

Seasons of the Runewild: All Through the Long, Dark Night



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All Through the Long, Dark Night

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The Runewild Is Coming

Though you can adapt it to any setting, *All Through the Long, Dark Night* was designed for a mystical forest called the Runewild. In the Runewild the borders between the mortal world and fairy lands grow thin. The Broken King gathers an army of goblins, while the Witch Queen Griselda plots revenge.

We ran a successful Kickstarter Campaign for the complete Runewild setting, and plan to convert it to be Compatible with Pathfinder Second Edition.

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In generations past, the villagers of Widderspire marked the eve of the winter solstice by leaving out gifts for a fey creature named Ember John. In return for these offerings, Ember John gave the families who pleased him an enchanted coal that warmed their hearths through the long, dark night. Families whose gifts were meager, however, awoke to find their homes torn apart by John and his retinue of mischievous winter sprites.

After the Aruandans conquered the Runewild, Aldric Widderspire, the village's new lord, became determined to put an end to this practice. With the help of his knights and the wizards of the Council Arcane, Lord Widderspire trapped Ember John in an iron cage and sunk the fey creature to the bottom of Widderspire Pond. Today, the inhabitants of Widderspire commemorate Ember John's defeat by gathering around Widderspire Pond each winter solstice to exchange gifts, drink warm cider, and skate on the pond's frozen surface.

Though banished from the mortal realm, Ember John is still alive. Recently, one of John's sprites, the icy-hearted Jack-o'-Frost, located John in a frozen corner of the Fey Realm. Instead of setting free his master, Jack stole John's magical staff and proclaimed himself the "Lord of the Long, Dark Night." Jack and his fellow sprites now head to Widderspire to seek vengeance against the mortals who defeated them nearly a century ago.

Introduction

All Through the Long, Dark Night is an adventure for four 1st level characters. It is designed to be played over the course of a single session (3-4 hours of gameplay). The adventure takes place near an enchanted forest known as the Runewild and can serve as an introduction to the *Runewild Campaign Setting*. You can also drop the adventure into an existing campaign without much trouble.

All Through the Long, Dark Night pits the players against a series of difficult combat encounters. To win the day, the PCs must defeat their foes while navigating challenging and unfamiliar terrain. Toward the end of the adventure, the PCs face a moral dilemma: do they keep Ember John imprisoned in the Fey Realm or allow him to return to the mortal realm? How the players answer this question impacts the village of Widderspire—and the Runewild as a whole—for generations to come.

Scaling the Adventure

If you plan to run *All Through the Long, Dark Night* for five or more PCs, or for characters of 2nd level or higher, consider making one or more of the following changes to the adventure:

- Add 1d4 **winter sprites** to the encounter, **Winter's Wrath**.
- In **Braving the Depths**, increase the DC of the Athletics checks required to reach the bottom of Widderspire Pond to 15 (or higher).
- In **The Ice Toad's Cave**, give the **giant ice toad** resistance 5 to all physical damage (except cold iron).
- Increase the DC of the ability check required to navigate the snowstorm in **The Winter Portal** to 20 (or higher).
- Add an additional **arboreal warden** to the final encounter area, **Ember John's Glade**.

The Festival of the Long, Dark Night

As the adventure begins, Widderspire's annual winter solstice celebration, the Festival of the Long, Dark Night, is in full swing. Despite being held on the longest (and often coldest) night of the year, the festival is a cheerful occasion, as it marks the night of Ember John's final visit to the village. Nearly all Widderspire's residents attend the celebration, and families from the surrounding countryside travel to the village to take part in the festivities, as well.

When the PCs arrive at the festival, read or paraphrase the following:

Widderspire Pond sparkles like crystal in the starlight. Villagers young and old skate across its frozen surface, filling the air with their playful shrieks. On the pond's northern shore, dozens more people gather around a roaring bonfire, their faces bright despite the evening's chill. Even from a distance, you can see the puffs of the townfolks' breath as they laugh, as well as the wisps of steam that rise from the warm cider in their cups.

PCs who succeed at a DC 10 Society check are familiar with the history of the Long, Dark Night, and the townfolk are happy to share the tale of Ember John's defeat to anyone who doesn't know it. At the GM's discretion, a PC interested in learning more about Ember John can uncover further details throughout the night that might prove useful later in the adventure. For example, a villager might mention Ember John rode in a sleigh pulled by a giant

toad, or that he wielded a staff imbued with the power of winter itself.

If you have access to the *Runewild Campaign Setting*, you can populate the festival with some of the NPCs described in that book (see the **NPCs of Widderspire** sidebar for suggestions). The following scenes present additional characters the PCs may encounter. Be sure the party meets at least a few NPCs as the night progresses, as these characters will become the villagers the PCs must rescue during the next scene, **Winter's Wrath**.

Ice Skating

Chances are good the PCs are unequipped for ice skating, but the townsfolk have extra skates available for those who want to give it a try. A character wearing ice skates reduces their land speed by 10 feet while on normal ground. On ice, they can attempt a DC 10 Acrobatics check at the start of each of their turns. On a success, their land Speed increases by 10 feet, and they ignore the penalties caused by uneven ground and difficult terrain due to ice until the start of their next turn. On a failure, the character fails to increase their speed and falls prone instead.

The children of Widderspire are expert skaters and take great delight in watching the PCs struggle

on the ice. One of the PCs (GM's choice) suffers the brunt of the children's teasing until a handsome lad named Dylan Whitebrow intervenes. Dylan chases off the other children and offers to help the struggling PC. With Dylan's instruction, the PC gains a +5 circumstance bonus to Acrobatics checks made to skate for the rest of the adventure.

Roasted Acorns

In addition to the bonfire, several smaller cooking fires burn around the shores of Widderspire Pond. Small groups of festival-goers huddle around these fires roasting acorns. Cooking tools are available for those who want to roast their acorns safely, but most revelers take pride in their ability to pluck the acorns directly from the coals. A PC must succeed at a DC 10 Thievery check to perform such a feat. On a failure, the PC takes 1 fire damage and becomes the subject of the villagers' good-natured teasing.

A dwarven cartwright named Travis Oakaxle rests near one of the cooking fires. Though he didn't witness Ember John's defeat first-hand, Travis is old enough to remember accounts of the battle and may provide guidance to the PCs if they're at a loss for what to do after the winter sprites' attack (see **Winter's Wrath, page 5**). Travis stores a heavy crossbow in the back of his wagon for emergencies. He's a terrible shot himself, but he'll loan the weapon to the PCs should they need it.

Snowball Fight

A half-dozen youths burst from their hiding spot behind a snow bank and pelt the party with snowballs. You can play out the attack as a normal "combat" or simply call for each PC caught in the crossfire to attempt a DC 10 Acrobatics or Athletics check (player's choice). If at least half of the PCs succeed, they recover from the ambush and turn the tables on the children.

A half-elf girl named Maelona Craddock leads the attack. Maelona is a rebellious spirit, but she takes a liking to the party if the PCs overcome her and her gang of troublemakers. Otherwise, she becomes a foil for the party for the remainder of the festival.

Gift Exchange

The residents of Widderspire once left gifts for Ember John, but now they give them to one another. Throughout the night, the PCs observe festival-goers exchanging packages trimmed with brightly-colored ribbons. PCs who have befriended someone in the village may receive one of these gifts. Party members

NPCs of Widderspire

More information about the village of Widderspire and its residents can be found in the *Runewild Campaign Setting*. If you choose, you can incorporate some of the NPCs presented in that book into this adventure.

- **Aldor Macson**, Widderspire's de facto mayor, makes a short speech welcoming everyone to the festival.
- Aldor's daughter-in-law, the notorious match-maker **Margaret Macson**, uses the festival as an excuse to help unattached PCs find love.
- **Hettie Price**, head of Widderspire's temple of St. Adso, disapproves of the Long, Dark Night. She believes the festival unduly celebrates Ember John, even in his defeat.
- Widderspire's resident taxidermist, **Goji Odd-arrow**, presents the party with a rare stuffed beast from his collection.
- The linguist **Ian Whitehall** greets the party in ancient Runish. He spends the remainder of the night pontificating about the festival's history.
- **Winn Weatherbee** pulls the party aside to sample his latest delivery of *wizard's weed*.

might also wish to exchange gifts with one another. The gifts are mostly small tokens of affection: a dozen sugar cookies, for example, or a pair of warm mittens. If you need ideas about the kinds of gifts the PCs might receive, choose or roll on the table below:

Roll	Gift
1	Basket filled with nuts and berries
2	Small bottle of liquor
3	Shiny silver coin
4	Hand-carved figurine
5	Scented candle
6	Leather-bound writing journal
7	An ill-fitting hat
8	Gaming set
9	Potted plant
10	A set of polished stones, each marked with a letter of the Common alphabet on one side and a matching Dwarven rune on the other
11	Snow globe with miniature replicas of the PCs inside
12	A live stoat

A well-to-do (and somewhat eccentric) woman named Wenda Moss ensures no one leaves the festival empty-handed. If the PCs have no one else with whom to exchange presents, they each receive one gift from the kindly widow.

A Kiss to Keep You Warm

In addition to the presents described in *Gift Exchange*, one of the PCs receives another gift: a sprig of mistletoe. At some point in the night, an attractive festival-goer delivers the gift. PCs who succeed at a DC 10 Society check understand they're now expected to give their admirer a quick peck on the cheek in return. If the PC fails to do so, their admirer's attitude toward the party turns cold until the PC makes amends.

Winter's Wrath

Once the PCs have had their fill of the festivities, read or paraphrase the following:

A sound like a whip crack splits the air. Startled villagers glance about in search of the sound's source, then all eyes turn in horror toward Widderspire Pond. An enormous crack has appeared across the surface of the ice, jagged as a bolt of lightning. A heartbeat later, the ice shatters completely, plunging several villagers into the frigid water.

Roughly the size and shape of a real-world skating rink, Widderspire Pond is 150 feet long and 60 feet across at its widest point. A 20-foot diameter hole now fills the center of the pond, exposing open water. The bonfire and cooking fires are all within 30 feet of the pond's shores.

PCs on the pond can attempt a DC 15 Reflex saving throw. On a success, they're able to move off the ice before it shatters. On a failure, they start the encounter in the water (see *Frigid Waters* below). Assume any PCs not on the ice when the encounter begins are arranged along the shoreline.

Once you've determined the PCs' starting positions, roll initiative. As the encounter begins, six festival-goers have fallen into pond. As other festival-goers rush to rescue their fellow villagers, Jack-o'-Frost and his minions burst from the open water and attack.

Slippery Ice

Despite the hole in its center, ice still covers most of Widderspire Pond. The ice is difficult terrain and uneven ground. The PCs are flat-footed while on uneven ground, and each time they are hit by an attack or fail a saving throw, they must succeed at a DC 15 Reflex saving throw or fall prone. A character wearing ice skates may ignore the effects of the ice, provided their Acrobatics check to skate (see *Ice Skating* above) is successful.

Except for where it has already broken through, the ice on Widderspire Pond is several inches thick and in no danger of breaking further. A PC who succeeds at a DC 15 Nature check confirms that some supernatural force caused the ice to shatter.

Frigid Waters

A character who starts their turn in the water must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or take 1d4 cold damage. A character who falls unconscious as a result of this damage slips beneath the water and begins to drown. As an action, a character within 5 feet of the ice can pull themselves out of the water with a successful DC 10 Athletics check.

NPCs in the water try to rescue themselves as best they can (assume the villagers have 8 Hit Points and a +0 bonus to all skill checks and saving throws). A PC within 5 feet of an NPC can haul them onto the ice by using an action to make a successful DC 10 Athletics check. A PC who critically fails this check tumbles into the water themselves.

The Winter Sprites

One round after the encounter begins, three **winter sprites** emerge from the depths of Widderspire Pond. **Jack-o'-Frost**, Ember John's former lieutenant, leads them. Treat Jack-o'-Frost as an **elite winter sprite** who wields the *staff of winter* (see **New Magic Items, page 11**). For the purposes of this adventure, assume Jack can use the *staff* to cast the *ray of frost* cantrip, but can't prepare the staff or cast any of its other spells.

The sprites seek vengeance against the residents of Widderspire. They strafe the panicked crowd, attempting to catch the maximum number of the villagers in their breath weapons. Jack-o'-Frost hovers above the chaos, targeting villagers at random with the *staff of winter*. As the villagers fall beneath Jack's icy blasts, be sure to describe how their bodies freeze solid, as this detail becomes important in the next section of the adventure, **Braving the Depths**.

The first round they arrive, the sprites focus their attacks on the villagers. They turn their attention to the PCs only once the party causes trouble for them. Though he hates all mortals, Jack-o'-Frost is cunning. He retreats into the water once the other sprites are killed or as soon as he takes any damage. The remaining two sprites fight to the death.

WINTER SPRITE

CREATURE 0

CE **SMALL** **COLD** **FEY** **SPRITE**

Perception +4, low-light vision

Languages Common, Sylvan

Skills Acrobatics +6, Stealth +6

Str -2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** -2, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +2

Luminous Chill (evocation, light, primal) A sprite naturally sheds light like a torch. The sprite can extinguish, rekindle, or change the color of this light using a single action, which has the concentrate trait. While this light is extinguished, the sprite's Strikes don't deal cold damage and they can't use their breath weapon.

AC 16; **Fort** +3, **Ref** +9, **Will** +5

HP 11; **Immunities** cold; **Weaknesses** cold iron 3, fire 3

Speed 10 feet, fly 40 feet

Melee **◆** claw +8 (agile, cold, finesse, magical), **Damage** 1d6-2 slashing plus 1 cold

Breath Weapon **◆◆** (cold, primal) The winter sprite exhales a blast of icy wind in a 15-foot cone that deals 2d6 cold damage to each creature within the area (DC 15 basic Reflex save). The winter sprite can't use Breath Weapon again for 1d4 rounds.

BRAVING THE DEPTHS

Once they defeat Jack and his minions, the PCs can take measure of the casualties. For every round the encounter lasted, assume 1d4 villagers were reduced to 0 Hit Points by the sprites' attacks. Of these, at least one has been frozen solid by the *staff of winter*. The PCs should recognize the frozen NPCs, having met them at the festival or previously in the campaign.

Frozen Villagers

A creature reduced to 0 Hit Points by the *staff of winter's* damage is stable but freezes solid (as the petrified condition, except the creature is also immune to cold and fire damage). Moving the villagers to a warmer location, or even applying fire directly to their bodies, does nothing to alter their condition. PCs who inspect the frozen villagers can attempt a DC 15 Medicine or Nature check. On a success, they confirm the villagers aren't dead but recognize that only powerful magic (such as a *remove curse* spell) can thaw them.

PCs who succeed at a DC 10 Society check recall that the warmth of Ember John's embers was said to banish even the coldest chill. The townsfolk share this story with the PCs if they don't know it already. Desperate to help their frozen brethren, the villagers implore the party to brave the depths of Widderspire Pond and retrieve John's *sack of embers*.

The PCs have no way of knowing it, but the frozen villagers aren't in immediate danger (they'll remain in their current state for years, or even centuries, to come). However, the party must move quickly if they wish to restore the villagers anytime soon, as the magical portal leading to Ember John opens only on the winter solstice. The portal closes unless the party reaches it by dawn (see **The Winter Portal, page 8**).



Exploring the Pond

To swim to the bottom of Widderspire Pond, each PC must make three successful DC 10 Athletics checks. Each time a PC fails one of these checks, they must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or take 1d4 cold damage. A character reduced to 0 Hit Points by this damage falls unconscious and begins to drown.

After the first successful Athletics check, the PCs spot a glowing light below them. After the second successful check, the PCs see that the light emanates from the mouth of submerged tunnel at the bottom of the lake. Assuming the party wishes to investigate the light, they can enter the tunnel and breach the surface of the pool in **The Ice Toad's Cave** after the third and final Athletics check.

The Ice Toad's Cave

After 15 feet or so, the submerged tunnel opens into an air-filled cavern. As the PCs pull themselves from the icy water, read or paraphrase the following:

You breach the surface of the water to find yourself in a yawning, air-filled cavern. Curtains of ice cover the cavern's walls, and icicles as long and sharp as greatswords line its ceiling. On the cavern's eastern side, you see the source of the strange light you spotted earlier: a vortex of snowflakes alight with an ethereal glow.

Frost-lined cave formations create a covered gallery to the north, which even the vortex's light fails to penetrate. As you pull yourself from the bone-chilling water, a croaking sound echoes from the gallery's dark recesses. Moments later, a toad the size of a horse hops from the gallery into the cavern. The toad's hide is dark blue and covered with spine-like growths of ice.

PCs who succeed at DC 15 Society check know Ember John is said to have ridden a sleigh pulled by an enormous toad. Kept alive by fey magic, the **giant ice toad** doesn't need food to survive, but it's hungry for a meal nonetheless. It attacks the party on sight and fights to the death.

The cave is roughly egg-shaped, 100 feet long and 40 feet wide at its center. The pool through which the PCs entered the cave takes up the western third of the space. The ice toad's gallery, a 15-foot-deep recess supported by pillars of ice and stone, spans the northern wall. The snowy vortex fills a 10-foot-wide niche on the cavern's eastern end.

Icicle Hazard

Loud noises (such as the thunderous force of a *sound burst* spell) cause the icicles on the ceiling to shatter. When the icicles shatter, each creature in the open part of the cavern takes 2d6 piercing damage (DC 15 basic Reflex save).

A creature can intentionally knock loose one of the icicles (AC 10, Hardness 2, HP 8, BT 4, cold and object immunities), causing it to fall into the space directly beneath it. A creature in a space where an icicle lands takes 2d8 piercing damage and must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or be knocked prone.

Creatures who take cover in the ice toad's gallery are safe from damage caused by falling icicles.

Treasure

If the PCs think to cut open the ice toad's corpse to search for treasure, they find a severed human arm inside its stomach. A PC swallowed by the toad might also discover the arm. Frozen solid and perfectly preserved, the arm once belonged to one of Lord Widderspire's knights, who lost the limb during the battle with Ember John. On one of the arm's frozen fingers is a *ring of cold resistance*.

Ember John's Sleigh

Characters who search the ice toad's gallery discover the remains of Ember John's sleigh embedded in the ice. The sleigh is broken beyond repair but contains two items of note: Ember John's *sack of embers* (see **New Magic Items**) and a dozen white-furred stoats.

Sack of Embers: Though it appears to be nothing but a simple leather satchel, Ember John's *sack of embers* radiates an aura of conjuration magic if subjected to a *detect magic* spell or similar effect. The *sack* is currently empty. A PC who inspects the sack and succeeds at a DC 20 Nature check to Identify Magic learns the *sack's* magical properties and recognizes that another creature (Ember John) is currently invested in the item. While Ember John lives, only he has the power to create the embers the PCs need to thaw the villagers of Widderspire.

Stoats: A dozen stoats with snow-white fur nest in the sleigh's interior. PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Society check recall that the stoats, like the ice toad and the winter sprites, accompanied Ember John on his annual visits to Widderspire. The stoats aren't aggressive, but they remain loyal to Ember John and attack (as a **rat swarm** sans filth fever) anyone who tries to steal his *sack of embers*.

A PC can attempt to befriend the stoats by making a DC 15 Nature check to Command an Animal. On a success, the stoats allow the PC to take the *sack of embers*. In addition, if any of the PCs are wounded, the stoats emerge from the sleigh to lick their wounds, magically restoring 2d8 + 5 Hit Points to each injured character. Once the stoats have healed the party, they can't do so again for the rest of the adventure.

Other than this bit of fey magic, the stoats are normal creatures. If a PC speaks with the stoats (via a *speak with animals* spell, for example), the animals relate the nature of the *sack's* magic, as well as the fact that Ember John remains trapped in the Fey Realm. If a PC has befriended the stoats, they offer to lead the party to John by helping them navigate the snowstorm in **The Winter Portal**.

GIANT ICE TOAD

CREATURE 3

N LARGE ANIMAL

Perception +6, darkvision

Languages Sylvan (can't speak any language)

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +10, Stealth +7

Str +5, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** -4, **Wis** +0, **Cha** +0

AC 17; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +4

HP 50; **Immunities** cold; **Weaknesses** fire 3

Speed 30 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +12 (deadly 1d10), **Damage** 1d8+5 piercing plus Grab

Leaping Charge ♦♦ The toad Strides twice and makes a jaws Strike. If the toad moved at least 20 feet away from its starting position, it gains a +2 circumstance bonus to this attack roll.

Swallow Whole ♦ (attack) Medium, 1d6+5 bludgeoning, Rupture 12

The Winter Portal

The snowy vortex in **The Ice Toad's Cave** is a magical portal to the Fey Realm. Characters who succeed at a DC 15 Nature check recognize the phenomenon. The vortex radiates conjuration magic if inspected with a *detect magic* spell or similar effect.

The PCs must travel through the portal to reach Ember John. When a creature touches the vortex, the portal activates for them, transporting them to the middle of a magical snowstorm in the Fey Realm. As soon as a PC activates the portal, read or paraphrase the following:

The Runewild and the Fey Realm?

The Runewild exists on the Material Plane, but as one explores the ancient forest, it's common to stumble across places where the walls between the realms of mortals and fey grow thin. **The Ice Toad's Cave** is just one of these places. For more information about the Runewild and its relationship to the Fey Realm, see the *Runewild Campaign Setting*.

You find yourself in the middle of a barren snowscape, empty except for the blizzard that rages around you. You spot no sign of your companions, nor of the cavern you left behind. Ahead of you, dark shapes fill the horizon—copses of trees perhaps, or simply places where the windswept snow has collected into dunes. The wintry tempest makes discerning any more detail about the shapes impossible.

Keep track of the order in which the PCs enter the portal, as this determines the order in which they arrive in the next scene, **Ember John's Glade**. The snowstorm has no boundaries or landmarks, and its magical nature ensures the PCs remain separated while within it. The gusting snow reduces visibility to a few feet.

To make their way through the snowstorm, each PC must spend at least one round wandering the snowscape. At the end of each of their turns, each PC can attempt a DC 15 Survival check. On a success, the PC finds their way to **Ember John's Glade**. On a failure, the PC takes 1d4 cold damage and must spend another turn wandering before they can attempt the check again. A creature reduced to 0 Hit Points by this cold damage becomes hopelessly lost within the storm and dies.

Though separated, PCs can help each other navigate the storm. The wind drowns out all but the loudest noises and makes lighting torches impossible, but magical light (such as that created by the *light* cantrip) can serve as a beacon. The players may propose other solutions to the problem, as well. A character who successfully assists the party grants their companions a +5 circumstance bonus to Survival checks made to navigate the storm.

Ember John's stoats (see **The Ice Toad's Cave**) sense their master's presence and can navigate the snowstorm with little trouble. PCs accompanied by the stoats pass through the blizzard in a single round, with no Survival check required.

Ember John's Glade

When the first PC successfully navigates **The Winter Portal**, read or paraphrase the following. The text assumes Jack-o'-Frost successfully retreated during **Winter's Wrath**. If the PCs defeated him, they find Ember John unguarded except for the arboreal warden that animates when they approach John's cage (see *Winter's Warden* below).

As the storm quiets, you reach the edge of a clearing lined with towering ever-green trees. A gibbet stands in the center of the clearing, its iron bars limned with frost. A wretched-looking man dressed in dirty furs huddles inside.

The strange creature that led the attack on Widder-spire hovers above the cage. In its claws, it clutches a staff made of solid ice. You're too far away to hear the creature's words, but it appears to be taunting the man inside the cage.

Having claimed Ember John's *staff of winter* for himself, Jack-o'-Frost now lords over his former master. Jack hasn't noticed the PC's arrival, but he spots them at the beginning of the next round unless the PC takes the Hide action and succeeds at a DC 14 Stealth check. As the rest of the party arrives, each PC must make a similar Stealth check or Jack spots them and attacks.

The glade is a shallow bowl 80 feet in diameter. Jack-o'-Frost begins the encounter in the center of the glade, flying 10 feet above the iron cage containing Ember John. The PCs arrive at the edge of the glade, but they can sneak as close as 20 feet to its center before the trees become too sparse to provide cover.

PCs who sneak within 20 feet of Jack-o'-Frost overhear the sprite as he taunts Ember John:

"Fool! You showed the mortals kindness, and this is how they repaid you? They deserve no mercy, no quarter from winter's wrath! Now that I hold your staff, I'll not make the same mistake. Soon, all mortals will tremble before me: Jack-o'-Frost, Lord of the Long, Dark Night!"

Jack-o'-Frost is mad with power and can't be reasoned with. If the party wishes to refill the *sack of embers*, they must either dispatch the sprite or reach Ember John and escape with the embers before Jack uses the *staff of winter* to turn them into frozen statues.

During the battle, Jack takes care to stay out of reach of melee attacks. Only if the PCs disarm him of the *staff of winter* does he swoop low enough to catch the characters in his breath weapon. He attacks with his claws only as a last resort. Unless the PCs find some way to subdue him, Jack-o'-Frost fights to the death, although he doesn't pursue PCs who flee the glade.

Winter's Warden

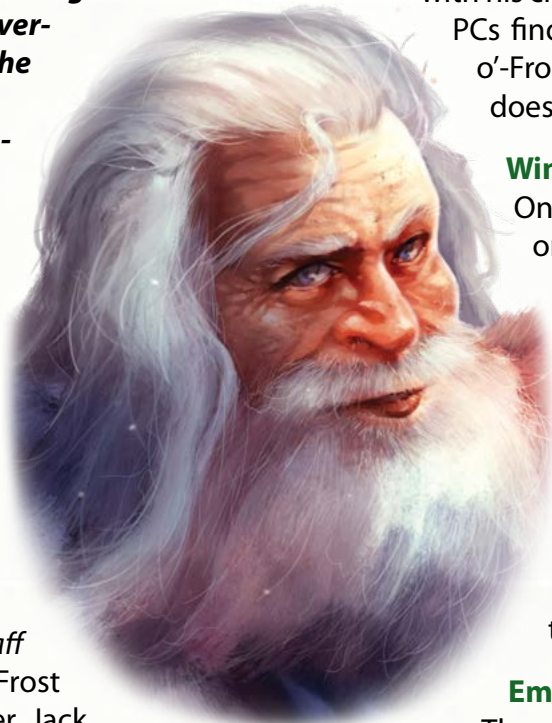
One round after Jack notices the PCs, or as soon another creature comes within 5 feet of Ember John's cage, the trees that surround the glade tremble as one of them up-roots itself. The magic of the Fey Realm itself animates the **arboreal warden**. The warden intervenes to prevent the PCs from freeing Ember John, but it returns to its inanimate state if the party flees the glade.

Ember John's Cage

The gibbet in which Lord Widder-spire imprisoned Ember John remains sturdy despite its age. The Council Arcane's enchantments secure the cage even further. A character can attempt to Pick the Lock of the cage using thieves' tools, but a sheen of magical ice covers the lock's mechanism. Before a character can pick the lock, the ice must be melted or chipped away (AC 10, Hardness 2, HP 8, BT 4, cold and object immunities). An ember from the *sack of embers* pressed against the lock melts the ice in a single round.

Once the ice is cleared, the PCs can pick the lock with a successful DC 15 Thievery check. Alternately, a character can Force Open the cage's door by succeeding at a DC 20 Athletics check.

The magical wards placed on the cage prevent Ember John from casting spells. A successful *dispel magic* spell (5th-level, DC 20) cast on the cage temporarily counteracts these wards, although doing so isn't necessary to free Ember John.



The Fate of Ember John

A creature as old as the forest itself, Ember John is a bizarre and inscrutable figure. Though he seems to understand any language he hears, John never speaks, countering all questions with an enigmatic smile. When treated with respect, John has the temperament of a well-behaved child. When not properly placated, his tantrums rival those of Jack-o'-Frost.

As is typical of the Runewild's fey inhabitants, Ember John's unpredictable nature makes him dangerous. PCs who tread carefully, however, might be able to secure John's aid. Ultimately, Ember John's fate lies in the hands of the PCs. Several possible outcomes of their encounter with John follow. The players may discover other ways to resolve the adventure, as well.

Releasing Ember John

PCs who free Ember John win his favor, at least for a time. If Jack-o'-Frost remains a threat, John fights alongside the characters until they defeat his traitorous minion. John then uses the *sack of embers* to conjure as many embers as the PCs need to help the villagers of Widderspire. As further thanks, he creates a magical portal the party can use to return to the Material Plane.

Abandoning Ember John

The bars of Ember John's cage are wide enough to pass small objects between them. If the PCs hand John the empty *sack of embers*, he refills it, hoping the party uses the embers to defeat Jack-o'-Frost and the arboreal warden. With the *sack* refilled, the PCs should have more than enough embers to cover their escape and thaw the frozen villagers on their return to Widderspire. If the PCs flee the glade without freeing Ember John, he remains trapped in the Fey Realm for the foreseeable future.

Betraying Ember John

Ember John is defenseless while he remains trapped inside the cage. Hard-hearted PCs may decide to kill Ember John rather than risk his return to the mortal realm. Once John is dead, a PC can invest in the *sack of embers* and create for themselves the embers they need to restore the villagers of Widderspire. Though ruthlessly efficient, this course of action isn't without its dangers. See **New Magic Items** for more information about the risks of investing in the *sack of embers*.

If you need stats for Ember John, treat him as an **elite changeling exile** with the following changes:

- His type is Fey. He understands all languages but can't speak (or chooses not to).
- His damage-dealing spells deal cold damage instead of whatever type they would normally deal.
- He has fast healing 5 and weakness 5 to cold iron and fire.

In addition to these changes, Ember John can cast the *gate* spell at will to create a magical portal between the Fey Realm and any location on the Material Plane. He doesn't require verbal components to do so. Other creatures can't pass through the portal unless John allows them to do so.

Returning to Widderspire

Once they've retrieved the embers they need, the PCs can return to Widderspire in one of two ways. First, they can backtrack the way they came. PCs who leave the bounds of Ember John's glade find themselves lost once again in **The Winter Portal**. By navigating the storm, they can return to **The Ice Toad's Cave** and from there swim to the surface of Widderspire Pond. Whether you require the PCs to make checks to find their way back to Widderspire, or simply handwave their return journey, is up to you.

Alternately, Ember John may create for the party a portal that opens directly onto the Material Plane. PCs who step through this portal arrive in a copse of trees not far from Widderspire Pond. Regardless of how long they've spent on their quest, the PCs find only a few hours have passed on their return.

Once the PCs return to Widderspire, they can use the embers to restore the frozen villagers. The villagers have 0 Hit Points when thawed out but are in no danger of dying. They regain consciousness after 1d4 hours, unaware of anything that occurred after Jack-o'-Frost's attack.

If the PCs restore the frozen villagers, Widderspire hails them as heroes. The villagers have no true wealth with which to reward the PCs, but in the following weeks they shower the party with free food and lodging, mundane equipment, and the like. The total value of these gifts equals 25 gp.

Widderspire's gratitude may not last, however. If the PCs freed Ember John, he visits the village the next winter solstice with a new gang of winter sprites under his command. Unless John finds the gifts left for him pleasing, he and his sprites wreak havoc in the village, just as they did in the days before Ember John's defeat.

If the party abandoned John in the Fey Realm, he may find another way to escape. Perhaps a witch or even more powerful creature comes to his aid. In this case, John doesn't wait until the winter solstice to seek revenge. The PCs may return to Widderspire to find the village buried in ice, even during the height of summer.

Finally, if the one of the PCs invested in the *sack of embers*, they may find the item more of a burden than a boon. Mechanically, the *sack* counts against the total number of magic items in which a character can invest, and getting rid of the *sack* once it's invested is a challenging proposition. The *sack of embers* also draws the attention of hags and other wicked fey. Why these creatures seek the last remnant of Ember John's power—and what lengths they'll go to get it—is for you to decide.

New Magic Items

All Through the Long, Dark Night presents two new magic items: Ember John's *sack of embers* and his *staff of winter*.

SACK OF EMBERS

ITEM 4

UNIQUE CONJURATION INVESTED MAGICAL

Price 75 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk 1

This simple leather satchel appears unremarkable, but once you've invested in the sack you can use it to create magical embers. Each ember sheds light and heat like a campfire but doesn't burn creatures who handle it. Creatures holding an ember gain resistance 5 to cold damage and can hurl the ember, causing it to detonate upon impact. A creature does not need to be invested in the sack to gain the benefits of an ember. An ember removed from the *sack* burns out in a fiery flash once it is thrown or after 6 hours.

Fey magic binds the *sack of embers* to its owner. Once you invest in the sack, you remain invested in it regardless of your distance from it. Only your death or powerful magic (such as a *wish* spell) can end the investment. The sack counts against your daily limit of items in which you can invest.

Activate ♦ Interact; **Effect** You cause the sack to fill with up to 13 magical embers.

Activate ♦ Interact (ranged); **Effect** You hurl an ember you hold at a target within 20 feet. The target takes 2d6 fire damage (DC 15 basic Reflex saving throw).

STAFF OF WINTER

ITEM 8

UNIQUE EVOCATION MAGICAL STAFF

Price 6,500 gp

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk 1

The *staff of winter* is carved from a single shaft of ice. The ice is cool to the touch but never melts. When used as a weapon, the *staff of winter* is a +1 *frost staff*.

If damage from the staff or a spell cast from it reduces a creature to 0 Hit Points, the creature is stable but freezes solid (as the petrified condition, except the creature is also immune to cold and fire damage). A *remove curse* spell or similar magic restores the creature to its original form. The creature also thaws if an ember from the *sack of embers* (see above) is brought within 5 feet of it.

Activate Cast a Spell; **Effect** You expend a number of charges from the staff to cast a spell from its list.

- **Cantrip** *ray of frost*
- **1st** *gust of wind*
- **2nd** *obscuring mist*, *resist energy* (cold or fire only)
- **3rd** *fireball* (deals cold damage), *wall of wind*

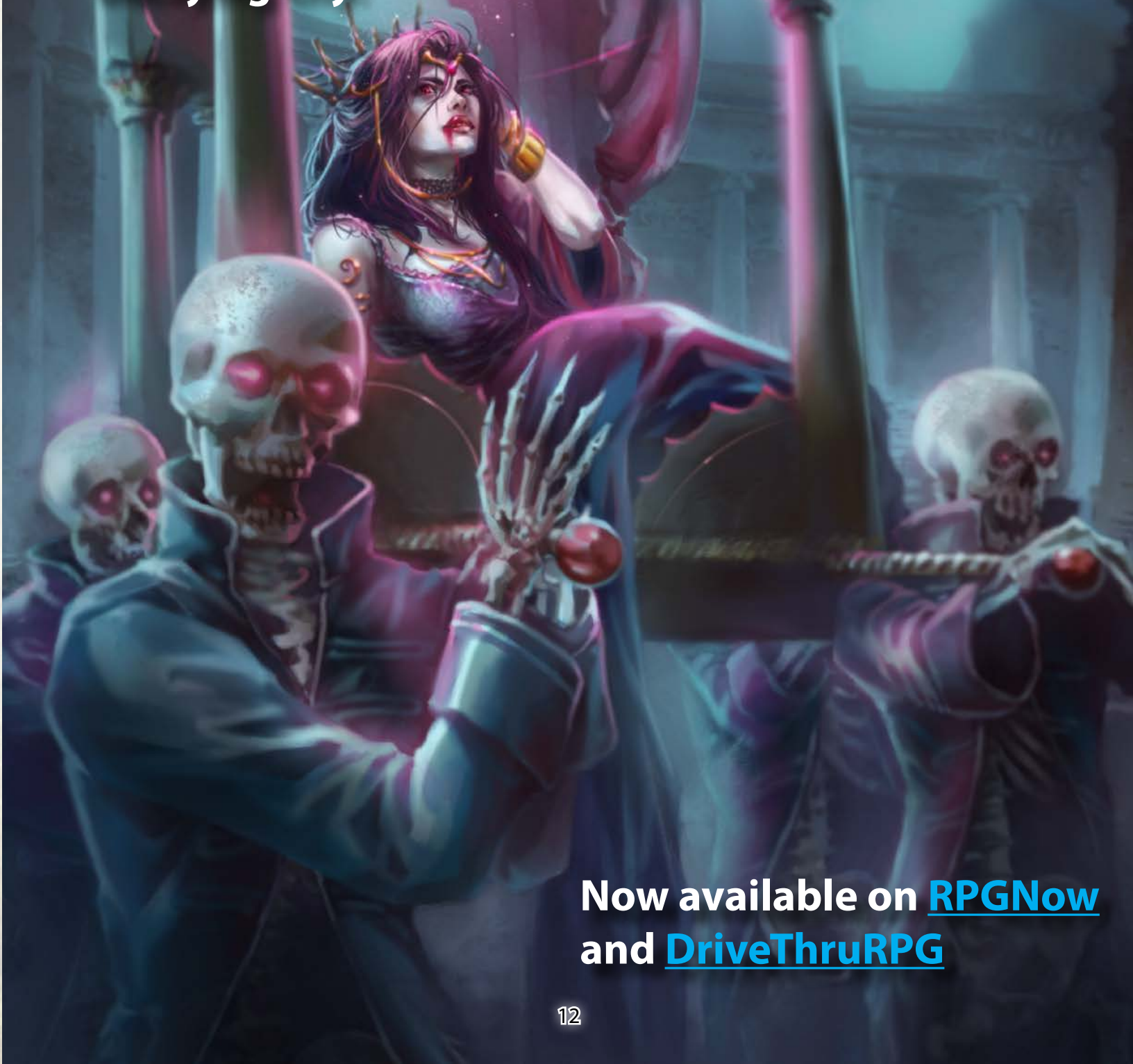
Craft Requirements Supply one casting of all listed levels of all listed spells.



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