Treasure

After the creature has been slain the PCs must wait 1d4 hours before Wequeon returns with a fine piece of Alexandrite. He hands them the Alexandrite with a smile and shows them the way to the surface.





Vladimir's Quest

Vladimir (or Vlad as his friends call him) is a man of average height with striking looks and jet black hair. He wears black and red clothing in town, but prefers white or gray in the wilderness so as to blend in. He is a noble man (intrinsically) and is always determined to right any wrongs, especially ones that he himself has brought about. When Vladimir approaches the PCs he will do so respectfully, asking them if they might spare a moment of their time. He will explain that he is planning on traveling to the north to retrieve the sacred Winterflower which is rumored to grow on a peak deep within the jagged crags. The path he takes is a dangerous one but although skilled with a crossbow, Vlad is not a seasoned warrior by any stretch of the imagination.

He is willing to pay the group 100 gold pieces to accompany him on his journey. If any harm should come to anyone in the group, Vlad will pay for their healing expenses and any damaged items.

Since the journey will lead them through some rugged terrain, **Vlad has purchased rock climbing equipment for the group.** He has acquired large amounts of rope, harnesses, chalk bags, hammers, pitons and metal hooks (similar to carabiners). When he hands the equipment to each PC he will thank them personally for their help. **When the quest is over he will allow the PCs to keep their new belongings.**

The flower Vladimir needs to win Gwendolyn's heart grows on the most dangerous peak in the jagged crags. Vladimir explains that the route they travel brings them dangerously close to the Dark Wood. He will need protection from the devils and beasts that dwell there should they be attacked. After that it's into some little-known territory and finally to the most dangerous peak in the jagged crags.

Vladimir (Vlad), (Guard, HP 11)



Vlad will not engage in combat, and will need to be protected if a monster target him. He carries 3 *potions of healing*.



3A. Dangers of Dark Wood

As the PCs travel northward they will pass very close to the edge of Dark Wood to the west. As they travel past a starving harpy spies them and grows quite interested. Perhaps she will get a meal sooner than she thought.



Combat

(2) Harpy, CR 1, 200 XP; Adjusted encounter Easy 600 XP. See official entry for full statistics.

Tactics: The harpies will wait hidden in the woods until the PCs happen by. They will then start to sing. They hope to lure a few PCs away before flying into melee combat. These harpies are hungry and dangerous and fight fiercely to the death.

3B. Treacherous Climb

An old Vikmordere trail wanders up the mountainside on the edge of a great cliff. Pitfalls, avalanches, and dangerous terrain await those who dare take this perilous path.

Read the following:

“Jagged peaks of a blue-gray tinge dominate the landscape to the north. The peaks grow up out of the land at radical angles like ice swords piercing the soil. A precarious old Vikmordere path leads up through the snow and around the peaks, making its way alongside suicidal cliffs and below monstrous avalanches. Surely one cannot survive this journey. You look to Vladimir to see if he indeed means to take this way. He looks back at you with a stern look upon his face and nods. “This is where we test our solidarity, our bravery, our will to survive despite the odds. This is where we carefully tread for this is not our land, but the wild land. We must choose our path carefully and tread lightly. Let us go. If we turn back now we will lay on our deathbed, years from now, wondering if we could have done it, and wishing we had.”

“Vlad seems to say this as much for himself as the rest of the party. He stops and takes in the sight for a moment before letting out a long breath of steam into the frigid mountain air. He hops his pack up further on his back and tightens his climbing harness before trudging through the snow up the old Vikmordere path that winds into the mountains.”

The PCs will pass three dangerous areas on this path that will require successful ability checks. Those who fail may be injured, separated from the party, or worst of all, die in the cold snow of the jagged crags.



Obstacle: Thin icy path on cliff edge

Skill Check: Strength (Athletics) vs DC 15

Modifiers: If the party took precautions and roped themselves together, each person has advantage on this check.

Failure: Fall from high elevation onto a rocky cliff and snow banks 100' below. (8d6 damage) If strapped on to other party members, failure allows one additional check. If this also fails the next party member connected to the failing member must make a check and so on. If all party members fail the entire group will go over the edge.

Success: Bypass threat.

Obstacle: Potential Avalanche

Skill Check: Dexterity Check vs DC 15 to bypass /

If triggered Dexterity saving throw vs DC 16

Failure: Noise triggers a cascade of snow forming a large avalanche. All party members who fail the saving throw are hit for 3d6 bludgeoning damage and buried under 5 feet of snow. Other party members have 1d4+1 minutes to dig them out before they begin to suffocate.

Success: Cautiously and quietly bypass threat.

Obstacle: Broken Path

The path the PCs have been following comes to an abrupt end. The natural rock bridge which once spanned a gap has cracked and fallen into a massive ice crevasse. There is a small landing (10 ft away, 10 ft down) that is lower than the PCs current position. It looks possible to run and jump from the current position across the gap, falling onto the lower platform and continuing. Getting back however, will prove interesting (and up to the GM).

Skill Check: Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check DC 16

Failure: PC falls toward their death (over 300 feet into an icy crevasse). If you are a forgiving GM you may allow a successful Dexterity saving throw to catch a ledge with minimal damage.

(If a PC dies you may opt to hand them the statistics for Vladimir so they may play him until the adventure's conclusion at which point they can roll up a new character.)

Success: The PC takes a running start and leaps across and down to the adjacent ledge. They can now continue on their path.

3C. Race to the Top

Read the following:

"You round the last bend in the dangerous trek deep into the jagged crags. A solitary giant looms over you, a stone giant with odd angles encased in hardened ice. Gray clouds darken the sky overhead and thick snowflakes begin to fall making visibility poor. You see a rough animal path through the snow leading to the base of this great mount.

Vladimir stops and looks the mountain up and down before checking his gear over a final time and preparing for a very dangerous climb. "You'll want to follow me toward the summit just in case I run into trouble. After I get the flower we'll take our time getting down and return to Rybalka."

Vladimir will make for the mountain.

"You follow Vlad to the edge of the mountain. He begins to hammer holds into the rocky cliffside preparing to scale the solitary giant. Once ready, he takes the first steps and slams his ice pick into the hardened snow and ice above, pulling himself upwards. "Gwendolyn! I do this for thee. Let the perils of my friends and I not be in vain!" Vladimir climbs with impressive skill and steadfast progress."

Climbing the Solitary Giant

Skill Check

Strength (Athletics) vs DC 16 to climb the icy mountain.

Failure

Just starting out: The PC is just not skilled enough to make the climb. He keeps sliding back down. He may try again after resting for a time but will be a considerable distance behind the rest of the group.

Partway up the mountain: GM determination. Either the PC takes a massive amount of damage or they simply fall to their death. This climb is not for the weak of heart (or muscle).

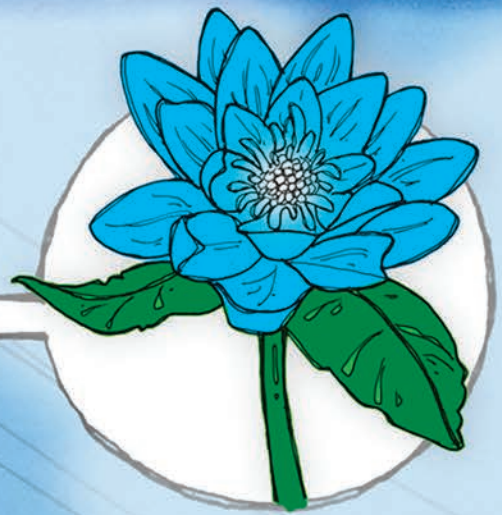
The PCs should be accompanying Vlad up the mountain. If they do not he looks back down and says "There's nothing to fear up here, the view is quite nice indeed!"

After the PCs are halfway up the mountain (300 feet) Vlad will motion for them to stay put and start to scale the last 1/3 to where the Winterflower grows. When he gets near the spot read this:

"As Vlad nears the Winterflower, you notice that the sky suddenly grows darker. Fearing a coming storm cloud, you turn your head just in time to see something large fly directly over your head, disappearing over the top of the mountain and out of view. Vladimir reaches the spot and stares at whatever it was that just flew over your head. His face turns white and he quickly yet gently gathers up something from the ground and starts to descend. "Make ready friends! We have company!" Vladimir starts to make his way down, his pace seems quickened and you fear he may slip and fall! You have little time to worry though as a dark shadow is cast over you and the 'boom' of flapping wings approaches from behind! The promise of death both above and below suddenly becomes quite apparent."

The creature which is so interested in the group is a young Snow Roc who recently left the nest and is looking for its first meal. He is very immature and is easily confused by the PCs actions. Thus, every round there is a 20% chance he does nothing but circle above trying to decide upon a target. Most rounds he attempts to attack Vlad but can be drawn away by fired arrows or spells.

If the PCs are unable to adequately protect Vladimir from this threat he may lose his footing and tumble down the side of the mountain, held only by a rope and a harness. He will fall over 30 feet in this way and sustain 3d6 damage (perhaps enough to kill him). The PCs will have to be quite diligent and resourceful to ward off this enemy.



“WINTERFLOWER”
The Rarest Known Flower,
grows solitary and blooms
but once per year.

Mountain Peak known
as the “Solitary Giant”
(Glacial Ice and Basalt Rock)

7500 feet above sea level



Snow Roc circling the
Solitary Giant

WINTERFLOWER

If the Snow Roc picks up Vlad or a PC he will fly off to a remote cave to enjoy his meal. The PC will have to fight the creature one on one and if they are able to slay it, will still have to figure out where they are and how to get home.

Extreme Combat Conditions

The PCs are climbing a mountain and are tied in with ropes and securement points. Advise the PCs to use their first round creating a securement point from which to tie off their rope. Now they will be able to proceed in combat from this location. Obviously standard movement will be impossible. The PC may choose to climb, attack with ranged weapons, cast spells, or wait until they are attacked by the Snow Roc to retaliate. Any PC may ready an action until the Snow Roc attacks. The PC may then immediately counter with their attack before the Roc flies out of range. If you prefer to use alternative rules feel free.

This combat scenario calls for an extremely scary yet exhilarating and fast paced narrative. Allow the rules to be quick and loose and keep things moving!

Combat

Snow Roc, CR 5, Hard 1,800 XP;

Snow Roc

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 124 (8d20 + 40)

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +9, Wis +4, Cha +3

Skills Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages --

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Keen Sight. The snow roc has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The snow roc makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the roc can't use its talons on another target.





Skill Check

**Strength (Athletics) vs DC 16 (badly injured:
DC 18)**


If the PCs and Vlad survive this ordeal they still must make another climb check to descend the mountain. Falling is not fatal though, a fall will drop a PC 10 feet to the last securement point where they will slam into the side of the sharp icy rock face for 1d6 damage.

If the PCs survived and were able to save Vladimir from the Snow Roc read the following when they reach the bottom of the mountain:

“You take the final step off the steep mountain face and onto the ground with great relief. You immediately feel how sore all of your muscles are. Just thinking about the trek all the way back to Rybalka makes your stomach drop, but you are glad to be alive after this ordeal.”

Vladimir soon joins you, his smile is enough to make it all worth it. “Look! Look my friends! It is the legendary Winterflower!” Vladimir gently lifts a blooming blue flower from a small satchel at his side. The green stalk is coated in solid ice and trails down into a complex white root structure which seems to dig straight into the chunk of ice and dirt which Vlad has so carefully cradled from the top of the solitary giant. “We did it. You did it. Without you I would have perished. I owe you my gratitude, my life, and hopefully if all goes as planned an invitation to a wedding someday. First things first though... we must safely return and I must visit Gwendolyn to present her with this gift.”

The PCs must now return to Rybalka. You may opt to describe a quick return (after asking how the PCs deal with the obstacle #3, the gap in the trail) or perhaps you want to make progress a little slower and stretch out the adventure with a few encounters. If the PCs crave more adventure feel free to adlib and throw in some obstacles, enemy encounters, or strange caverns with a hidden treasure.



Once the PCs return to Rybalka and all of the chosen quests have been completed you may continue with the final section of our story.

Conclusion: Heroic Heartbreak

When the first two men offer their gifts, Gwendolyn refuses their propositions, assuming they did not obtain the gifts on their own.

Vladimir presents Gwendolyn with the Wildflower. Although her eyes linger on him for quite awhile, she politely refuses his gift (assuming the newly arrived adventuring group had some hand in its acquisition.)

Gwendolyn has actually already chosen to attend the festival with a local man named Vincent. Vincent is a commoner and has no money or gifts to give. He offered her the rarest gift in the world, something devoid of envy, jealousy, or lust - his pure and everlasting love.

If the PCs intervene and explain Vladimir's struggle to obtain the Wildflower, Gwendolyn will reconsider and ultimately accept his offer. Her original suitor, although hurt will honor her decision and withdraw.

If Vladimir died on his quest yet was able to obtain the Wildflower then the PCs may give it to Gwendolyn. If they tell her everything that happened she will feel so bad that she will not even attend the festival or dance. Instead she will attend the private funeral for Vlad with a few of his friends and perhaps the PCs as well.

A05 - Experience Awards

- If you are using the Milestone rules, the party can level up at the end of this adventure. Otherwise consider the following rewards.
- 200 each - Completing Nicolì's Quest
- 300 each - Completing Alem's Quest
- 200 individual - Finding the Solution to the Stone Walk (Death by Pebbles) Trap
- 100 each - Solving the Puzzle: Door to the Dwarf Realm
- 300 each - Completing Vladimir's Quest
- 500 single award - Taking initiative to speak with Gwendolyn and tell her of Vladimir's undying love for her and the risks he took to obtain the Winterflower.
- Remember to award inspiration!

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A 5th Edition compatible adventure for four to six 4th to 5th level PCs

The annual Winterflower Festival & Dance is just around the corner! What originally started as a festival to honor the rare Winterflower has grown into an annual gathering for families, soldiers, and hunters to eat, drink, and dance the night away.

The festival is named after the rarest flower in the world. It thrives in a cold mountainous region and has a reputation for growing on sheer mountain peaks and cliffs. It is the only flower known to grow through layers of snow in order to reach the sunlight. When carefully transplanted near the village the Winterflower is considered a blessing which protects the village from harm.

It is customary for the men of the village to ask the women to the dance by presenting them with rare, difficult to obtain gifts. A woman will usually select from the men based on the rarity of the gift with which she was presented.

This year, a beautiful maiden by the name of Gwendolyn has come of age and many men vie for her attention. Three such men are Nicoli Vrodle, Alem Dulgra, and Vladimir Pelchonal- all of which are willing to go to great lengths to attend the Winterflower Festival & Dance with the maiden Gwendolyn on their arm.

Each of the three men hire the PCs to retrieve the rarest gifts in the land.

The catch? The Winterflower Festival starts in just 5 days so the PCs must hurry!

Also included in “Winterflower”:

- Maps and Illustrations by 3x ENnie Award winner Todd Gamble
- Optional story arc transitioning from A04 into A05 depending on the PCs actions in the previous adventure.
- Three main quests, of which the PCs may choose to take only one or all three if they so wish. Adventure conclusion varies greatly depending on the PCs choices and actions.
- New Trap: Stone Walk
- New Puzzle: Entrance to the Dwarf Realm
- New Map: Old Rybalkan Shipwreck
- Illustration: Winterflower and the Solitary Giant
- New Monster: Snow Roc
- Paizo reviewer ENDZIETGIEST calls the final encounter “**one of the coolest environmental showdowns I’ve read in any PFRPG adventure and feels truly unique.**”