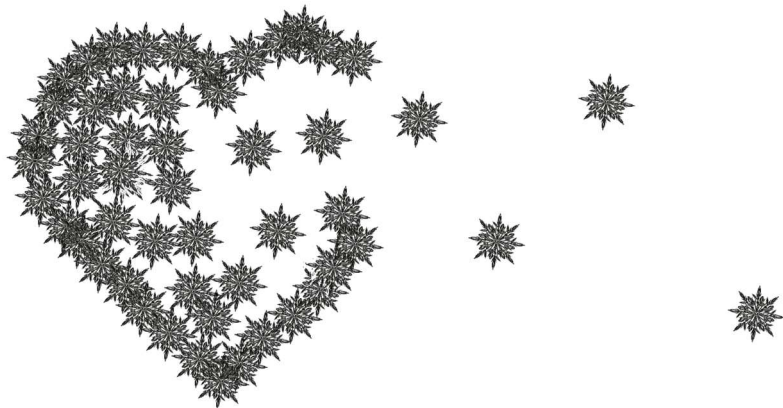
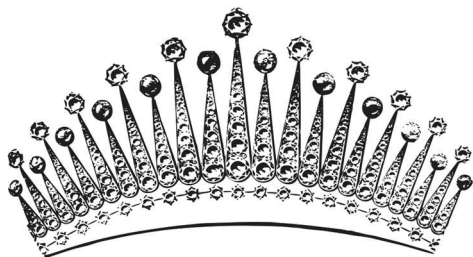


The Bleak Holdfast of the Heartless Queen



An adventure for levels 3–4

DESIGNED FOR USE WITH
**OLD-SCHOOL
ESSENTIALS**

Copyright Rob Alexander 2020–2021

Contact — mediumquality@imap.cc

Release 1.0.0, April 2021

All images and image sources used are either original or taken from the public domain, except for the cover art, which uses components by *OpenClipart-Vectors* and *Geralt* on Pixabay.

Old-School Essentials is a trademark of Necrotic Gnome. The trademark and Old-School Essentials logo are used with permission of Necrotic Gnome, under license.

Thanks to Jo Maltby, Richard Sharp, Jon Rainer, and Greg Reynolds for playtesting, and to Fiona Murphy for final proofing and editing.

Contents

1	Introduction & overview.....	2
2	Hooks & strategy	4
3	The area around the castle	7
4	How the castle works	8
5	Random encounters	12
6	Major NPCs	16
7	Monsters	23
8	Maps	28
9	Locations — Below the castle	32
10	Locations — Level 1	34
11	Locations — Level 2	46
12	Locations — Level 3 (including towers)	56
13	Adversary roster.....	64

Ice is cold, but hate is colder.

Sustained immersion in icy water is colder than both.

— *Silvia of Quent, who was notoriously prosaic in her aphorisms*

I Introduction & overview

High above the snow line there is a castle on a crag. It is an object of fear and hatred, because the Heartless Queen holds court there and she is pitiless in her anger and host to terrible friends. Between the Frost Wyrms, the Ice Harpies, and the Frozen Thing that Guards the Bridge, even getting in is difficult.

Most locals stay as far away as they can, but between courage, pride, and burning vengeance there are always some willing to take a shot at it. And travellers from the soft, warm south might hear stories of the Queen's fantastical treasures and be oblivious about the horrors that protect them.

Design intent & playstyle assumptions

The adventure site is built for the *Old-School Essentials* rules, for 5-6 PCs of 3rd or slightly fewer of 4th.

It assumes players who are used to meeting risks they can't just fight. Mindlessly aggressive groups are likely to get wrecked. Most of the rewards can be had, in theory, without much fighting. And when fights do happen, it assumes that PCs are using clever tactics (backed by freeform GM rulings) that let them punch above their straight-fight weight.

House rule assumptions and extra special rules

xp-for-gold — this module assumes an xp-for-gold model and an OSE-like xp chart, but (taking a leaf from *Tomb of the Serpent Kings*) it assumes 10 xp per gp so that the treasure piles aren't ludicrous.

Thief skills — this module assumes they cover actions that only a Thief could succeed at. If a non-Thief would have a chance at a relevant activity (e.g. a Dexterity check to climb something), the Thief rolls both and needs to succeed at only one. The exception is Hear Noise, for which the standard rules already cover the Thief/non-Thief distinction. (I originally heard of this from James V West)

Exhaustion — this module assumes a simple model of exhaustion, where each level you gain gives -1 to attacks rolls, damage rolls, saving throws, and ability scores when used for ability checks. (This is an extension of the OSE norm where exhaustion gives attack and damage penalties if you don't rest after six turns of dungeon work or six days of wilderness travel.)

Recovery from failure-to-rest exhaustion requires you to take the rest you missed; recovery from other sources will be described when that source is described.

Cold — can cause exhaustion. If a character exposes themselves to significant severe cold (e.g. by hiding in a snowdrift) or to sustained moderate cold, they gain an exhaustion level. This level can be healed by spending a full day in warm conditions.

2 Hooks & strategy

Hooks and setups

For groups coming from far away, there are several plausible options:

- Treasure raid
- Looking to steal a specific high-value item
- Paid to assassinate the Queen or another major NPC (Eugenios would be the obvious one)

For locals:

- Assassinate the Queen
- Assassinate the Ice Witch (whose Ice Harpy servants torment people far and wide)
- Steal an item that allows her to oppress them in a specific way
- Rescue a prisoner, servant, or guard
 - Suggestion — prisoner is actually held by the Ice Witch, in her prison at location R3.13.
 - Complication if the target is a servant or guard — the ice-in-blood effect that lets the Queen kill them remotely

One reason for locals to favour assassination, rather than some other mission, is that it's too dangerous for them to antagonise her without finishing the job

Viable tactics for players

The castle, taken head-on, is likely to be fairly lethal. What tactics could work?

Some ideas include:

- Sneak in
- Disguise yourself e.g. as traders coming to negotiate and deal
- Subvert the servants or the guards (latter is unlikely... unless you subvert the Captain first, because she's looking for a way out)

Common knowledge

If the PCs ask locals, or anyone who knows about the castle, they can get the following information pretty much for free:

- The Heartless Queen rules the castle with a cruel hand
- The locals hate and fear her
- Her servants and guards are strange, animalistic humanoids
- Those who set out for the castle usually never come back
- Those who do come back were usually turned away by the Thing on the Bridge

If running this as a one-shot, definitely add:

- There is a cave about half a mile from the castle that travellers often use. It seems to be basically safe to camp in.

... or, indeed, start them off in that very cave.

Rumours

Rumours are for things that are “good to know”, a little bit obscure, and possibly false.

-
- 1 The Queen has a hold over her servants because she can freeze them straight to death remotely.
-
- 2 The Great Ice Wyrms is sometimes seen near the castle. Its frozen fur is studded with gemstones.
-
- 3 A strange man, a southerner, came to the castle about six months ago. Supposedly he’s a Magician capable of wonderful things.
-
- 4 The castle is also home to the Ice Witch, whom the locals hate and fear almost more than the Queen. She controls the Ice Harpies.
-
- 5 No human will work for the Queen as a guard or servant, so she has had to magically turn animals into people.
-
- 6 The Queen has frozen monsters that she can thaw out and command.
-

Available retainers

It is hard to find hirelings or retainers so far from major towns, but some possible retainers are in the table below.

Name	Abilities	Description	Share & reliability
Atrix	Thief 2	A local tracker and hunter. His brother, his aunt, his sister's child... all taken by the Ice Witch. His blood burns with hate.	1 share. Reliable as long as the PCs are making good progress towards the witch; if they are not, he will go solo to go after her. (He will sneak as far as the harpy roost but then the harpies will catch him with their superior senses and kill him).
Meluda	MU 1	Local aspiring sorceress. Gaze intense, movement erratic, words ill-chosen and liable to offend. She knows one spell (Charm Person) and this has given her a hunger.	Will agree ½ a share, but will try to grab any apparently-magical treasure she can, and if PCs are heavy-handed about making her share it she will run off and try to escape with it.
Corrine	Fighter 1	Southern, hunted-looking. Not young, not successful, many scars. She seeks a living out here where her creditors won't come.	Will aim for 1.5 share, will negotiate with a lot of sad worrying about all her debts, and will settle for a ¾ share. Reliable as long as she is paid and the danger isn't stupid.
One	Fighter 1	Skin only slightly darker than the snow. Painfully thin and barely dressed, but they never shiver. They don't say much, and what they say is very odd. If you sleep in camp with them, they appear in your dreams.	Will insist on 1.5 share. Totally reliable, seems to have no goals of their own.

3 The area around the castle

Coming from the south — reaching the castle requires a long journey, ending with a hard climb through the mountains to reach the plateau the castle is on.

Movement in the snow — movement rates are about one-third normal, both in and out of combat. So a character with 120' move will manage about 8 miles in a day or one mile per hour.

Looking at the area around the castle — the castle is adjacent to an east-west ridge that runs for a long way alongside a vast plain leading to further mountains in the north

Looking north from the ridge, it falls away to the plain 100ft below. Tends of miles beyond that mountains are dark grey and heavy with snow clouds. Beyond the first of those mountains it is so cold no-one goes there.

Finding shelter — there is a safe cave, west from the castle along the ridge for half a mile. You can see the castle clearly from near to the cave, so you're not going to get lost on the way there unless a blizzard hits.



4 How the castle works

In rough order of practical importance...

Structure — The castle sits on a stack of ice, like a plug that's been pushed out of the earth. The visible part is about 100' high, and the cross-section (on which the castle sits) is about 150' square.

The castle is a block of an ice-gravel-stones material that has been shaped by the Queen's hand (and much, much, often lethal, labour of servants). It's not that strong so the walls are all very thick — most rooms are connected by narrow tunnels 5-10' long (rather than just by a door in a wall straight through a wall) and each floor is about 30' high.

One consequence — not as easy to hear things between rooms as it might be in a more conventional building.

Ambient temperature — About -5C, steady, just cold enough to keep the ice from melting. That means it's often *slightly* warmer than outside, though in the warmest part of the year you get days with positive temperatures, and a few of those will crack the structure once the Queen is not there to sustain it.

Common heat sources — two major ones:

- Braziers (can't fuel for long, though)
- Bedwarmers etc containing hot coals. These come from the kitchen.

Common light sources — Most rooms have one or more cold flame lanterns of various sizes. The castle has few and tiny windows, and most rooms are fully encased by others, so the occupants are very reliant on these. They burn with a white flame, the light of which is extremely white and dulls colours towards in the way an overexposed photograph does. It generates almost no heat, and can't set anything else on fire.

Outside the castle, the cold flame oil is worth 10gp/pint.

Doors — There are three basic kinds:

- Servant's doors — just big enough for a small person without hunching, and lightweight (+1 to any open doors attempt).
- Sturdy doors — big enough for any human to comfortably walk through.

- Special doors — each is unique and will be described when encountered.

The two standard door types are made of wood and heavily oiled to prevent freezing.

Where doors have interesting properties (or interesting sounds behind), this will be noted in the text. Otherwise assume that all doors are sturdy, unlocked, not distinctively marked, and have no sounds of note behind them.

Unless otherwise noted, all servant's and sturdy doors are lockable with a Guard Key.

Alarms — An alarm can be triggered by any castle inhabitant using the trapped ghost at location R2.9. The alarm works by opening hundreds of two-inch holes in the walls (exterior and an interior) so that the wind rushes through, making a howling noise and even more chilling the air (thus encouraging the residents to get busy). The alarm has two modes:

Standard alarm — this sounds just like wind howling through the walls. It means that there are hostile intruders to the castle, and that everyone should arm up and start searching in small groups. The guards will mobilise — all of them will wake up and the two guard posts will be reinforced.

Little Sister alarm — this sounds like the normal alarm, except that the holes in the walls are smaller and thus the pitch is higher. It means that Little Sister has got out of her cell and is roaming the corridors, so everyone (even the guards) should lock themselves in a secure place until the alarm goes quiet again to signify she is back in her cell.

When the alarm ends, the holes in the walls will close in a few seconds.

Food in the castle — Officially, all food comes through the kitchens (location), so only the chef knows exactly what you're eating. There's also some hunting the snow, and some cannibalism at bad times.

Trade and trade visitors — the castle conducts a bit of trade with the south for small, high-value items. This is conducted almost exclusively by servants and guards going on journeys south. These agents tend to talk some, which is where most of the rumours come from.

The castle also extracts a moderate tribute from the locals, although their population is sparse and over time they're shifting further and further from the castle.

Resting in the castle — overnight or day rests are not viable anywhere in the castle, unless with support from a major NPC

Night versus day —the castle at night is extremely cold. Outside at night is deathly cold. Doing anything at night is not likely practical, unless PCs have long-duration magical protection.

Restocking after losses and disruption —

If the PCs disrupt the castle, then leave, the Queen will slowly rebuild the defences. This doesn't mean she will put things back as they were.

Guards and servants —

- The Queen will restock at a rate of 1-2 a week, through a mixture of kidnapping, coercion, and trickery
- In extremis, the Queen will promote servants to guards, improving their AC, weapons and morale but leaving them otherwise the same

Other ideas —

- The Queen will investigate how the PCs got in, and repair that first. In particular, cracks in the walls are likely to be sealed up, and whoever allowed them to stay open will be made part of the repair. The crack that Xueshan uses, however, will not be sealed as long as he's alive.
- The Queen fills an area with freezing mist — not impossible to bypass, but draining. Passing through it requires a Con check to not get an exhaustion level. This could go, for example, in an uncloseable entryway that the PCs previously used for a successful raid.

Knowledge of the inhabitants —

Most people in the castle know something useful. Some ideas:

1. The Queen's touch is freezing
2. The Queen can project a freezing blast that turns everyone in its path straight to ice
3. The Queen travels everywhere with her two Ice Wurm Chimerae
4. ...except when she goes up to the forbidden tower.
5. The Queen hates fire and will only allow the cook and the Ice Witch to use naked flames (apart from the cold flames oil, of course, which doesn't generate heat)
6. Little Sister's touch withers people
7. Little Sister cannot be hurt by mere steel
8. A strange but friendly magician has been staying here for a few months. He has wooden mannequins who work for him.
9. The Ice Witch is a great friend of the harpies
10. Constance, the guard captain, has seemed distracted and spacey recently



5 Random encounters

Each turn, there is a chance of a random encounter:

- *In the area around the castle* — every hour, 1 in 6 chance of encounter from Encounter Table 1
- *Inside the castle, normally* — every turn, 1 in 6 chance of an encounter from Encounter Table 2
- *If inside the castle and the alarm is sounding* — every turn, 3 in 6 chance of a guard response (normally 3 guards, but rising up to 6 if the PCs have shown themselves a serious threat)

Guards are drawn come from barracks pool or from a nearby guard post. If there are none left, or if the overall threat situation means that makes no sense, then no encounter occurs.

By default, reactions are unfriendly and suspicious, but not hostile. Maybe use a standard reaction roll, modified based on PC behaviour so far (and whether they hid the bodies well).

Encounter table 1 — outside the castle, but nearby

Encounter		Experience	
1	A solitary Yeti (see <i>Monsters</i>) lurks in a snowdrift d6*10 feet away, surprisingly the party on 1-4 on d6.	7	Foreign (southern) adventurers, frozen in a snow-drift that just got reduced by the wind, revealing them. (they just froze to death)
2	1d3 Juvenile Ice Wyrms (see <i>Monsters</i>) come swishing across the snow, their furry bodies hard to see against it (surprise 1-2 on 1d6).	8	Tracks of Xueshan, leading between the climb up to his room and a place where he fought a juvenile ice wyrm. Some blood trail back to castle as he was injured.
3	The Great Ice Wyrms (see <i>Monsters</i>) moves past in the middle distance (1d6 * 100 ft away). It will not do anything unless the PCs work to draw its attention.	9	Trail of the Great Ice Wyrms — a 10' wide smooth trail through the snow

4	<p>A long-dead Polar Bear Zombie (see <i>Monsters</i>) crawls over the snow, looking for something it can never find (and of course cannot describe). Inside its chest cavity is what might be ice and what might be a gently glowing gemstone. It is not aggressive unless interfered with.</p> <p>If the PCs somehow communicate with it, it is looking for its mate, which is now a rug in location R3.4. If it is reunited with that, it will cry mournfully and then die.</p> <p>The gem in its chest is a unique item, perpetually cold and gently glowing. Worth 500 gp.</p>	10	<p>Out of sight, a few hundred feet away, something howls.</p>
5	<p>An Ice Harpy (see <i>Monsters</i>) flaps out of the castle and around, scouting. If the PCs are still, it will see them 1-2 on d6; if they cover themselves in snow, risking hypothermia, it will not see them,</p> <p>If it does see the PCs, it will swing down to harass them, aiming to make sure they fear its kind and by extension the Ice Witch.</p>	11	<p>A blizzard hits. PCs can wait it out (will take d3 hours and get them an exhaustion level) or press on (50% chance of getting lost and spending an hour going in the wrong direction)</p>
6	<p>A patrol of four guards have been dispatched to investigate suspicious-looking people in this area. Might have been the PCs, might have been someone else, might have been some bullshit a servant made up. The guards are not expecting serious trouble.</p>	12	<p>Blood, signs of a struggle. Something was killed here.</p>

Encounter table 2 – inside the castle

Encounter		Experience	
1	1d3 guards, patrolling	11	Wind howls through the corridors
2	1d3 guards, illicitly drunk	12	A crack has formed in the ice here, and then been patched up
3	1 guard, fiddling with their boot, which seems to have something wrong with it	13	A small hole opens up in a wall, and wind briefly howls through
4	1d2 servant(s) being bullied by guards	14	Laughter, as if at a crude joke, echoes
5	Servant patching up a crack	15	A random PC gets the impression they are being watched
6	Servant carrying food to the nearest guard post or major NPC	16	Some solvent has been spilt here — the icy floor is slick with water
7	One of Eugenios's wooden servants, carrying woodworking supplies	17	A lamp breaks and falls to the floor. Cold flame spreads, but does no harm to anything.
8	The alarm starts to sound with the second tone - Little Sister has got out. She will start at R3.2 and move thru the castle mostly randomly, though being drawn to loud noises and to concentrations of body heat.	18	One PC sees a vague form, like a human face trailed by a torn sheet, slither <i>through</i> the icy wall right next to them.
9	Xueshan, carrying an Ice Wyrms or snow wolf he just killed. Probably he's taking it to the larder; if the location makes that implausible, he's probably carrying it to a guard post to keep the guards on his side.	19	A gust of wind blows through the room, and carries with it an unusually clear fragment of dialogue e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "...of course she's our enemy, but we need to be careful" • "...I'd wager her heart was cold before she cut it out..." • "...it would be better for everybody if that castle wasn't there..."
10	Freezing fog has filled this area, not for any reason anyone knows. Con check or take an exhaustion level if you pass thru it. Will last an hour or until Queen comes and dismisses it.	20	There is a slow, loud creak from inside a nearby wall.



6 Major NPCs

In rough order of importance to the castle...

Elizabeth of Ruania, The Heartless Queen

The Heartless Queen **AC** 7[12], **HD** 6** (hp 26), **Att** 1 × touch (d10 + paralysis), **THACO** 14[+5], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** MU6, **ML** 10, **AL** chaotic, **XP** 725

- ▶ **Undead** — unaffected by attacks that target living bodies (e.g. poisons) or minds (e.g. charms)
- ▶ **Freezing touch** — when she hits in melee, Para. save or paralysed until start of her next turn
- ▶ **Frozen almost solid** — immune to cold-based attacks, half damage from stabbing or slashing weapons, double damage from heat or fire attacks
- ▶ **Spellcaster** — as MU 6. Default memorised spells are *charm person*, *hold portal*, *web*, *invisibility*, *clairvoyance*, *dispel magic*. Given a day's warning of dangerous intruders, she will swap the *clairvoyance* for *freeze ray* — as *lightning bolt*, but cold-based and doesn't bounce.
- ▶ **Items carried** — crown of ice (will melt, but has aquamarines worth 200gp), silver heart-hole ring (worth 100gp), Little Sister key, Queen's key

Tall, incredibly pale, bleach-white hair. Has a bloody hole in her chest, slightly to the left, and she features this with her clothes and accessories (e.g. a silver ring around the hole). When she is animate, she seeps blood, at a modest rate. Again, she dresses so you see this.

The only warm colour on her is that blood.

She needs to average a quarter of her time in the coffin in R3.7 or she starts to break down. This is slow — 1 max hp a day, regained at the same rate if she — but also can't recharge powers (e.g. memorize spells) while in this condition.

Eugenios thinks he can preserve her in his insulated box, but then he's planning to suppress her consciousness and much of her powers.

Acting as her — hollow voice like she's speaking down an ice tunnel. Speaks slowly like it's an effort to push out words. Pause, but keep your eyes moving, to show she's thinking much faster than she speaks. Say "I expected you would do that", often (she didn't *know* you would, but in her constant vigilant catastrophising she

realised that you *might*). Be unremittingly hostile, and quickly escalate to violence, *unless* the PCs claim to know of a plot against you, in which case you are all ears.

Plans and motivations — none that make any sense, not any more. She is paranoid, constantly seeking out “plots” against her, and consumed by a desire for revenge against the family that sidelined her, the community that rejected her, and the lover who cheated her out of the estate she inherited. Paranoia and revenge fight in her mind, daily, leading to a stalemate that keeps her (and the castle) in stasis.

Her plans for vengeance are mostly pointless now, as everyone she wants revenge on has been dead for thirty years. But her sense of time has deteriorated so she can no longer really understand this.

The only people in the castle who know her actual name or history are Eugenios and Grandmother — latter because she was there, former because he heard stories in the Great Kingdom, stories originally told by the aforementioned cheating lover who fled there in fear of the Queen’s wrath.

What happened to her heart? — she always had powers over cold and ice. But to reach her current mastery, and so better enact her revenge, she sacrificed her heart to an old god of winter, death in winter, and frost-born famine. That worked, but what shreds of empathy and fellow feeling she still had went with it.

What if she feels a servant has betrayed her? — she can inflict the ice death (see room R3.6).

What if she is killed, or removed from the castle? — the castle will start to break down. This will take weeks, maybe months, but eventually the structure will crack and tumble. Someone with sensitive hearing (e.g. a Thief listening at doors) will pick up that the normal cracking and creaking is getting steadily louder.

The queen is escorted, most of the time, by two Ice Wyrms Chimeras.

Ice Wyrms Chimeras AC 5[14], HD 3* (hp 13), Att 1 × bite (1d4 + wrap), THACo 17[+2], MV 120' (40'), SV F3, ML 9, AL chaotic, XP 50

► **Snowshimmer** — moves at normal speed in heavy snow

► **Wrap & squeeze** — on bite, paralysis save or target is wrapped — 1d6 automatic damage immediately and on each round following. One action and a paralysis save to break.

The Chimerae are human heads transplanted onto juvenile Ice Wyrms and coerced and abused so that they are totally loyal to her. Not clear where their teeth came from but it was definitely a carnivore.

Issumatar, the Ice Witch

Issumatar the Ice Witch **AC** 7[12], **HD** 4* (hp 17), **Att** 1 × hand claw (d4 + paralyse), **THAC0** 18[+1], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** MU 5, **ML** 10, **AL** chaotic, **XP** 125

► **Paralysing hand** — her main weapon is embalmed right hand of her disobedient son. She's sharpened it into a claw and on any hit the target must save vs Paralysis or be twisted into an agonising fixed contortion for one turn, unable to move or speak.

► **Spellcaster** — *sleep, hold portal, web, mirror image*

► **Items carried** — hand claw (after her death, can be used by someone else, but might not be placid and obedient), Issumatar's key

Issumatar has wild grey hair, grey rheumy eyes, and loud shouting voice that echoes through the corridors.

Acting as her — Shout. Make constant minor demands (“Move out of the way!”, “Let me look at your shield!”, “Don't shout in here!”). Laugh, loudly, as if what they (or you) just said was very funny.

Plans and motivations - Her main motive is maintaining her mortal life — she is 113 but looks and feels about 70. She achieves this by tinctures and ointments made from the blood and body fats of local people she kidnaps. Only one in six people have the right mix of humours for this process, and there's no way to tell until she cooks them up.

She runs a brood of harpies, who scout and kidnap for her. The locals, unsurprisingly, hate and fear her.

Role in the castle — She is a native of the region, but only moved in here about five years ago, when the locals ran her out of a yet another hiding place. The Queen gives her protection in return for harpy-based scouting and local knowledge, which suits the witch very well because most people in the locality want her dead.

Eugenios of Heraclea, the Magician

Eugenios AC 9[10], HD 2* (hp 10), Att 1 × dagger (d4), **THACo** 19[0], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** MU4, **ML** 9, **AL** chaotic, **XP** 25

► **Spellcaster** — As MU 4, memorised spells *magic missile*, *shield*, *invisibility*, *burn* (Last of those is a 2nd level custom creation which causes a single target within melee range to take 2d6 damage. For the Queen, this would then be doubled by her heat vulnerability.)

► **Items carried** — dagger +1, fine robes albeit rather worn (worth 50gp), Eugenios's key

Tall, olive-skinned, poised, dressed in blue and purple velvet robes. And an arrogant, narcissistic sociopath. He has no empathy at all, and does not use moral concepts in speech, ever.

Acting as him — Calm, open, easy speech, punctuated with smiles and pleasant laughter. (See boxout for some dialogue ideas)

Dialog samples for Eugenios

- "This is a strange place. Always good to meet some people who aren't all frozen into its ways!" <chuckle>
- "If we were in Heraclea now, or perhaps in my little place in the Great Kingdom we would be delightfully warm, sipping blended drinks on my veranda while my many well-wishers came and went" (maybe once, before he did those bad things)
- "When I am finished here, and return home with the wonderful treasure I am close to now, the people will welcome me back with open arms. And probably a parade. (delusional, given those things that he did)
- "And I'm sure that in return for exclusive access to the treasure, some rich individual will give me a fine little nest in their Palace in which I can continue my studies uninterrupted" (probably true)

Plans and motivations — For his plan, see the nearby boxout.

If the PCs offer to assist him, he'll send a couple of wooden workers with them, thus marking them out as his friends.

Knowledge he can share — If friendly, will tell PCs lots about the castle. He knows everything from the knowledge list (see "How the castle works"), and be quite open about his plans. (He can't imagine the PCs *successfully* betraying him, and in any case doesn't see why anyone would think his plans particularly offensive).

He *can't* tell them about the awful things he did back home in Heraclea, or indeed in the Great Kingdom, because remembering them is socially inconvenient and thus he has forgotten. Indeed, he doesn't really understand that they were bad, so doesn't even accord them particular significance.

Role in the castle — respected visitor, potentially valuable because of his powers, but both the Queen and the Ice Witch are somewhat suspicious of him.

Eugenios's plan

He wants to overpower the Queen, cut her up and take her back home as an ice machine. "In my country, the only thing we do want for is ice...". He already has the insulated box made.

He was driven out of his home country because of the things that he did, but rightly suspects that a year-round source of ice might persuade a few people to forget that... and, if not there, maybe in the Great Kingdom (in a sub-Saharan Africa-alike) where it is hot as fuck all the time.

How does he plan to betray the Queen –

1. Arrange for the guards to "accidentally" die, allowing her to propose his constructs as substitutes. He knows about the cistern (see R3.10) but needs someone else to trigger it. Failing that, he has a deadly ingestible poison that looks like food poisoning.
2. Replace the guards and servants with his wooden constructs. He has about a dozen in total, but he struggles to get more materials. (he needs wood; he's experimenting with bone but it is "a more lively material, more prone to have its own ideas"). Given adequate wood he could make about two a day, up to about 40 before he lost control of them.
3. Incapacitate the Queen using his special spell.

Eugenios has promised Little Sister "a tiny sun, for her chest, to make her warm". He'll give it her once the Queen is gone – the heat will loosen her tendons and within a few hours she'll be hot wet bones. He knows this, of course.

If his plan fails, he will use Invisibility to get back to his rooms, have his wooden servants gather up his treasure (including the Sun, which they'll need for the journey) and move on to his next unfortunate residence.

Eugenios is waited on by a dozen wooden workers:

Wooden worker **AC** 7[12], **HD** 1/2 (hp 3), **Att** 1 × club (d6), **THACo** 19[0], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** F1, **ML** fearless, **AL** neutral, **XP** 5

They are reasonably dextrous but not particularly strong. Their joints are oiled against the cold.

Xueshan, the Wild Man

Xueshan the Wild Man **AC** 5[14], **HD** 6 (hp 25), **Att** 2 × great hands (d6) or by weapon, **THACo** 14[+5], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** T6, **ML** 9, **AL** neutral, **XP** 500

► **Thief skills** — as Thief 6

► **Counterattack** — when attacked in melee, spend 1 unused attack (can borrow one from next round if necessary, but only one) to either disarm (thrown d6*10 ft in rough direction of Xueshan's choosing) or throw (d6*5 feet in rough direction of Xueshan's choosing). In either case, Para save avoids. If thrown into a solid wall d6 damage, if into lesser objects/breakable wall d3.

► **Snowfooted** — moves at normal speed in heavy snow

► **Items carried** — none of note

Bear-like bearded man, of East Asian ethnicity, dressed in thick furs.

Acting as him — simple words and phrases, hand gestures, sounds. Randomly swap in words from any other language you know (he does this in any language — doesn't speak even his native one well anymore). Very short attention span for anything that doesn't fit his life.

Plans and motivations — He likes to hunt and to go outside, to survive as long as he can. His admires, more than anything, the majestic polar bear, and his ultimate ambition would be to be like that. He's not there yet, hence he keeps coming back to the castle, but he's getting closer.

Might be interested in an arrangement where he could have a base in the castle but have no obligations to it.

Role in the castle — After roaming for decades and thousands of miles, it gives him a base to work from. In return he gives the proceeds of his hunts — meat and fur. He neither understands nor cares about anything else that's going on.

If threatened — hide and ambush, set snares, or just leave.

Constance, the guard captain

Constance **AC** 4[15], **HD** 4 (hp 15), **Att** 1 × harpoon spear (d6+2 + hold) and 1 x cleaver (d8+2), **THACo** 17[+3], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** F3, **ML** 9, **AL** neutral, **XP** 125

► **Harpoon hold** — when hit by her harpoon spear save vs Paralysis or her future attacks on you are at +2 until you spend a round's action to rip it out, doing 1d4 more damage. (If you take a full turn to remove it, no damage)

► **Items carried** — guard key, prison key, Little Sister key

A large woman who has been on staff for over ten years and so is very blubbery and seal-like. She is somewhat loyal to the Queen, who has treated her (relatively) well, but she is pregnant and does not want to raise the child in this environment. (she's also a bit freaked out about what form the child will have)

(When she tacitly agreed with Queen that she could pull her lover out of the servant pool and host him at his leisure in her quarters, the Queen signed off with "Don't get pregnant". It was friendly advice, but it quite clearly wasn't.)

Arabella of Ruania, the Little Sister

Little Sister **AC** 6[13], **HD** 6** (hp 24), **Att** 2 × claw (d6) + energy drain, **THACo** 14[+5], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** F6, **ML** 10, **AL** chaotic, **XP** 725

► **Undead** — unaffected by attacks that target living bodies (e.g. poisons) or minds (e.g. charms)

► **Energy drain** — when she hits, the target loses a level permanently

► **Immune to ordinary weapons** — only silver or magical weapons will hurt her

Long wild hair, pretty dress in rags, pale skin gone green-brown.

Long estranged but now found at last by the Queen's agents, alas angry dead but rotting as normal. The cold preserves her. Extremely hostile to everyone except the Queen and Eugenios (latter has managed to win her over with promises of warmth and comfort).

When cogent she thinks she's alive and craves warmth (it's bad for her, accelerates decay and makes her stink). When not cogent she screams and claws and snaps your bones. On any given day, roll 1d6 to see how she is doing — 1-2 angry, 3-4 catatonic, 5-6 relatively cogent.

7 Monsters

Harpy, Ice

Ice Harpy AC 7[12], **HD** 3+1 (hp 13), **Att** 2 × claw (d6) or crude weapon, **THACo** 16[+3], **MV** 60' (20') or fly 120' (40'), **SV** F2, **ML** 8, **AL** chaotic, **XP** 25

► **Flight** — clumsy fliers

► **Dive and grab** — if airborne, they can dive down and grab a human-sized or smaller target. Paralysis save to resist. While carrying a human-sized one, their flight move drops to 60' (20').

Humanoid, ugly, covered in off-white weathers. Big pale eyes and sensitive noses that work best when there's a cold wind. Semi-intelligent with semi-coherent word use, but can't form true sentences and are hard to understand because of alien priorities.

Ice Wyrm, juvenile

Juvenile Ice Wyrm AC 5[14], **HD** 3* (hp 13), **Att** 1 × bite (1d4 + wrap), **THACo** 17[+2], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** F3, **ML** 7, **AL** neutral, **XP** 50

► **Snowshimmer** — moves at normal speed in heavy snow

► **Wrap & squeeze** — on any successful bite, wrap target and do 1d6 automatic damage immediately and on each round following.

10'-long snakes or worms with furry bodies and furry, dragon-like heads. They enjoy hiding in snowdrifts and surprising their prey on a roll of 1–4.

Ice Wyrms, The Great

The Great Ice Wyrms **AC** 0[19], **HD** 10* (hp 45), **Att** 1 × bite (4d8 + swallow) or slam (2d8 area), **THAC0** 11[+8], **MV** 150' (50'), **SV** C10, **ML** 9, **AL** neutral, **XP** 1600

► **Snowshimmer** — moves at normal speed in heavy snow

► **Swallow** — on a bite attack roll of 19 or more it swallows its target whole. Then 1d8 damage per round while the Wyrms lives. Target can attack from inside but only with sharp weapons and at -4 to hit.

► **Slam** — rear in the air and slam down, attacking everyone in an area 10' wide by 40' long.

The Great Ice Wyrms are the greatest living instance of their kind. They're 6' wide and 80' long, majestic and old and studded with what appear to be gemstones. The "gemstones" are, sadly, just ancient encrustations of ice, nourished by its secreted oils. The oils are of some value, however, anyone following the Wyrms around can gather 1d6 fallen stones an hour, worth 1gp each.

Queen's staff and retainers, The

The Queen's staff are human, but they don't stay looking like that — over time, they inexorably deform to resemble the Killer Seals from location R1.21. Their face becomes seal-like, their skin gains an under-layer of blubber, and a fine fur grows all over. This is the Queen's doing, though the hand she serves the poison is Graegus the cook (see location R.1.12).

Generally, the guards are loyal (partly because they are loyal to Constance and she says "the best thing for all of us is to serve the Queen loyally", convincingly) but servants are not so much (because they are looked down on and mistreated and don't have a leader).

The Ice Death — if the Queen wants to kill one of her staff, she can. She goes to the Servant Control Room (R3.6) and turns their body temperature down to zero. See R3.6 for more details. To set this up, she takes a drop of blood from each servant and drops it into the Ice Whirl in R2.13.

Servants

Servant AC 9[10], **HD** ½ (hp 3), **Att** 1 × crude weapon (d6), **THACo** 20[-1], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** F1, **ML** 6, **AL** neutral, **XP** 5

► **Fear of the Queen** — +2 ML if a guard or other authority figure is present

Things for servants to be doing:

-
- 1 Trying to keep warm

 - 2 Slowly dripping water over a crack to fix it

 - 3 Whispering about concerning events in the castle

 - 4 Being patched up after a guard knocked them about

 - 5 Scraping meat from a frozen haunch of unclear species

 - 6 Refilling lamps with cold flame oil

If the servants see the PCs — as long as there are at least two of them, they will approach, offering to help, asking if they are lost, etc. If they are given a good excuse, they will probably let it slide; otherwise they'll alert the guards who will send a two-person patrol to investigate.

Some example servants:

Name	Nature	Desires
Pettie	Conniving and manipulative	Get better from her gut cramps and diarrhoea
Tweriana ("Twerpi")	Obedient and disciplined	Be the next cook
Corrun	Effusive and open-hearted	Win affection of Morris, a guard
Minas	Aggressive and diligent	Be promoted to guard-hood
Flox	Imaginative and really quite odd	Get a bit of actual downtime
Jerobi	Vain and uncritical	To be generally admired

Guards

Guard AC 5[14], **HD** 2 (hp 9), **Att** 1 × ice axe (d8), **THACo** 18[+1], **MV** 60' (20'), **SV** F2, **ML** 8, **AL** neutral, **XP** 20

► **Freeze bomb** — Patrols may be issued with a freeze bomb (usually only one) – takes a round to light and then an AC 9[10] attack roll to deliver usefully. On success, it does d4 damage in a 5' radius and everyone hit must make a Paralysis save or skip their next turn.

► **Items carried** — 4d6 sp, ice axe, 1 in 6 chance of a freeze bomb

As with all the staff, the guards are on a continuum from clearly human to anthropoid seals. They wear thick furs all over – under the fur there is a mix of leather and metal. Their main weapons are ice axes with a vicious beak.

See the **Adversary Roster** for where the guards are likely to be.

Things for guards to be doing:

1	Trying to keep warm
2	Taking bets on which crack in the ice will be a foot long first (the trigger for servants to fix it)
3	Harassing a servant for no particularly good reason
4	Practicing axe technique
5	Sleeping
6	Gambling (with one of them trying to win back what they lost yesterday)

Some example guards:

Name	Nature	Desires
Morris	Intense and self-critical	To learn to relax a bit
Elurin	Abusive and arrogant	To make the servants respect her
Obiefune	Downbeaten and morose	He came with with Udumele (see R1.15) but was captured and chose to serve the Queen rather than be killed. He feels ashamed at abandoning Udumele and her cause.

Yeti

Yeti **AC** 6[13], **HD** 4 (hp 18), **Att** 2 × claw (d6), **THACo** 16[+3], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** F4, **ML** 9, **AL** neutral, **XP** 75

► **Snowfooted** — moves at normal speed in heavy snow

Someone took a human and made it big and made it hairy and gave it terrible teeth and claws and made it live in the snow. Or maybe it was just born that way.

Zombie, Polar Bear

Polar Bear Zombie AC 6[13], **HD** 7 (hp 33), **Att** 2 × claw (1d6), **THACo** 13[+5], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** F7, **ML** fearless, **AL** neutral, **XP** 450

► **Snowfooted** — moves at normal speed in heavy snow

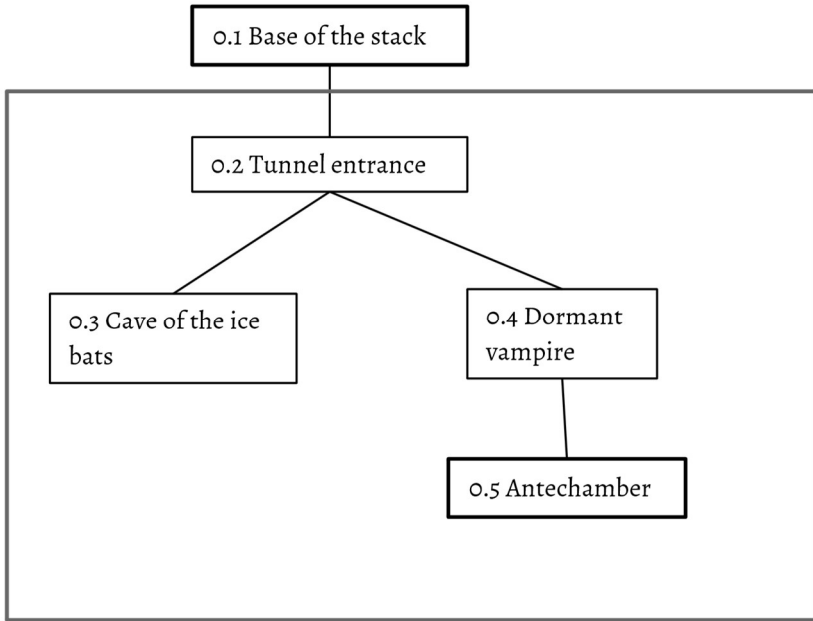
► **Bear hug** — if it hits a target with both claw attacks in the same round, it can bear hug them for 2d8 extra damage.

A polar bear grew large, died, and rose again.



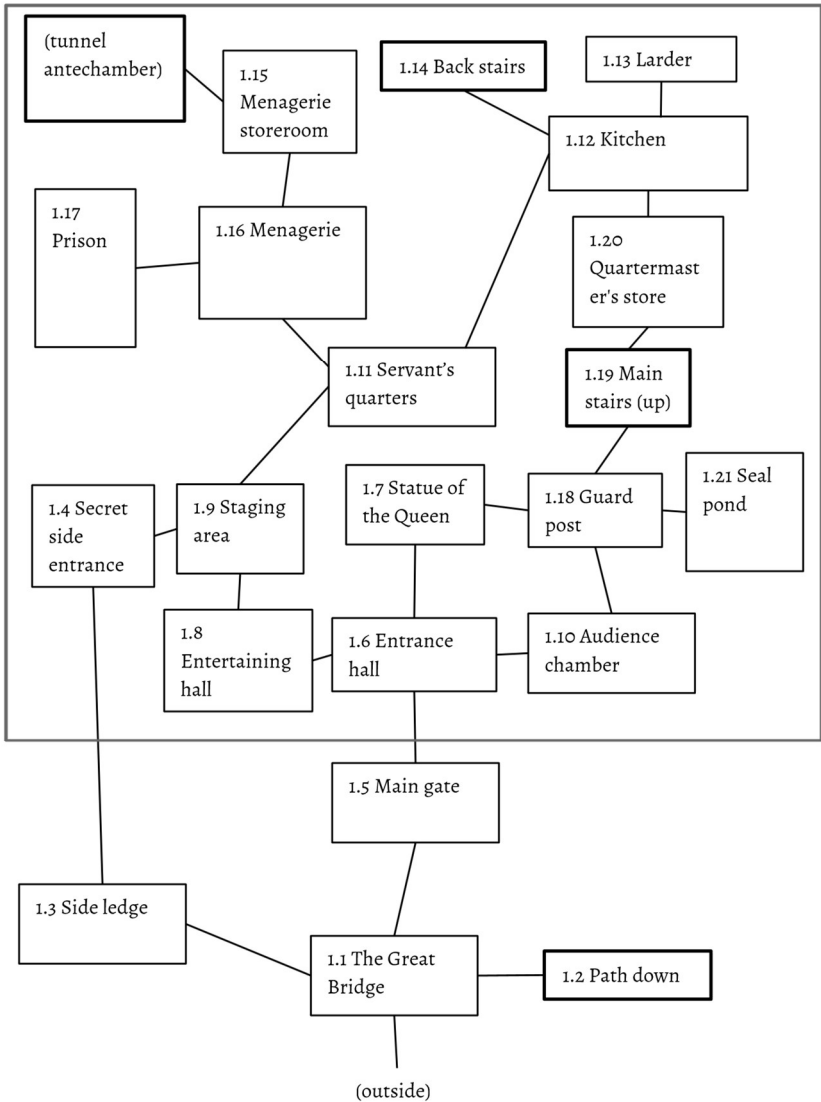
8 Maps

Level 0 – Below the castle

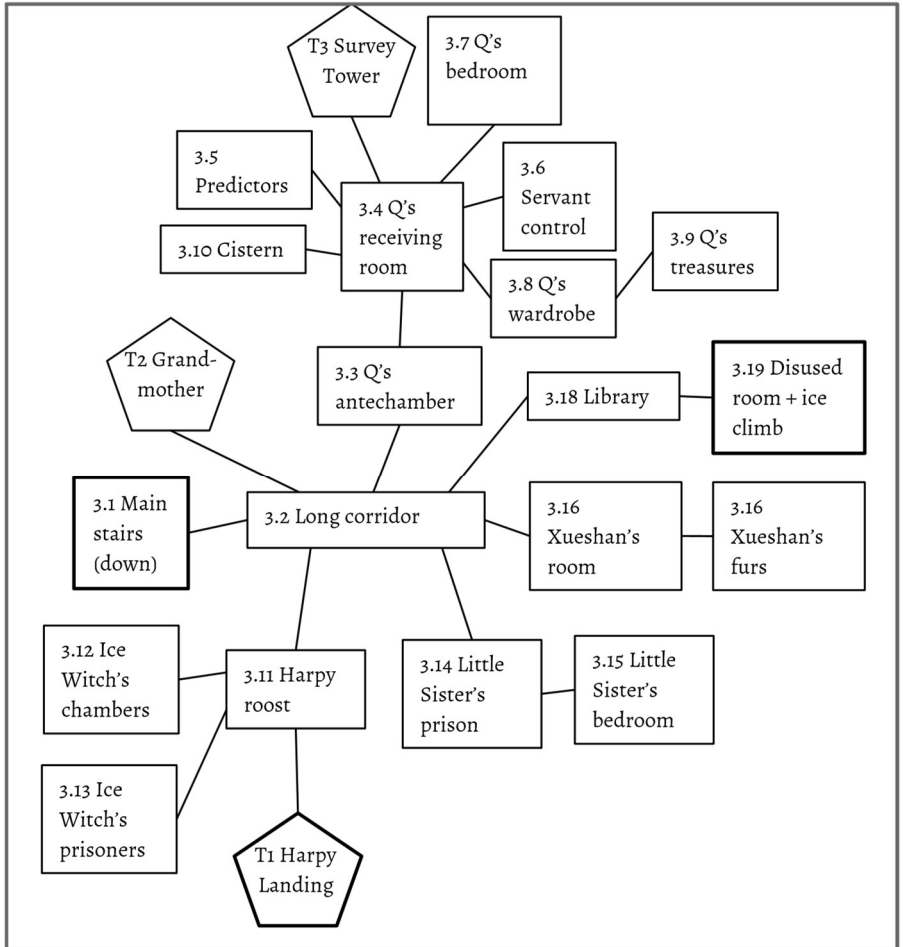


Rooms with darker outlines are ones that allow movement between floors

Level 1 – Lower floor



Level 3 – Top floor



9 Locations – Below the castle

R0.1 Base of the stack

Snow is deep all around, which slows movement as described in *The Area Around the Castle*.

Depending on what side they are on, and how far they are from the actual stack (further gives better sight lines), they can see the following interesting features:

- Level 1
 - Side ledge around southwest corner
 - Windows near to that
 - Crack on west side to R1.4
- Level 2
 - Opening on east side to storeroom (R2.18)
- Level 3
 - Opening on east side to disused room (R3.19)

The stack, and the castle walls, are in general only climbable using a Thief's climbing skill.

The climb to the towers is a long one, and unless you start from the west (secret side entrance) or east (storeroom and disused room) you're not likely to see another entrance until you get there. The fall from the top of the stack is 100' (though counts as half because of the deep snow); the fall from the top of the castle is about 200' (again, halved)

R0.2 Tunnel entrance

An almost circular hole in the side of the stack leads into an upwards-curling tunnel, smooth and round and so narrow you'll have to crawl.

After about 30ft it splits:

Left — upwards, silence.

Right — gently downwards, slight fluttering sound if you listen carefully.

Ro.3 Cave of the Ice Bats

A natural cave 40' wide by 60' deep and a 40' ceiling.

The sound of fluttering is everywhere, as 18-inch bats roost all over the ceiling, their grey fur making a smooth mass.

In the centre of the cave is a pile of frozen meat and bone in which gold glints.

If someone tries to dig out the gold — they make progress each turn (if there's a second digger, the cover the first two in one):

- First turn — can get at furs and clothing, good but rather spoiled by guano. Worth maybe 50gp.
- Second — under the cloth is about 180 gp.
- Third — under everything else is a necklace of (rare) orange porphyry worthy 200 gp

But the fucking bats won't stop hassling you — diggers take 1d6 hp/turn damage from a thousand bites and scratches and wing-buffets per turn of digging (can't take you before 1hp, and tell the player the damage roll before to anyone messing with the pile albeit can't take you below 1hp. If you only have 1hp at the start of the turn, you just can't make useful digging progress in the face of the bat's attacks.

Ro.4 Awkwardly placed dormant vampire

Compared to the Ro.2, the tunnel widens and the floor flattens. A block of clear ice in the wall contains a skeleton, apparently intact and with very pronounced incisors and a sharp wooden pole wedged through its rib cage. It's surrounded by particularly rocky wall-matter. Behind it, clearly visible through the clear ice, is a mid-length spear of fine crafting and intricate silver decoration.

The spear is +1 and would sell for 500gp to someone rich and fancy.

If someone breaks the ice and thus disturbs the skeleton — it lurches forwards, falls to the ground, crawls a bit, then shatters into three hundred inert pieces.

Ro.5 Antechamber before the castle

A rough-hewn room, but definitely a room. Empty except that someone has written in white paint on the wall a variety of crude images, and a couple of legible messages. e.g. "in the end, we are all seals" (followed by a crude cartoon of a seal), and "fly with the harpies".

10 Locations – Level 1

R1.1 The great bridge

About 8' wide and 40' long, wind howls across it burnishing the ice to a shine.

To the right of the bridge is a narrow path which switchbacks its way down to the plain below.

If they study the castle from here — they will see

- The general shape of the castle, including the three towers
- The main doors (see R1.5)
- The Icegyle, in its alcove (see R1.5)
- The Tower 1 platform, which faces south. If they watch for long enough, they'll see an Ice Harpy take off or land there.

If they pay close attention to the precise shape of the castle — they will notice the side ledge.

If someone tries to climb the underside of the bridge — only a Thief has a chance, and that at -10%. They will then be able to reach the main doors or the side ledge without attracting the attention of the Icegyle.

R1.2 Path down

A path switchbacks 100' down to the plain below. It's narrow, precarious, and meant for sure feet, but there's no actual risk unless rushing or attacked.

R1.3 Side ledge

A narrow ledge, perhaps 10 inches deep on average, works its way around the castle wall from the western side of the bridge to the secret side entrance (R1.4) in the middle of the western wall. It is a little hair-raising but safe to traverse unless you are being attacked or the weather is vile.

Once around the corner, you can climb from the ledge without being seen.

R1.4 Secret side entrance

A crack just wide enough for an armoured human to squeeze through leads to a 6'x6' room with cloaks hanging up and an old wooden stool. The stool is sturdy and too large to fit through the crack. A door leads east.

If someone looks behind the cloaks — there is a hole in the wall containing two days of iron rations and a *Potion of Cold Resistance* (12 hours duration).

R1.5 The main doors

Double doors of solid wood and metal reinforcement 10' high and 8' wide. The left door has a stylised metal snowflake and the right door a stylised metal crown.

They are guarded by the Icegyle, which crouches above the gate in built-for-purpose niche. It is a 9' high spider-thing with six arched legs and a crude humanesque face that hangs below its rough-ovoid body like an old leather bag. Its legs end in curved climbing-spikes that double as claws, and its mouth is full of rock teeth. It is made of the same thing as the castle wall itself — ice, small stones, and gravel.

Icegyle **AC** 3[16], **HD** 6* (hp 30), **Att** 2 × claw (d8 + grab), **THAC0** 14[+5], **MV** 120' (40') or climb, **SV** F6, **ML** 10, **AL** neutral, **XP** 500

► **Construct** — immune to mind-affecting spells, poisons, and similar things that rely on animal minds or biology.

► **Ice climber** — it can climb easily without error on any cold surface

► **Grab** — when it hits with its claws, target must make a Paralysis save or be picked up by the Icegyle. They can spend their next action to make another save to escape; otherwise, on its next action the Icegyle can throw them 1d6 * 10 feet in a rough direction of its choosing. (If there is nowhere useful to throw them, it can instead bite them for d8 automatic damage). Either throw or bite uses one of its attacks that round.

► **Statuesque** — while still, it is indistinguishable from an inanimate statue

► **Vulnerable to heat** — takes double damage from heat or fire attacks

If PCs talk to the Icegyle — It will engage, but share only basic, obvious facts only — “This is the castle of the Heartless Queen. You are not welcome here. If you find a way in you may find that you never leave. You should return to the south where it is warm in summer rather than cold all year round...”

If PCs try to open the doors — this will take about 3 rounds, as they are heavy and stiff, and during this the Icegyle will warn them to stop (first round) and attack

them if they resist (latter two rounds). It will not pursue inside, however, or sound any alarm (it's not been told to, and has never needed to before, so no-one has noticed this error).

If the PCs try to climb, move around the side ledge, or otherwise enter the castle by unusual means — the Icegyle will warn them of the dangers they are facing but will not otherwise interfere.

R1.6 Entrance hall

20' wide, 30' deep, and 30' high, with fine-cut ice and ice-on-glass-flower patterns on the walls. A chandelier of ice has a dozen cold-fire lamps burning in it.

R1.7 Statue of the Queen

This room, 20' and circular, contains nothing at all except a 12' high state of the Queen made (of course) of ice. It emphasises her emaciated looks and the hole in her chest, and her Ice Wurm Chimeras curl around her legs.

The workmanship is middling, but it is striking and unusual whole would be worth 1500 gp if you could maybe get it out of here without it just melting.

East door —listening at it, you can hear guards laughing or bickering (no roll needed).

R1.8 Entertaining hall

This room is 40' by 40', with elegantly carved pillars and roof and fourteen frozen people and animals who serve as talking points, seats, and drinks stands.

Great windows (of two-inch thick clear ice) provide excellent views across the plain to the west.

If the PCs study the ice formation on the frozen people — they can probably infer that this room hasn't been used in quite a while.

R1.9 Staging area

Small backstage area for running events out of. Full of furniture, props, decorations, and a few more interesting items:

- A long pole (12') for lighting and refilling the chandelier in the entrance hall, and a stepladder to help with that
- A 30-gallon barrel of cold flame oil
- A silver flask with "LIME" engraved on it — worth 50 gp
 - Inside there is, indeed, a faint smell of limes.
- 200ft of decent rope

R1.10 Audience chamber

This 30' by 30' room is dominated by a high throne of jagged ice, having the rough shape of a sunburst or a spray of icicles. In contrast to the status in R1.7, it is for a person of roughly normal stature.

There is a row of notable depressions in the floor in front of the throne (these are where visitors are supposed to kneel). Careful inspection will reveal that there was a set about 10ft from the throne, but they were recently erased and a new set dug at 15ft

North door — listening at it, you can hear guards laughing or bickering (no roll needed).

R1.11 Servants' quarters

A room with rough walls, menially appointed with lots of small cubbyholes for sleeping that have been lined as best they can with insulating materials like blankets and furs.

It's just a bit too small for the people using it. And it's in the middle of the castle so there are no windows.

At any time, there are about six servants here, most of them sleeping (wrapped up densely). Maybe 2 or 3 are awake, talking in hushed tones or gambling for tiny stakes.

If the PCs search the room — Taking a turn to loot it, if there is no opposition, will uncover money and trinkets worth 200gp

R1.12 Kitchen

30' by 30' room with tables, cupboards, and a wide range of cooking implements (some of them for *very* large animals). The room has clear damage from cooking it's riven with cracks and recent re-freezes, despite being heavily exposed to the elements by many small windows and several large chimneys.

The chimneys can be climbed up to the roof of the castle — Dex check to do so without a 2d6 damage fall (the chimney walls will break your fall but may break bones in doing so).

4 in 6 chance Graegus the cook is here — a large moderately-transformed man who is very depressed by his situation (He was a great chef in the south before he was captured by a trading party from the castle. He's particularly frustrated because he can only slow cook — can't have a fire hot enough to fry or roast. He would like to escape, but he knows about the ice-death (see R3.6).

If he's made very angry, Graegus might fight (stats as a Guard).

Graegus is also unhappy because he puts a special substance in the food, a substance he gets directly from the Queen. He doesn't know what it does, but he suspects (correctly) that it's what makes everybody turn seal-like over time.

If Graegus is here, his assistant (Twerpi — see servant's list) will be, too.

R1.13 Larder

A crudely-shaped room with many, many meat-hooks and open barrels.

Only the cook and his assistant are allowed back here, so that that source of meat remains ambiguous. That one there looks very humanoid. Lightly marbled, good colour.

There's not much here — wouldn't take a lot to starve the (living) residents out

R1.14 Back stairs

A narrow stairwell, with rough ice walls, much cracked, crudely repaired.

R1.15 Menagerie storeroom

10' by 15' rough-walled room, with a low ceiling and no light sources.

There is a crowbar leaning against the wall.

A wooden platform, covered in ice, can be levered up to get access to the secret passage. Open secret this exists, but not guarded because it's not supposed to be there.

There are several barrels here of the (green) exochemical used to melt the menagerie ice. It's useful because it produces a short-duration heat of moderate intensity (about 100C). It's worth 50 gp per gallon and there are three 2-gallon barrels/tuns here (plus the small amount of clear-liquid starter you need).

R1.16 Menagerie on ice

This 30' x 40' room is a gallery of frozen monsters that the Queen can thaw out. The north and south walls have blocks of clear ice (or empty spaces for same), six on each side.

In each block of ice is someone or something, frozen solid and suspended in time.

There is a chute at the base of each space, into which an exothermic chemical can be poured which melts the block in about five minutes. (the chemical is stored in R.1.15)

The people and creatures in the ice are as follows:

Yeti	<p>Constance has tamed a Yeti (see <i>Monsters</i>) and he is now her friend, much like someone might have a trained bear.</p> <p>Yetis, evolved for extreme temperatures and two minutes into thawing out it will burst out through the ice, getting surprise on 1-4 on a d6. Only the presence of Constance (or the Queen, whom it fears) will stop it killing to eat.</p>
Shapeshifter	<p>This is frozen as a shapeless mass, like a green-yellow liquid that exploded or dropped into near-freezing water. It will reform during thawing process into a humanoid shape, resembling one of the guards.</p> <p>Shapeshifter AC 6[13], HD 4* (hp 18), Att 1 × claw (1d10), or by weapon, THACo 16[+3], MV 120' (40'), SV F4, ML 9, AL chaotic, XP 125</p> <p>► Shapeshift — If it kills someone it can take their form immediately. It has a “library” of forms corresponding to the last three people it killed, and can change between them given a minute or so.</p> <p>On the surface its replicas are nearly perfect, but and it inherits instincts and tacit knowledge, but it doesn't get episodic memories and it can't speak in any form — when it tries it makes a variety of mouth-noises but they always sound very wrong.</p>
Photine of Heraclea	<p>A Mediterranean-complexion woman, with a shepherd's crook. She speaks in an elaborate and elliptical fashion, full of allusions, metaphors, and similes. It sounds like riddles, but no-one except her can honestly make sense of it.</p> <p>If taken to Heraclea, a few elderly people might recognise her as a noted prophet and seer who disappeared about forty years ago.</p>
Horvix	<p>An elderly man, naked and hairless, frozen with a wild grin. He is the exact clone of Gorvix (imprisoned in location R1.17) and cannot be distinguished from him by sight.</p>
Udumelue	<p>Udumelue AC 7[12], HD 3 (hp 12), Att 1 × by weapon, THACo 17[+2], MV 120' (40'), SV F3, ML 10, AL lawful, XP 35</p> <p>Dark-skinned warrior with long hair and elaborate armour.</p> <p>She tracked Eugenios here after he fled the Great Kingdom; she planned to kill him but was captured and ended up frozen.</p>

Her story — Eugenios came to her city promising to make industrial machines that worked by themselves. Rumours soon reached them of terrible things he had done in Heraclea, but the Council of her city protected him because they wanted to profit from his work — he gave them promises of perfect slaves and fearless soldiers. In the end, “all the wooden chairs and brooms” rose up in night of frenzy and two hundred were killed (including her husband and child).

Her loyal companion Obiefune was also captured, but surrendered and ended up as a guard. He is guilty and repentant but she is so angry at him.

Centipede monstrosity	20ft-long centipede with many tentacles on its head, has been there for decades and has died due to progressive ice damage
--------------------------	--

West door — sturdy, locked with a guard key

R1.17 Prison

10'x by 20' and mostly given over to a single metal cage built into floor and ceiling. A bench of castle matter runs down either side. The room smells of rank filth and is in no sense clean.

The cage is locked with the Prison Key and two people.

Gurta is an elderly local woman who was tracking the Great Ice Wurm for its oil-stones when she seized by a guard. She is terrified, but if calmed down and reassured is a good source of information about the castle. She could also lead them to her settlement, about three hours walk away, where she could arrange supplies and healing.

She is leered at by Gorvix.

Gorvix AC 6[13], **HD** 3 (hp 16), **Att** 1 × grab (1d3 + grapple), **THAC0** 17[+2], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** F3, **ML** 9, **AL** chaotic, **XP** 35

► **Grapple** — when he hits you make Paralysis save or he twists you like a leather strap each round thereafter for d10 automatic damage. Spend an action to make another Paralysis save to break. Anyone attacking him while he's grappling you, including you, has 50% chance of hitting you instead.

A naked bald man who doesn't feel the cold. He hides in snow and jumps out and wraps his hypermobile body around you and snaps your neck. He actually likes the Queen, and likes being a killer for her. He is not very nice. He does not speak.

R1.18 Guard post

15' x 15' and respectably appointed. There is a mid-sized oak table and a large man's skeleton — the latter is suspended face-down above the table, as if flying. The guards call him "Regulon" and he gets a vote in any decision (although in practice he always abstains).

By default, four guards are on duty here at any time; six if there's been an alarm in the last hour or so. The Prison Key is held by the most senior guard present — it has a wooden key fob with "P" scratched in it.

There are usually two Freeze Bombs in a box on the table.

R1.19 Main stairs

A grand sweeping stairway, 10' wide. It goes smoothly around corners because ice is easily malleable (if you are an immortal undead Queen with an inborn ability to manipulate it and little else to do with your time).

South door — listening at it, you can hear guards laughing or bickering (no roll needed).

R1.20 Quartermaster's store

This room is a hatch in the wall backed by 20' by 20' space full of valuable goods. It is occupied most of the time by Ogrue, the Quartermaster.

Ogrue, the Quartermaster **AC** 6[13], **HD** 4 (hp 17), **Att** 2 × fist (d4), **THACo** 16[y], **MV** 90' (30'), **SV** F4, **ML** 8, **AL** neutral, **XP** 75

► **Arm/off**— can detach arms (AC 7[12], hp 3, move 10', THACo 19[0], ML fearless)

► **Grab and bite**— instead of attacking normally, they can try to grab and bite— paralysis save or be grabbed, and on the next round and each round thereafter chew for d8 automatic damage in addition to their normal actions. Victim can use an action to get another paralysis save to escape.

Ogrue has stubby arms (four) and legs (two) and a great head that's basically part of their torso. Somewhere between the head and torso (the boundary is not clear) is a huge mouth of stubby but robust teeth. They have grey-white fur thickly all over

Ogrue likes it here because they are of an extremely rare species and are basically accepted nowhere. So their life here isn't bad. This makes them loyal to the Queen.

Their species has no sexes. Supposed to get fat and pod off, but that's not happening here because it's too cold and they can't get the plant matter they need to grow well. That's the one thing they're sad about.

Can detach arms to do tasks (they have two dozen stubby tentacles at the joint point), including hanging off a shelf and throwing ice bombs from it

What's in the store?

- Ice bombs (14, less the number recently used by guards or stolen by PCs)
- Exothermic chemicals for menagerie (8 gallons)
- Cold-flame oil (20 gallons)

R1.21 Seal pond

30' by 40' and dominated by a 10' by 20' rounded pool of actual liquid that appears to be water. There is a stench of rot and there are bones and there are bloodstains.

The pool stays liquid because of a lump of rough porphyry (about 6" square) that sits at the bottom and exudes a gentle heat. (It's sat on a larger, more inert stone so it doesn't steadily melt down through the ice stack).

In and around the pool are half a dozen Killer Seals, which the Queen keeps as genetic templates for the transformation she inflicts on her staff.

The seals are slow-moving, and docile when well fed. But they are not always well fed and have horrible tempers.

Killer Seal **AC** 7[12], **HD** 1 (hp 5), **Att** 1 × bite (d4), **THACo** 19[0], **MV** 60' (20') or swim 120' (40'), **SV** F1, **ML** 7, **AL** neutral, **XP** 10



II Locations – Level 2

R2.1 Main stairs down

Stairs, as R1.19.

R2.2 Main corridor

10' wide corridor. Compared to the public-facing ground floor rooms, this is more austere and functional, but the ice is cleanly cut, with arches around the doors and similar subtle decoration.

West door in north wall — sturdy door with a red 'X' painted on it. On a listen check you can hear a weird slurping noise from behind.

East door in north wall — locked sturdy door with a message in fine gold lettering spelling out “Eugenios of Heraclea” (worth 60gp total but would take a turn to get off and likely would draw Eugenios’s attention). If Eugenios is elsewhere it will be locked with Eugenios’s key.

East door on south wall — Sturdy wooden door with a large swirl gouged into the wood

North door on south wall — listening at it, you can hear guards laughing or bickering (no roll needed).

West door in south wall — Listen check to hear something slurping about in there

South door in the west wall — “Guests” painted on it in white paint

R2.3 Main stairs up

10' wide stairs with elegant curves.

If PCs listen for noises from upstairs — mostly quiet, except for sometimes a wailing and banging (Little Sister at the door of her cell), and some odd sounds on the wind like musical notes (the surveillance tower).

East door — listening at it, you can hear guards laughing or bickering (no roll needed).

R2.4 Guard post

This 15' by 15' room has a table and chairs and a polar bear head, crudely stuffed, sticking out of the wall, along with enough of the bear's shoulders and fur to make it look like it's just crashed through the wall and is very angry with you.

By default there are four guards here at any one time, going up to six if there's been a recent alarm.

There are usually three Freeze Bombs in a box on the corner.

If a fight starts here — 1 in 6 chance each round that someone will come through from the barracks to investigate (at which point all awake guards in the barracks will realise what is happening).

North door — narrow 10ft corridor to another door and then guard barracks. At that second door can hear talking and snoring (listen check).

R2.5 Guard barracks

30' x 30' with three small tables and eight cubbyholes for sleeping. The cubbyholes are long enough for normal adults to sleep comfortably. There are lots of boxes and bags as well — the possessions of the guards.

A latrine is accessible via a short passage and curtain. On the wall above it someone has written "The Guard Shit" in frozen chalk.

Normally there around 8 guards here, six of them sleeping, dropping to four if there's been an alarm in the last hour (and those will all be awake).

Treasure, revealed by a turn of unopposed searching through bags and boxes:

- A leather belt with embedded fire agates — the leather has perished, but stones are worth 60gp
- Knucklebone dice that are always discretely biased in your favour. If you hold them in your hand, you feel lucky.
- Miscellaneous coin and jewellery worth 250 gp

R2.6 Guard captain's room

A 15' by 10' bed-sitting room. Constance, the Guard Captain (see *Major NPCs*) has her quarters here. It more comfortable than the barracks but hardly luxurious.

There is a next of thick blankets and furs, in which you can usually find her lover, Idiophe. He is small and has a weak heart but is beautiful. He is not uncomfortable here but is rather bored. Constance has a tacit agreement with the Queen that Idiophe can idle here rather than working as servant or guard.

Treasure:

- Key to armoury strongbox
- Locket with two indistinct faces carved from hardwood — her face and those of her mother, although she's very transformed now so you wouldn't know it — worth 50gp
- Quite a lot of money and valuables, including the pearls that Idiophe wears in his hair — 350 gp total value

R2.7 Armoury

A 10' by 10' room with a large amount of mundane weapons and leather-based armours (not much metal armour).

A heavy strongbox has been dug into the ice on the north wall — it would take three turns to dig it out and two characters of average-or-better strength to carry it. Constance has the keys. It contains an ice axe +1 (1d8 base damage), three potions of healing and a potion of heroism, and the Skull of Nordon.

Skull of Nordon — a human skull decorated with small electrum pieces. Worth 25 gp as an ornament. If a Magic User holds it, they can feel the ghost inside and how cold it is and how much it longs to suck human body heat. A Magic User can release the ghost, and it will swirl around them for three rounds, sucking 1d6 hp of body heat from every living creature within 10'. It can be used once a day, although if it kills a sentient being it will be greatly sated and will not function for a week.

North exit — A sackcloth curtain covers access to R2.8.

R2.8 A plant in a crack

A vertical crack in the wall hosts a small, dark-green plant which is somehow growing despite the conditions. It's rooted in a small amount of earth. Clearly someone has taken the time to grow a plant in this cold place.

If PCs dig up the plant — they will find a red porphyry stone that generates a steady low heat, about 5C.

R2.9 Alarm station

10' x 10' room in which the only feature is a column of clear ice against the west wall which a vague ghostly figure is frozen. If you bang on the ice it manifests a face and hands and it writhes and screams and the alarm sounds. If you tap three times on the ice with a metal weapon it screams at a higher pitch and the Little Sister alarm sounds.

See *How the castle works* for a description of what the alarm does and when the inhabitants will try to sound it.

R2.10 The useless room of the oil-creature

10' x 20' room of no particular note. It is useless because a cow-sized transparent oil-creature owns it.

Cow-sized oil-creature AC 5[14], HD 6* (hp 22), Att 1 × pseudopod (d6), THACo 14[+5], MV 60' (20'), SV F6, ML 8, AL neutral, XP 500

► **Regenerate** — 3hp/round while any part still lives

► **Oily nature** — immune to bludgeoning attacks; half damage from cold or piercing attacks; double damage from fire or heat attacks

- Looks like any oily mostly-transparent mass — picks up a temporary covering of ice-dust as it moves. Normal surprise chance.
- Ignores familiar people. Reaction roll at -2 for strangers. Dumb as shit so easily fooled by disguises.
- Chemically weird so never freezes
- Attempts to drive it off have failed — the bastard regenerates and comes back. The Queen could kill it (at about -25 it would freeze and you could smash it). But she won't, just so everyone remembers they need her.
- Quickly wrecks any object left in the room.

R2.11 Eugenios's audience room

This 20' by 20' room has six fine oak chairs and numerous warm-coal heaters on stands. The air is mild and rather humid.

Eugenios is here more often than not, with two of his wooden workers attending him.

Treasure:

- Eugenios' insulating box — an oaken box slightly smaller than a coffin, with a cloth lining containing thick layers of wool and kapok. Worth 200 gp to someone who understands its properties; worth much, much more to the right wizard who could actually exploit it.
- 600 gp in coins etc

R2.12 Eugenios's garden

30' x 40' space that Eugenios has hollowed out himself, using an alchemical "sun" to melt the ice. Plans grow in pots and there is pleasant seating. The walls sweat continuously.

The sun (which Eugenios claims is genuinely a star "plucked from the sky, casting a world like ours into inky darkness") hangs from the ceiling and casts a pleasant heat on the garden. It's worth easily 1000 gp, or much to the right alchemist, but it weighs 1000 cn, and if not tuned once a day by Eugenios (or an alchemist of equivalent skill) there is a 1 in 6 chance that it sets on fire.

One of the ten wooden worker stationed against one wall will, without prompting, serve cocktails form a tray.

In the back of the room is a rough wooden box which rattles sometimes. A sturdy chain holds it closed. Inside is:

Angry Skeleton Worker **AC** 5[14], **HD** 2* (hp 10), **Att** 1 × claw (d4) or thrown rib (d4 + dance), **THAC0** 18[+1], **MV** 120' (40'), **SV** F2, **ML** fearless, **AL** chaotic, **XP** 25

► **Bone dance** — if hit by a thrown rib, Paralysis save or launch into a crazy dance for a turn that renders you useless for the duration and does d6 exhaustion damage

This skeleton has had its joints reconnected with screws and bolts, and a few missing bones replaced with mismatched ones. It is animated by cowed fragments of several spirits, but its bones remember enough of life to make them angry and aggressive and defiant of attempts to order it around.

If released from the box — it will attack anyone and everyone nearby.

R2.13 Ice whirl

10' x 15' space with a hole in the ground, 8' across, that contains a frozen whirlpool.

When one of three command word is spoken loudly (only the Queen and Constance know this word) it comes alive...

- ... seemingly still frozen but moving like a swirling liquid. In this mode, it freezes solid without killing, leading to ice blocks like those in the menagerie (or, rather, a safely frozen person/animal who can be taken downstairs and iced up a bit more for security).
- ... swirling icy water (in which you will be quickly pulled under and drowned).
- ... still water which is merely cold (which is how the queen applies the ice-for-control effect — see R3.6).

R2.14 Message room

This 10' by 10' room is empty except for the words “NOW EAT FAT CHILDREN” in foot-high letters on one wall, as white paint just beneath the top ice layer.

R2.15 Guest rooms

This is a cluster of four small rooms (8' by 6') with fur beds, cold-flame lamps, and with antique bedwarmers (hold warm coals and release their heat slowly) worth 50 gp each.

South door — sturdy door with “Forbidden Room” written on it in red paint.

R2.16 Forbidden room (ice trap)

This room is 10' deep by 6' wide. A basket sits on a pedestal at the far side of the room, very clearly containing 180 gp. The floor in between is thin, semi-transparent ice, almost as black as the pit below.

It is maintained by the Queen as a test of who isn't following the rules.

If an adult walks on the floor — it cracks and they fall 10ft onto ice spikes for 2d6 damage.

R2.17 Back corridor

A narrow corridor, 50' long and only 5' wide in most places. Wall are rough and covered in lumps from crude repairs.

West door in north wall — sturdy door, crude image of a knife or similar gouged into the wood. On a listen check you can hear a high-pitched whistle or wine.

West door in south wall — sturdy door with 'G' carved on it. If you listen can hear guards laughing or bickering (no roll needed).

East door in south wall — sturdy door with a red cross painted over it. On a listen check can hear a weird slurping noise from behind.

R2.18 Storeroom

20' x 20' rough-walled room, full of boxes and bags and shelves and stacks.

It stores things not important enough to be under the quartermaster's control. It's mostly lower-grade stuff like worn furs and rough cloth. There is also 200' of decent rope here.

The wind is unusually active in this room, because there is a crack in the east wall big enough to climb through. This can be climbed up (Dex check on d20) to the Disused Room (R3.19) on the upper level, or down (Thief climb skill) to the ground. Failure of either means falling 130' on snow (half damage, but still likely fatal).

R2.19 Cutting blade

10' circular rooms contains a floor to ceiling column of ice, 3 inches diameter on average with a teardrop cross section. The point of the teardrop forms a sharp blade (which points towards the door).

The blade is harder than diamond, and anything short of short of stone pushed through it cuts with negligible resistance. A normal metal weapon is destroyed (50% chance it shatters for 1d6 damage in 5' radius); for a *magical* weapon roll d6 — on 3-6 it survives, 2 it breaks, 1 it shatters as above.

If somehow cut off without cracking it, will keep its edge for about a minute. Pouring a gallon of cold water over it, quickly, will restore its edge for another minutes. This is at the castle's temperature — in positive temperatures it won't hold an edge and will disintegrate permanently within an hour.

R2.20 Shrine of Cwomom

This tiny room has been cut out of the ice by hand — you can see the chisel marks. It contains a shrine in black ice, like a crude figure with a sneering mouth and grasping hands. The black is like soot — it's a kind of slow-growing mould.

This is a shrine to Cwomom, a local god, mostly abandoned these days because it's such a dick. A handful of servants minimally propitiate it but don't otherwise engage (1 in 6 chance of one visiting it during any given turn). Cwomom is a jealous god, and would like you to pray to it. If you do, you will hear it say "There is no god but me!" and then:

If you have already prayed to Cwomom this week — it ignores you.

*If you are a cleric — it hates you. Black mould buboes sprout from your face and shoulders. They are harmless, if uncomfortable, but looks very like the plague and most people you meet will react accordingly. A *Cure Disease* will cure this, though you will dream of Cwomom for a month afterwards.*

If you are not a cleric, but you do not offer a gift worth at least 30gp — suffer as if you were a cleric, though maybe the buboes are slightly smaller.

If you are not a cleric, and you offer an adequate gift — Cwomom blesses you (after telling you that there is no god but it several more times) — roll below (unless noted these last for 6 days):

1. Skin gains a fat layer that makes you immune to cold
2. Skin hardens for +1 AC
3. Literally turn into a small-ish polar bear
4. You can see in total darkness
5. You can extend an icy chill through any metal weapon — take 1 damage yourself to do +1d4 on your next attack (if you miss, that 1 damage is wasted).
6. Cwomom shows you secrets in your mind. You gain 500xp (permanently), but you tend to talk about weird things now (permanently).

R2.21 Stash in wall

Someone hollowed a hole out of the wall here, stored their special things here, then concealed it. Everything has frosted over thickly — clearly they've not been back in a while.

Things — boiled sweets, a lock of curly hair, 15 gp, and a animal bone on a leather necklace.

R2.22 Back stairs down

A narrow stairwell, with rough ice walls, much cracked, crudely repaired.

A wooden panel mostly covered in ice conceals the entrance to a hidden shrine (R2.20).



12 Locations – Level 3 (including towers)

Tower 1 – landing platform

A 15' wide circular tower. One wall has a 10ft wide by 8ft high opening the air.

Everywhere is caked in harpy shit, some of it fresh enough not to have frozen and thus there is a profound stench.

A hole in the floor provides access to R3.11. There is no ladder or stair, only a rope.

If PCs listen at the hole — they can hear the Ice Harpies below.

Tower 2 – frozen grandmother

This 15' wide circular room contains a single lump, like a stooped human figure mostly encased in ice.

It is in fact Katherine, the Queen's grandmother, encased in preserving ice. Mostly she sleeps in suspended animation, having slow thoughts and slower dreams.

1 in 20 chance that the Queen is here (*without* her ice wyrms, because they scare grandmother) and has thawed grandmother enough for the latter to be conscious and to whisper words. She'll be asking about some threat and whether they should take it seriously — quite likely some paranoid speculation about some resident of the castle.

One a 2 on the above roll, the Queen was here recently and Grandmother is still partially conscious.

If the PCs manage to talk to grandmother — she doesn't say much that makes sense unless you spend a very long time, and a Charisma check, interpreting her confused recollections.

She taught the Queen, as a child, to manage her ice powers somewhat, and thus knows about her weaknesses. She can also describe the kind of things the Queen has recently asked her for advice on. She calls the Queen by name, though, and will only recognise her by that — you can't talk about "the Queen" and expect sense from her.

Tower 3 – surveillance tower

Stairs lead up through the middle of the floor in a 20' round room. A thousand small holes in the walls let the wind in, a cacophony of moaning, crying, even talking. The noise is disorientating, and it is very cold here.

There is a single chair of frozen wood.

There is a 1 in 10 chance that the Queen will be here, and will have her Chimerae with her.

This is a surveillance device — the holes and slots in walls carry whispers to you, sometimes from hundreds of miles away. If you spend a few minutes listening you can get a feel for what it is, and after a few hours have a good feel for how it works, but using it is very hard. Need to learn the skill of tuning in to the right voice, and still need to be patient as you may be waiting a long time before you hear anything useful. You need to hear a snatch at one point, then spot that a later snatch is part of the same conversation. It may not be in order, and you'll probably only get their side of the conversation.

After 6 hours practice, a user has a 1 in 100 chance per hour of hearing something relevant to them. After 60 hours practice this rises to 1 in 10, and after 600 hours practice (the Queen has been at this a long time) to 1 in 6.

The longer you spend, the colder you get. Roll a Con check every hour or take one exhaustion level.

This tower is vulnerable to breaking in from outside, brick-by-brick, in a way that the rest of the structure is not.

R3.1 Main stairs down

10' wide stairs with elegant curves.

R3.2 Main corridor

10' wide corridor. Much like R2.2 on the floor below, this somewhat austere and functional, but the ice is cleanly cut, with arches around the doors and similar subtle decoration.

West door in north wall — sturdy door labelled “Forbidden”, leading to a narrow spiral staircase upwards.

Middle door in north wall — sturdy door heavily reinforced with metal bands. If the Queen is out and has taken her ice wyrms with her this will be locked with the Queen's Key.

West door in south wall — sturdy door leading to a passageway that opens into the harpy roost. A listen check will reveal shuffling and strange cawing speech in a language no human speaks.

East door in south wall — heavily reinforced sturdy door, locked with the Little Sister Key. If the PCs listen at it, they will first hear nothing, then (as Little Sister senses their life and warmth) she will come and (50%) scratch at the door or try to talk them into letting her out (she knows that “my beloved sister” and “Constance” have the key).

R3.3 The Queen's antechamber

This 20' by 20' room is decorated with the frozen heads a dozen of the Queen's former enemies, stuck on vertical spikes that are tastefully arrayed around the room. She always keeps two or three spikes free, just to be clear.

If the Queen is here, or any of the rooms leading off it, the Ice Wymr Chimeras live here. Usually they are hidden in a purpose-built nest in the west wall, concealed carefully cut ice-and-gravel doors. If starting out of combat this gives them a normal surprise chance; if starting in combat, they can emerge on this first round but cannot take any other action.

R3.4 The Queens receiving room

30' by 30', ornate relief carvings of the castle and the events that occurred there. These are rather grander than the reality, featuring more pennants and guests and less cowering and punishment. White furs and throne, on which the Queen sits when she has visitors.

Concealed holes in the southwest corner allow the Ice Wymr Chimerae to enter this room, as in R3.3 — see there for details.

Treasure here — Furs and other finery worth 800 gp but weighs 4000 cn.

R3.5 Frozen predictors

Here, ice sculptures animate to act out predictions on two dioramas, each 6' across. They change when the Queen speaks to them, and they rely on her for information (although they can animate some consequences based on what they already "know" from past conversations).

- Abstract strategic scene covering a hundred mile radius. Pieces describe settlements and leaders, along with a few powerful individuals (e.g. the most influential local leaders and the Wizard of the Glacier).
- A more detailed version covering a ten-mile radius, showing groups moving.

The dioramas are probably not useable to anyone but the Queen, although with extensive study the right wizard or alchemist might make something of them – and might pay 1000 gp each if they could someone be prevented from melting.

R3.6 Servant control room

This 10' by 10' room hosts the mechanism that the Queen uses for the Ice Death.

The machine is a rough boulder of ice, about 3' by 2' by 5' wide, on which each servant and each guard has a face on top of a foot-long ice pole. The ice-faces move, roughly in sync with what the real people are doing but in a jerky, sporadic fashion. On each pole is an icy ring, which can be moved up and down — if it is below the very top the corresponding person feels an icy chill, and if it touches the bottom they will die in ten rounds (and then freeze solid over the next two or three).

The Queen uses the machine to express her displeasure and concern with her staff. At any time, maybe a third of the servants and a quarter of the guards are below the top of their poles, and 2 or three will be around halfway and thus painfully cold. She decides who goes where partly based on informants amongst the staff, but mostly based on scenarios that she plays out in her head.

R3.7 The Queen's bedroom

This 15' square room is dominated by its 45-degree-angle back wall and the coffin-like shape in it. This is where the Queen rests about a quarter of the time to maintain her immortal state (see her description in Major NPCs).

R_{3.8} The Queen's dressing room

This room is 10' by 10' and the walls are lined with dresses and robes. All of them are white or grey and have a hole in the chest so you can see straight through.

R_{3.9} The Queen's treasure room

10' by 10' and decorated in the same elaborate style as the Queen's audience room. It contains the Queen's finest treasures, displayed on frozen (parts of) former enemies:

- Waist-up body of a young woman with a beautiful, kind face holds out two flat palms on which rest a music box. It's frozen stiff, but if you heat it up it can play a sad tune. This is not common technology so would be worth 300 gp to the right buyer.
- Torso and head of a woman wears an elaborate diamond necklace. Facial features were chiselled off after freezing; arms were hacked off before freezing. The necklace is worth 700 gp.
- Powerfully muscled naked man holds a bastard sword in a rough approximation of a swing charge. The upper half of his head is missing. The sword is Reisuvine, Bane of Ice and is (1h/2h 1d8/1d10) and +1 / +3 versus anything that's vulnerable to heat or fire. After a fight you can cook an egg on the blade.

On the floor there are coins and mixed jewellery in a casket — 500 gp worth.

R3.10 Cistern room

One wall of this 15' square room is dominated by what appears to be a water tank — four 30' walls of solid, glassy-clear ice containing a gently-bubbling liquid. A foot-wide tube, also of clear ice, descends from the tank into the floor. An oiled metal plate with a pull-handle on the front of the tank prevents the liquid pouring out down the tube, but it can be easily pulled, causing the tank to rapidly drain.

The tank is a magical artefact which keeps water in a state of suspended freezing — a state which will break down about three rounds after it leaves the tank, causing it to freeze almost instantly.

The tube leads into a concealed hole in the ceiling of the barracks, and thus if the liquid is released everyone in the barracks will be frozen solid in three rounds. (Constance and Idiope, if in their chambers, will survive but will be trapped there.)

R3.11 Ice Harpy roost

This 40' square room is dominated by eight 10' poles with crossbars, on which at any time roost d6+1 Ice Harpies (see *Monsters*). The poles and floor are caked with harpy shit and strewn with gnawed bones, some of them human. The rooms smells about as well as you might expect, with additional floral notes.

A rope leads up to a hole in the ceiling, and that in turn to Tower 1.

Dealing with the harpies — The harpies are fiercely loyal to the Ice With but couldn't give a fuck about the Queen or anyone else. They are easily distracted by noise, prey, or anything shiny.

Searching the room — There is scope for three person-turns of searching through the filth, each such turn coming up with 50gp in assorted coins and (once-shiny) jewellery, but each such turn causes a 1 in 6 chance of contracting Arse Rot (causes loss of 1 maximum hp per day until *Cure Disease* or similar — if cured, half those hp will eventual return).

R3.12 Ice Witch's chambers

This collection of small rounds around a 20' square kitchen/living room/laboratory/pigsty is cleaner and tidier than the harpy roost next door, but the difference is one of degree. There are bits of food and tools and materials and experiments (involving animals fats and organs) all over the place on tables and shelves and in jars and urns and bowls. Despite the prevailing cold there is a microbial liveliness to the environment and you can smell it, not least because a cauldron is on a low boil day and night and the single chimney is not adequate.

The Ice Witch (see *Major NPCs*) is here nine-tenths of the time. If she is awake (and she doesn't sleep much) she will be working on her preservation ointment, either making it or refining her formulae.

Treasure — given three turns of rooting through the mess, the PCs will be able to find 200 gp in other coins and jewellery.

R3.13 Ice Witch's prisoners

This room is 10' deep and 20' long, giving comfortable room for six prisoners to be chained to the back wall. At any time there will be 3-6 prisoners here, usually all locals and with no illusions what they are headed for. After all, they can smell the bubbling fat in the Witch's cauldron.

The prison are a range of people, united by how they'd all very much like to be out of here.

(some names – Krevit, Weenan, Creese, Atropia)

R3.14 Little Sister's prison

15' wide and 30' deep and icy bare. Little Sister (see *Major NPCs*) is kept here (at least most of the time).

R3.15 Little Sister's bedroom

This 10' by 10' room is filthy with the smell of human rot. The floor is covered with rags and what might be (and is) the effects of someone slowly disintegrating.

In the corner of the cell is a discarded locket. Painted inside is the Queen and Little Sister, but both long ago. Worth 150 gp.

R3.16 Xueshan's room

The 10' by 10' room has one old fur on the floor, worn smooth by use, and a raw snow wolf that has been about half-gnawed by human teeth.

Xueshan (see *Major NPCs*) lives here, though he often away hunting.

- During the day, 5 in 6 he's away
- At night, 1 in 6 he's away

When he enters and leaves the castle, he climbs out via the ice climb in R3.19.

R3.17 Xueshan's furs

Hanging furs in which Xueshan will hide to ambush — 1-4 chance of surprise. Also meat he's hanging to cure — smells terrible. Nothing obviously human but just about anything else.

These are his treasures — he doesn't care for gold etc. E.g. the superdense fine fur of an adult Ice Wurm — 800gp, but *heavy* (1300 cn). Also other rare pelts e.g. two full polar bears worth 50gp each.

R3.18 Library

20' x 10'. There are dozens of books here, many rare and precious — if fully legible they would be worth 750 gp in a major city. A few contain spell scrolls — *fireball*, *invisibility*, and *cure disease*. Their pages, however, are frozen solid. To get them out of here you would have to thaw them out carefully, isolating the pages and drying them somehow.

R3.19 Disused room

This room has got out of shape, and is now longer a clear room anymore. Stalactites and stalagmites dominate. A hole in wall leads to climbable ice wall down.

13 Adversary roster

The following adversaries will obey the Queen in a coordinated attempt to defend the castle:

- Guards (20 total)
 - 8 in guard barracks (R2.5) — 4-6 of those will usually be sleeping
 - 4 at ground floor guard post (R1.18)
 - 4 at mid floor guard post (R2.4)
 - Others elsewhere (if in doubt, leave for random encounters)
- Servants (20 total)
 - 1-2 in the kitchen (R1.12)
 - 6 in the servant's quarters (R1.11)
 - Others elsewhere (if in doubt, leave for random encounters)
- Ogrue, the Quartermaster (R1.20)
- The Queen (see NPCs)
- Issumatar, the Ice Witch (see NPCs)
- The Icegyle above the main doors (R1.5)
 - NB this is too large to effectively move around inside the castle
- The creatures in the Menagerie (R1.16), *if thawed out* (takes about a turn)
- Little Sister (see NPCs), though she will likely be indiscriminate in her killing

The following adversaries will defend the castle if the situation suits them and/or they don't see a better opportunity:

- Eugenios
- Xueshan

The following adversaries will not likely leave their areas:

- The Killer Seals (R1.21)
- The Oil Creature (R2.10)

High above the snow line there is a castle on a crag. It is an object of fear and hatred, because the Heartless Queen holds court there and she is pitiless in her anger and host to terrible friends. Between the Frost Wyrms, the Ice Harpies, and the Frozen Thing that Guards the Bridge, even getting in is difficult.

Most locals stay as far away as they can, but between courage, pride, and burning vengeance there are always some willing to take a shot at it. And travellers from the soft, warm south might hear stories of the Queen's fantastical treasures and be oblivious about the horrors that protect them.

Player characters may have many reasons to interfere with the castle, and this thus constitutes an adventure location for the *Old-School Essentials* rules, for 5-6 PCs of 3rd level or slightly fewer of 4th.

Medium Quality
Products