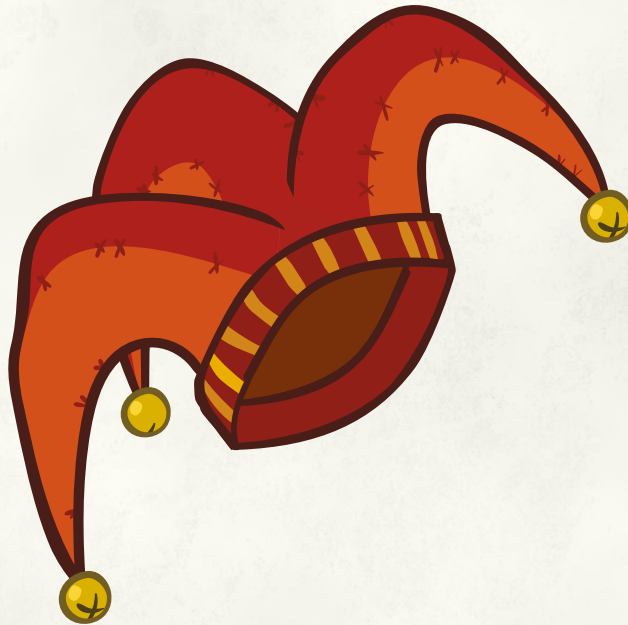


A FOOL'S ERRAND

An Adventure for Characters of 8th to 10th Level



In the mountain village of Hornfirth, it's time to look forward to enjoying a night of mirth and celebration at the Festival of Fools. But when a local frost giant becomes enraged at a practical joke gone bad, it's up to the characters to set things right.



Welcome to *A Fool's Errand*—an adventure that you can now play in either [Idle Champions of the Forgotten Realms](#), or in a game of Dungeons & Dragons with your friends! In this tabletop version of *A Fool's Errand*, the characters must intervene when a group of village jokers plan to pull a grand jape on a local frost giant not known for his sense of humor. Can the characters stop the misguided pranksters in time? Or will they need to step up their own comedy game to prevent a deadly misunderstanding?

Each of the combat encounters in this adventure is balanced for five characters of 8th level, and offers suggestions for adjusting it for a 9th-level or 10th-level party.

As a point of convenience for running the adventure, it'll be useful to make sure the characters don't have access to the *teleport spell* or high-speed flying magic capable of moving the entire party.

BACKGROUND

Across the Sword Coast, the Festival of Fools is celebrated as a day of feasting, drinking, and general foolishness. Commemorating the transition from dark winter to brighter spring, folk don brightly colored and garishly patterned clothing and dance in the streets like court jesters, each competing with their friends and neighbors to see who can pull off the most foolish pranks. Those jests and japes are always harmless, of course.

Most of the time.

HORNFIRTH

The village of Hornfirth is a small rural settlement nestled in an area of mountains, and can be fleshed out for your Forgotten Realms campaign or your own campaign world. You can easily set this adventure in any existing village or small town, as long as there's a place nearby where a retired frost giant scout and sage would lair. (If you set the adventure in southerly climes, you can easily establish that the frosty interiors of the giant's caverns are kept cold by ancient magic, making that the reason he chose the site as his home.)

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins with the characters caught up in the Festival of Fools' celebrations in Hornfirth, but it's up to you to determine what's brought them here. You can use any of the following hooks to get the characters into the adventure, or as inspiration for hooks of your own.

Local Connections. One or more characters might have connections to Hornfirth through friends or family living in the local area. If serious business brought them here, the madcap antics of villagers caught up in the Festival of Fools celebrations might provide an ironic juxtaposition to that business.

Giant Lore. The frost giant Wreldor who becomes an inadvertent threat to Hornfirth is a retired scout and sage from the Spine of the World mountains, and a potential source of information to characters seeking giant legends or hard-to-come-by lore of the northlands. Coming to Hornfirth as a first step to seeking out Wreldor's retirement lair, the characters

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Our dedicated alpha and beta testers

Our friends and families!

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find themselves with an additional reason to seek the giant out.

Just Passing Through. The characters arrive in Hornfirth while passing through the local area between adventures, or even in the middle of a longer adventure. Seeing the Festival of Fools' celebrations well underway, they might be inspired to join in—or to try in vain to avoid being dragged into forced merriment.

JOKING IN THE STREETS

This first part of the adventure introduces the characters to Hornfirth and the Festival of Fools—and sees them quickly overwhelmed by the local merrymaking. Depending on which adventure hook you use, this scene might come immediately upon the characters' arrival in the village, or after they've made inquiries about other business. Alternatively, you might have the characters' attempts to seek out information or make contact with specific NPCs play out alongside the events of this section, as the mirth of local jokers makes those tasks more difficult than expected.

When you're ready to bring the characters into the festivities, read the following to set the scene:

The nighttime mood in Hornfirth is one of mirth, friendly mockery, gluttony, off-key singing, and drunkenness—not necessarily in that order. Every person in the village is seemingly gathered along its main streets, many wearing outrageous clothing of garish patterns and colors never meant to be matched up in nature. Shops and houses have their doors flung wide for folk to share homemade drinks, sweets, and snacks. Raucous laughter rises from everywhere at once, but trying to push through the hooting crowd is like navigating an obstacle course. The Festival of Fools is in full swing!

GETTING THROUGH

Whether the characters are interested in joining the celebrations or in getting away from them, they face the same challenge of trying to get through the crowd. This part of the adventure plays out in stages, and allows the characters to make ability checks to counter and defend against encounters with elements of the exuberant throng. You can set up these encounters with group checks if the characters stay together, or as individual checks if they split up. If you favor group checks, you'll likely want to run fewer encounters overall.

The first time a character fails an ability check as they navigate the crowd, they gain a d4. Each subsequent time they fail a check, the die increases in size, to a maximum d12. This die is carried over as a penalty into the combat encounter in the next section. (If you are using group checks, all characters gain the d4 on the first failed group check, and it increases in size on each subsequent failed group check.)

You can roll for random encounters on the Foolish Encounters table, or choose interactions you think will be the most fun for the players.

FOOLISH ENCOUNTERS

d6	Interaction
1	Ale juggling
2	Best pies
3	Crowd crush
4	Drinks for everyone
5	Hungry dogs
6	Young pickpockets

ALE JUGGLING

Three villagers in the crowd are frenetically juggling full mugs of ale, creating a veritable alcoholic monsoon. With a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, a character slips past safely. On a failed check, the character and their gear are doused in sticky dark ale.

BEST PIES

A burly street vendor named Janis approaches the characters, exuberantly shouting, "Best pies! Get them here!", and bearing a tray displaying savory pies whose quality looks dubious at best. Any character who pays 1 sp for a pie is able to get away from Janis, who crowds the characters in the hope of making sales. A character must otherwise succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Charisma (Deception) check to disengage from the pie merchant. On a failed check, Janis loudly denounces the characters' insult to their wares, drawing disapproving looks from all bystanders.

NO REST FOR THE WEARY

This adventure features a breakneck pace that affords the characters no opportunity for rest. If the players seem keen to expend too many resources during the initial interactions and the upcoming combat in Hornfirth, feel free to tune those encounters down even further. Likewise, you can have the villagers offer up healing magic or *potions of healing* to characters who burn through a lot of hit points early, or who don't have sufficient healing resources going into the final fight.

CROWD CRUSH

When two groups of revelers crash together, the characters are caught in the middle. A character must succeed on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to shoulder through or twist away from the crowd. On a failed check, a character's feet are trodden upon before they can get away.

DRINKS FOR EVERYONE

The characters are forced by the crowd into an open beer garden, where the locals cry out a welcome—and someone announces that it's customary for newcomers to buy a full round for the house! Dropping 25 gp at the bar allows all the characters to continue on with the villagers' gratitude, as does a successful DC 14 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check made to beg off. Otherwise, the characters receive a chorus of boos and a hail of half-eaten bar snacks as they depart.

HUNGRY DOGS

As the characters push through the crowd, a pack of local dogs comes looking for a handout. As the dogs get underfoot, a character must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Wisdom (Perception) check to get through them safely. If any character has food to give to the dogs, all characters have advantage on the check. On a failed check, a character trips and stumbles, twisting their ankle or straining their back.

YOUNG PICKPOCKETS

A passel of young children slipping through the crowd decide to lighten the characters of loose change or mundane gear. A character easily notices the children's attempt at thievery, whereupon the youngsters panic and start to wail in fear. It takes a successful DC 12 Charisma

(Persuasion) check to calm them down and send them on their way. On a failed check (or if any character tries to intimidate or threaten the children), a group of adults quickly scoops them up, glaring at the characters as they go.

WE'RE NOT LAUGHING AT YOU...

Alternating with the interactions above, the characters find themselves the targets of jests and practical jokes by the villagers. The jokes are mostly harmless, albeit potentially annoying, and inspire hilarious laughter from all nearby folk. As they engage with the practical jokers, characters who recognize the locals' pursuit of harmless fun have the opportunity to play jokes of their own in response (see "Joke's On You!" below).

You can roll for random practical jokes on the Everyone's a Joker table, or choose interactions you think will be the most fun for the players.

EVERYONE'S A JOKER

d6	Joke
1	Clockwork handshake
2	Hotfoot
3	Illusory makeover
4	Mimic switch
5	Slippery steps
6	Sticky wicket

CLOCKWORK HANDSHAKE

An exuberant villager steps forward to shake a character's hand—whereupon their own hand comes off at the wrist. The villager laughs hysterically as a rudimentary clockwork hand crawls around on the character for a while, then jumps back to its owner.

HOTFOOT

While the characters are momentarily caught in a crowd, a villager drops down low to attach an alchemical igniter to the back of one character's shoe or boot. When the



igniter goes off, the character's foot bursts into flame, though the fire goes out quickly.

ILLUSORY MAKEOVER

A character suddenly finds themselves undergoing a hilarious change of clothes, hairstyle, hair color, or other physical features, courtesy of a passing illusionist.

MIMIC SWITCH

A villager approaches a character and hands over a piece of their gear (a sword and scabbard, a holy symbol, or something else clearly recognizable) asking if they've dropped it. If the character checks, they haven't lost that particular item—and the duplicate suddenly comes to life and starts dancing in the character's hand. The duplicate is actually a tiny harmless mimic trained by the villager, and scurries back to its master as soon as its dance is done.

SLIPPERY STEPS

A villager apologizes as they spill a mug of steaming tea on a character's shoes or boots. The mug actually holds a slippery oil, which causes the character to skitter and slip around to the delight of the surrounding crowd.

STICKY WICKET

A villager moves past a character, flinging a cloud of sparkling dust into the air around them. The dust is a short-term alchemical sealant that immediately causes a number of nearby people to become stuck to the

LAUGH TILL IT HURTS

The practical jokes played on the characters are designed to be benign, both in the interest of not wanting to invite a combat throw-down with the folk of Hornfirth, and because the characters have no time to take any rests during this short adventure. That said, if the characters are heavy on healing and other magical resources—and if you think you can do so without them starting a brawl—you can give the practical jokes a little more oomph.

Most of the adult villagers at the festival have been enjoying a drink or two (or more) since the celebration began. As such, more than a few of them are quite certain that their really bad joke ideas are really good joke ideas (including the main adventure setup in "Following Fools," below). Others have nothing but good intentions, but their clouded judgment might lead to a joke doing unintentional harm.

Each time a practical joke is played on a character, you can add an effect appropriate to the joke to spice things up:

- Someone or something rifles through the character's pockets or pack, stealing 2d10 gp or a nonmagical item.
- Getting up close with a joker or caught in a crowd sees the character take an elbow to a sensitive area for 1d6 bludgeoning damage.
- A character gets the wind knocked out of them and gains one level of exhaustion. This exhaustion goes away at the end of the "Riot Place, Wrong Time" section.
- A villager mistakes the character for an old rival and 'accidentally' trips them into an obstacle for 1d8 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage.
- A joke that involves potentially dangerous materials deals 1d10 damage of an appropriate type (fire damage for hot food or drinks; poison damage for glue, oil, or potent alcohol; and so forth).

character. All stuck characters can break free of each other as an action.

JOKE'S ON YOU!

The characters can respond to the practical jokes played on them by the villagers in any way the players see fit. If they attempt to play practical jokes on the villagers in return, roleplay the encounters and let the characters make DC 12 ability checks to pull off the most challenging aspect of a prank. Assuming the jokes are well intended, the villagers respond in a friendly fashion. A character who successfully responds to a villager's joke decreases the value of the die they've been given by a failed check in any of the earlier encounters, to a minimum d4.

The characters are equally free to threaten or thrash one or more villagers to make the point that they're not keen on getting caught up in the festivities. However, the party will have a harder time in the next section as a result.

NO LAUGHING MATTER

When you and the players have had enough interactions with the feverishly celebrating locals, the characters push through the main crowd to a slightly less packed side street. Unfortunately, the celebration in Hornfirth is about to get dangerous.

RIOT PLACE, WRONG TIME

As the characters clear the thickest part of the crowd of celebrating villagers, a cry of alarm alerts them to trouble. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

From down the side street, a voice shouts out a warning. "Watch out! He's summoning fiends!" Though it sounds like a joke consistent with the general mood of the Festival of Fools, the response is cries of fear, not laughter.

The characters can draw closer to investigate, or you can have the panicked crowd and the source of the disturbance move toward them.

A clearly inebriated figure in wine-stained robes is fighting to stand upright—even as a spined devil standing before him leers as it stalks toward villagers fleeing from the area at speed. "Hold, strangers!" the figure shouts out in drunken glee, as he pulls out a scroll from an inside pocket. "For I am Blalaster Hackcloak... Alastair Blackoak... Harbalaster... I am the Mad Mage of Undermountain, and I demand you laugh! Ooh, this is a good one!"

As the celebrating villagers flee and the characters watch, the inebriated figure (a mage named Eldon) casts from the scroll and a second spined devil appears. Roll for initiative.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any town square or village streets map for this fight.

FIENDISH FIGHT

The two **spined devils** are spoiling for trouble, and are happy to focus on the characters if that seems the easiest way for you to run this battle. Alternatively, for more roleplaying opportunities, you can have the devils lay into villagers trying to defend their shops and homes until the characters draw their attention. A villager attacked twice by a devil is reduced to 0 hit points, but can be easily stabilized by a character or by other villagers.

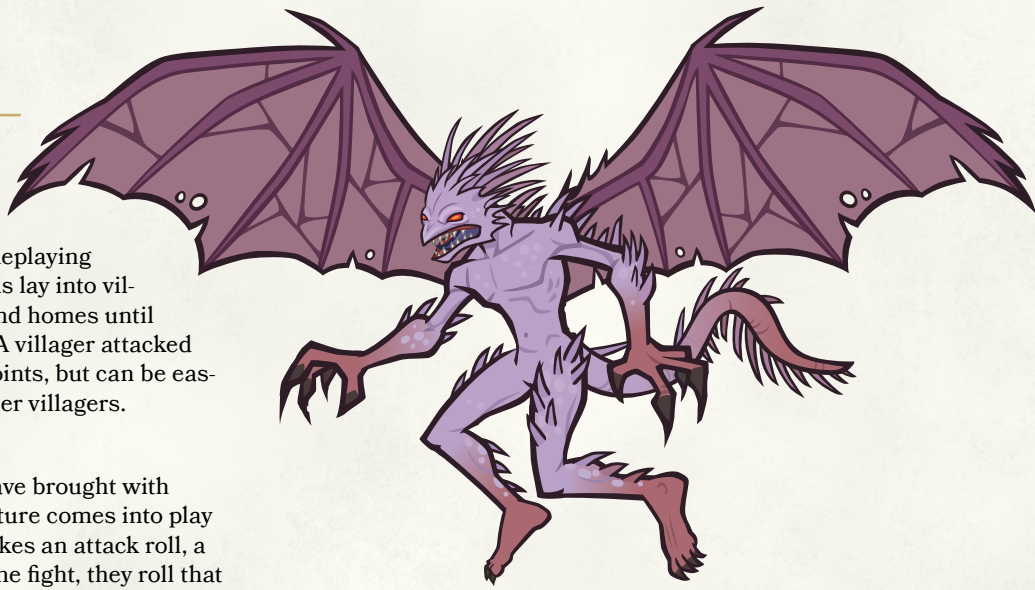
TOUGH LUCK

The die that each character might have brought with them from the first part of the adventure comes into play now. The first time the character makes an attack roll, a saving throw, or an ability check in the fight, they roll that die and subtract it from their d20 roll. This penalty might accrue from a physical effect incurred in the last section (clothing or armor sticky with ale, sore or slippery feet, and so forth). Or it might result from sullen villagers using the characters as humanoid shields as they flee past them (if the characters earned the ire of the villagers in “Joking in the Streets”).

Additionally, if any character resorted to threats or violence in the previous section, they are recognized by inebriated villagers, who forgo defending themselves against the devils to teach the characters a lesson. In addition to the devils and the additional threats below, the party is attacked by one **berserker** per character, who use their Reckless trait each round. Each berserk villager attacks with their fists, using the statistics for their great-axe attack but dealing bludgeoning damage. These locals are not gluttons for punishment, however, and flee when reduced to 20 hit points.

JOY RIDING

Before summoning the first spined devil, Eldon the mage summoned a **nightmare** that quickly fled the immediate area. A number of villagers are presently so inebriated that they’re attempting to ride the creature, which reappears at the start of the second round of combat.



A fiendish nightmare comes bolting around the corner of the next street—and has a half-dozen extremely intoxicated villagers running alongside it and laughing as they attempt to jump on. The nightmare rears up, its flaming hooves ready to strike. If these drunken fools aren’t stopped, this fiend will tear them apart!

Any attacks on the nightmare direct the creature’s attention toward the characters, but it takes a successful DC 16 Charisma (Intimidate) check to clear the would-be riders out. If the riders don’t flee, attacks against the nightmare have disadvantage as the characters are forced to fight through the cover of the drunken crowd. If the characters ignore the nightmare, the fiend drops one villager to 0 hit points every two rounds.

The nightmare uses its Ethereal Stride action to leave the fight if reduced to 20 hit points or fewer.

MAGE OUT

Eldon the inebriated **mage** doesn’t attack the characters, but can cause a bit more trouble if they don’t deal with him. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) check or dealing 1 or more damage to the almost-comatose mage causes him to faint dead away. If this doesn’t happen in the first two rounds of combat, Eldon pulls another scroll from his pocket and summons four **quasits** to the fight at the start of round 3, then passes out. If you have villagers fighting alongside the characters, you can have additional quasits summoned to keep them busy at the edge of the fray.

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, use five quasits for this encounter. For a party of 10th-level characters, use five quasits and three spined devils.

TREASURE

Eldon’s definitely-not-by-the-rules summoning scrolls have conveniently been depleted by the end of the fight. However, characters who do a quick search of the mage discover a *spell scroll* of *haste* in the pocket of his robes that they should feel no guilt about liberating.

THANKS AND GRATITUDE

When the fiends are destroyed or have fled, the now-extremely-sober villagers tend to the wounded, with the characters helping if they so desire. The mage is identified as Eldon Woganfasen—an otherwise harmless wandering wizard passing through Hornfirth on his way to a nearby city. He presents no threat once he sleeps off his inebriation, but cannot be woken to provide any assistance to the characters if they think to seek it from him.

Word of how the characters stepped up to defend the village quickly spreads, and the joyful mood of the Festival of Fools starts to ramp back up. But before the celebrations can continue, an even more dangerous threat comes to light.

FOLLOWING FOOLS

Even before the adrenaline of the fiend fight wears off, another shout of alarm catches the characters' attention.

Over the hubbub of villagers cheering their victory and assisting those wounded in the fighting, a clear voice cries out. "Oh, my stars! I can't believe he's gone and done it! Where are the guards? Oh, some stout folk, please help me!"

The source of the voice is a young villager named Heiley, who is quite distraught. She can be calmed down with suitable roleplaying or a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check, whereupon she frantically reveals the following:

- Heiley's husband is Beirn, who she describes as "a fine, hard-working sort most of the year, but the worst of all fools on this night."
- Each year, Beirn obsesses over performing an outsized prank during the Festival of Fools that will have all the village talking about him. His previous efforts have included such jests as swapping all the furniture in his neighbors' houses, training his and Heiley's flock of chickens to square dance, and filling in the village well with several hundred pounds of gelatin. (It took the locals a full day to dig the well out again, but what a laugh they had!)
- Heiley hasn't seen Beirn all night, but a rambling note she just found at home suggests that he's headed out of the village with a gang of drunken friends to undertake his prank—and that all Hornfirth will be in danger if he succeeds.
- Beirn has decided to sneak into the lair of Wreldor, a frost giant scout and sage retired to a cavern complex just north of the village, and play some unknown ultimate joke on him.
- Wreldor is a good neighbor to the folk of Hornfirth, but the taciturn giant is known to have a quick temper.
- Everyone in the village knows the tale of an unfortunate gang of ogre bandits who tried to raid Wreldor's caves a few years back. Even though Wreldor kept some of them around to happily work as servants

A LITTLE HELP HERE

If the characters think to ask for a guide from the village, any local scouts and warriors are either too inebriated to be of assistance, or elect to stay behind to help shore up Hornfirth's defenses in case the characters fail in their mission. However, the party can be accompanied by four young people—Abby, Skylar, Elaina, and Kordal—who regularly make deliveries to Wreldor's cave. All are in a less-than-perfect state of clarity as a result of earlier celebrations, but their presence gives the characters advantage on the first group check as they travel.

The four guides flee back to the village the first time the characters trigger an encounter, or when the entrance to the giant's lair comes into view.

after he was done thrashing them, loggers from the village working the forested slopes north of Hornfirth still report finding pieces of the rest of the gang from time to time.

When the folk of the village hear Heiley's story, all are equally horrified. A few people who delivered supplies to Wreldor in the previous week say that his ogre servants (Taunka, Troy, and Tad) reported him in a particularly bad mood. Fueled by their foolish celebrations, the folk of Hornfirth become absolutely convinced that if Beirn succeeds at his prank, an infuriated Wreldor will descend upon them—and they beg the characters to catch up to the gang of jokers before it's too late.

MOUNTAIN TRACKING TREK

This section of the adventure sees the characters head out of the village and up the mountainside in the dead of night, pursuing Beirn and his friends up the hard-to-see trail to Wreldor's lair. Where the trail leaves the village, any Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check easily notes tracks where a half-dozen humanoids headed out within the last hour. If the check result is 15 or higher, a character notes from the erratic course of the tracks that all those who made them are thoroughly drunk. However, when the trail crosses over into rocky forested slopes, safely following it becomes more of a challenge.

As the characters seek out Wreldor's lair, ask for three DC 15 group Wisdom (Perception or Survival) checks. On any failed check, the characters go off course and stumble into a quick encounter. You can roll randomly on the Forest Trail Encounters table, or choose encounters based on what seems the best fit. (You can also play one or more of the encounters just for fun even if the characters ace the group checks.)

Track the number of successes and failures in the group checks, which has an effect on the next encounter.

FOREST TRAIL ENCOUNTERS

d4	Encounter
1	Famished shambler
2	Ghostly ogre
3	Outraged owlbeats
4	Wolf pack guides



FAMISHED SHAMBLER

Accidentally slipping off the trail brings the characters into a boggy area that is the territory of a hungry **shambling mound**. Have each character make a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check. Any character who fails the check is surprised when the shambling mound attacks. The creature fights until reduced to 30 hit points, then takes the Dash action to attempt to flee.

GHOSTLY OGRE

The characters go off course and stumble into a strange mound of vines. Any investigation reveals that the vines have arrayed themselves around the spine and ribcage of some sort of giant—whereupon the spectral figure of an ogre rises up from the ground. The ghostly apparition is no threat to the characters, and simply goes through the motions of repeating its last moments of life—sneeringly challenging a frost giant to a duel, then looking quite surprised as its limbs, head, and body suddenly split off in separate directions. The apparition then dissolves to a fine mist.

Even as a spectral image, the ogre's demise is a gruesome sight. Each character who watches must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become slightly nauseated, imposing disadvantage on the next ability check they make in the trek. (If this is the last encounter while traveling up the mountain, give the character disadvantage on the first attack roll or saving throw they make in the fight in the next section.)

OUTRAGED OWLBears

Have each character make a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check as they come crashing into a small grove that is the den of a pair of slumbering **owlbears**. Both creatures respond with indignation to being awoken, and make initial attacks against the characters before quickly running off. Any character who failed the initial check is disoriented by the darkness and the close-growing trees, giving one owlbear advantage on an attack roll against that character.

WOLF PACK GUIDES

The characters catch sight of six **wolves** led by a **dire wolf**, out on the hunt by night and drawn to the sound of the characters' approach. The wolves are savvy enough to not attack a well-armed party, and they scatter in response to any threat or show of force. However, any character capable of magical communication with the wolves, or who offers food to the dire wolf and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check, can ask about the way to the giant's lair and receive an escort along the next section of trail. This grants all characters advantage on the next group check to reach the lair. (If this is the last encounter while traveling up the mountain, give each

character advantage on the first group check made to navigate Wreldor's lair in the next section.)

HUMOR IS EVERYWHERE

After each of the group checks to follow the trail (and either before or after a triggered encounter, as you determine), the characters also stumble across some sort of physical gag or practical joke left behind by Beirn and his friends as they staggered up the mountain. You can roll for a random joke on the Abandoned Jokes table, or choose gags based for their entertainment value or their potential usefulness if repurposed for fighting (see the entry for each gag for details).

ABANDONED JOKES

d4	Joke
1	Boot trap
2	Sneeze breeze
3	Trip snare
4	Whoopee cushion

BOOT TRAP

What appears to be a mundane puddle of mud along the trail is actually a patch of industrial-strength contact cement. When a random character steps into the mud, their footwear sticks fast and causes them to become restrained. Extricating a character's footwear from the mud requires a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check. If the check is 13 to 17, a character can decide instead to extricate themselves from the trap but leave their footwear behind.

With 1 minute's work, a character can collect enough of the super-sticky mud to fill a bottle or waterskin. The mud can be subsequently poured out to recreate the trap, leaving the bottle or waterskin ruined.

SNEEZE BREEZE

Dust scattered onto trees alongside the trail wafts into the air when disturbed by any breeze or the movement of passing creatures. The dust rises to fill an area 10 feet on a side. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity or Constitution saving throw to carefully brush off the dust or overcome its effects. On a failed save, a creature starts sneezing uncontrollably, imposing disadvantage on its attack rolls and granting advantage on saving throws against its spells and features. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. A creature that saves becomes immune to the effect of the dust for 24 hours.

With 1 minute's work, a character immune to the dust can collect enough of it to fill a small sachet. As an action, the sachet can be thrown to strike any creature within 20

feet of the thrower, forcing the creature to make saving throws as noted above.

TRIP SNARE

A random character must make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, spotting a loop of rope cast across the trail on a success. On a failure, the character steps onto the spring-coiled rope, which wraps around their feet to reduce their speed by 10 feet until the snare is removed as an action.

As an action, a character can reset the trip snare and conceal it on the ground with a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. A creature whose passive Wisdom (Perception) score is less than the check result steps on it and is slowed as above. If the check result exceeds the creature's passive Wisdom (Perception) score by 10 or more, the snare instead causes the creature to become restrained until the snare is removed.

WHOOPEE CUSHION

A random character must make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. With a success, they spot a suspicious-looking object on the trail and can investigate. On a failure, they discover what the object is by treading on it. Crafted from an inflated pig's bladder, this classic gag emits a loud, embarrassing sound when compressed. At your determination, you can decide that a character stepping on the whoopee cushion makes enough noise to automatically trigger one of the creature encounters above.

A character can deploy the whoopee cushion in a combat scenario by concealing it under leaves, dirt, canvas, and so forth with a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. A creature whose passive Wisdom (Perception) score is less than the check steps on it during the fight and is distracted by the noise, granting advantage on attack rolls made against the creature until the start of its next turn.

ARRIVAL

When the characters have made the last group ability check to follow the trail, they reach the entrance to Wreldor's lair—and learn what happened to Beirn and his friends.

COOL WELCOME

At the edge of a broad stand of trees, the steep slope the characters have been climbing is interrupted by a tunnel opening. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene:

The slope turns rockier where the forest thins, and a great wedge of gray stone thrusts up and out of the ground before you. Beneath this overhanging awning, the dark mouth of a cavern tunnel opens up, some twenty feet high. Beside the tunnel, a large sign has been bolted into the rock, carefully painted in Common:

Home of Wreldor, Sage.

Research Inquiries Welcome, This Entrance Only.

All Others Go Away.

FLEEING FOOL

Even as the characters ponder their best approach to the tunnel or think about scouting around, frantic foot-steps sound out from within. A disheveled human races out of the shadows, their clothes rent and covered in an icy rime. The figure yells out in fear as they run for the treeline—then yells even louder when they see the characters.

This is Lharam, one of the friends of Beirn who accompanied him up the mountain. A **commoner**, she has 1 hit point remaining and is in a profound state of panic. Having been thoroughly trounced by the servants of the frost giant (see below), Lharam assumes that a well-armed party of strangers lurking in the trees are going to finish her off, and she starts running in agitated circles. You can let the characters call out and calm her with roleplaying, or dial down her anxiety with a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Any Charisma (Intimidation) check or attempt to grab Lharam sees her run head first into a tree and knock herself out, but she can be easily revived.

Once the characters get Lharam calmed down, she can reveal the following:

- Beirn and eight friends came up the mountain, intent on playing a practical joke on Wreldor. The giant is always so dour. It seemed like a great idea at the time.
- Something went very wrong, and Wreldor became enraged. His ogre and frost mephit servants attacked the band of fools, and Lharam barely escaped with her life.
- The others are still in the caves, and she has no idea as to their fate.

Lharam is so shaken that she can do little more than beg the characters to go after her friends. (The characters learn more about what Beirn was planning later in this section.) She tells them she saw no guards or other creatures in the tunnel as she fled, and that none of the frost giant's ogre or mephit servants followed her. Though injured, Lharam can be safely left behind in the woods if any character loans her a cloak to keep warm.

TUNNEL TROUBLE

Any observation of the tunnel mouth confirms that there are no creatures around, giving the characters free entry to the giant's lair. (The sign at the door might suggest correctly to the characters that the lair has other entrances. A wider scout around reveals a number of smaller tunnel mouths farther along the slope. Whichever tunnel the characters enter serves as their route to the center of the lair.)

As the characters enter the dark tunnel, they feel the temperature quickly drop to a wintry cold. The effect is not dangerous, and is either a natural phenomenon if the lair is in a cool environment, or a magical effect if the lair is in warm lands. There is no light in the tunnels until the characters reach the central lair.

Within the first hundred feet from the entrance, the characters see the tunnel fork, then fork again. It's clear that Wreldor's lair is a network of passages that the characters must successfully navigate to discover the whereabouts of the frost giant, Beirn, and Beirn's crew.

WATCHING AND LISTENING

To navigate the tunnels, the characters must make three DC 15 group ability checks using either Wisdom (Perception) to listen for distant sounds, or Wisdom (Survival) to find signs of tracks on the rough stone floor. Remember that characters who worked with the wolf pack in the “Following Fools” section might have advantage on their first group check made in this section, as getting to the lair more quickly means that the fight is louder and the tracks of Beirn’s company are fresher.

If the characters willfully engage in any activity that makes a lot of noise or obscures the tracks in the tunnel, feel free to impose disadvantage on their checks, or even assign one or more automatic failures.

Make note of the results of the group checks for the next section. But whoever gets the best Wisdom (Perception) result during the first check is the first to hear the grim sound of a distant battle.

A crack like breaking bone sounds out as a faint echo on the chill air. A distant scream follows it, then a cackling, inhuman laugh.

The situation for Beirn and his friends isn’t as bad as it sounds, as the characters will discover. But hearing what sounds like a desperate fight should hopefully keep them moving.

As the characters progress, you can describe the twisting tunnels getting even colder, their stone walls limned with frost. Regardless of the result of the group checks, the sound of the fight grows louder as the characters make their way closer, until they spot a glimmer of light in the distance.

MEPHIT MAYHEM

As the characters approach the light, read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel opens up at last to a huge cavern, its walls covered with frost that glows a pale blue. Against those walls, a number of humanoids are held fast by manacles of ice, their heads slumped forward. More humanoids run frantically around the cavern, constantly slipping, falling, and begging for mercy as they’re pursued by small creatures seemingly made of jagged ice. These ice mephits soar and pounce, laughing hysterically as the humanoids are targeted by icy missiles that crack loudly each time they miss to strike the frozen walls.

Magic in the glimmering ice fills this area with bright light. During the fight, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 12 or higher notices that the humanoids iced to the walls are unconscious, not dead. They likewise notice that the mephits are attacking more to harass and torment the humanoids running around the chamber, rather than trying to finish them off. (This isn’t a courtesy they extend to the well-armed characters.)

It won’t escape the attention of any of the characters that there’s no sign of Wreldor the frost giant or his ogre attendants during the fight.

ARE WE LATE?

The ability checks made to navigate the tunnels in the previous section determine how quickly the characters get here. This in turn determines how many members of Beirn’s entourage the mephits have knocked unconscious and iced to the walls, how many mephits are harassing the pranksters still running around, and how many mephits are free to attack the characters.

Three Successes: Only two of the pranksters (including Beirn) have been iced to the walls, unconscious. Four mephits take on the characters while the others harass the rest of the pranksters.

Two Successes: Four pranksters are on the walls, and six mephits are free to fight the characters.

One Success: Six of Beirn’s people are on the walls, leaving eight mephits free to attack.

No Successes: All eight members of Beirn’s group have been iced. Ten mephits lay into the characters.

CAVERN FIGHT

The mephits hoot and holler as soon as the characters appear. They ignore any attempts to talk, with the numbers indicated above splitting off to attack. As personal servants to a frost giant, these mephits use the **ice mephit** stat block with the following changes:

- Each has 42 (12d6) hit points and is chaotic good.
- They have the following additional action options:

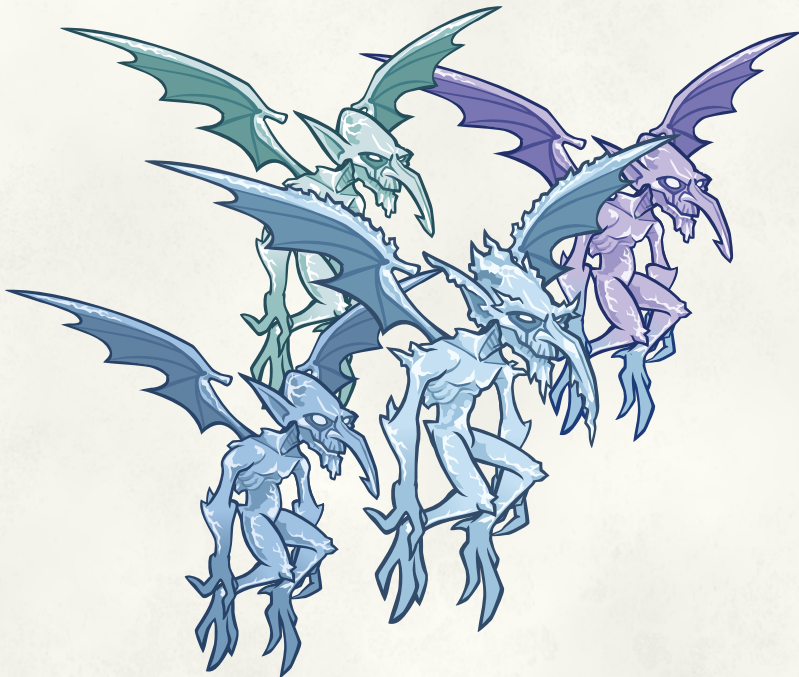
Ice Missile. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 50 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) cold damage.

Multiattack. The mephit makes two attacks with its claws or its Ice Missile.

- They have a challenge rating of 1 (200 XP).

The mephits fly to stay at range if they can, attacking lightly armored characters with Ice Missile and using Frost Breath against any closely clustered characters.

The icy floor of the cavern is difficult terrain. Any area of the floor exposed to fire or lightning damage becomes normal terrain for the rest of the fight.



If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any large icy cavern map for this fight.

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, add one mephitis to the indicated group. For a party of 10th-level characters, add two mephitis.

TIME TO TALK

When the last of the mephitis tangling with the party are taken out, the rest of the pack decide it makes sudden sense to parley. They break off attacks against the terrified pranksters and talk to the characters from a safe distance. If threatened with effective roleplaying or a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check, the mephitis acquiesce to let the characters break free the unconscious and iced members of Beirn's crew. All the NPCs are **commoners** with 1 hit point and a bad case of the chills, but are otherwise healthy.

Either the mephitis or the grateful-to-be-rescued pranksters can share the following information:

- Beirn and his people crept into the lair while Wreldor and his ogres were asleep, intending to give the frost giant a spectacular giant-sized hotfoot.
- Unfortunately, the drunken Beirn spilled the alchemical reagents and oil he'd brought for the task, accidentally setting fire to Wreldor's favorite bedspread.
- The furious giant called his mephitis servants from deeper in the lair, telling them to "have fun" with the

FROM PREVIOUS SECTIONS

Characters who saw the spectral ogre's demise in the "Following Fools" section might have disadvantage on their first attack roll or saving throw made in this section, as the memory of that vision leaves them feeling squeamish.

Characters might also have claimed some of the traps abandoned on the trail in "Following Fools." Though most of those traps will be ineffective on the mephitis while they stay in the air, the characters will get good use of them in the final fight in this adventure.

pranksters. He then kitted up with axe and armor and headed out a side passage with his three ogres—Taunka, Troy, and Tad—saying he was going to "wipe those smiles off the folk of Hornfirth once and for all ..."

Beirn is tearfully apologetic for his actions, but even more tearfully frantic over what might yet come of those actions. He and the others make it clear that Wreldor seemed intent on violent retribution—and that the folk of Hornfirth have no chance to defend themselves against the giant and his ogre companions.

"You have to save them!" Beirn shouts through freezing tears. "My Heiley! My friends! Oh, please! You need to catch up to them ... or ... wait! I know how you can reach the village ahead of Wreldor! I can help you fix this! Please, follow me!"

With that, Beirn races out of the cave at a run, his compatriots following with no idea where he's going—and urging the characters to come with them. The characters should all understand that if they go after Wreldor on foot, they have no chance to catch up to the giant before he reaches Hornfirth. A *fly* spell and other short-term flying magic won't last long enough to get the characters down the mountainside.

Absent any other options (this is the point in the adventure where it's useful for the characters to not have access to teleportation or mass high-speed flight, as mentioned earlier), the characters need to follow Beirn for the revelation of his risky plan.

FLUME SHOT

Following the desperate Beirn, the characters emerge from the giant's lair and are led at a breakneck pace across forested slopes—and away from the trail back to Hornfirth. If anyone asks what's going on, Beirn simply begs them to follow, saying his plan is their only chance.

A few of Beirn's followers accompany the characters, with the rest picking up Lharam near the main lair entrance and heading back down the mountain.

LOGGING SHOW

As the characters follow Beirn over the course of a few minutes' running, the trees begin to thin, then disappear suddenly. Read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

Ahead, a broad expanse of mountainside slope has been logged off, with new seedlings already growing healthily between huge piles of decaying brush. The sound of a stream rings out where it flows down a rocky course—and reveals your destination where Beirn proudly points ahead.

It's a log flume—a long, twisting aqueduct down which logs would have traveled to a landing site far down the mountainside. And it looks like it hasn't been used in many, many years.

Beirn expresses his delight that the flume is still standing a decade after it was last used, describing it as barely holding together even when the villagers were actively logging this area. He then promises the characters that it's absolutely safe—and will get them down the mountain in record time.

Any character who wants to make a quick inspection of the flume's well-soaked planks, rotting struts, and shaky supports might be less enthusiastic. It seems clear that the flume isn't in danger of collapsing, but riding it down won't be easy.

ARTS AND RAFTS

The first step to using the flume to race Wreldor to Hornfirth will be assembling some sort of raft on which the characters can ride the aqueduct. Plenty of timber and lumber can be scavenged from the logging site, but it needs to be assembled quickly. Call for a group DC 15 ability check, with each character using their choice of the following:

- Strength (Athletics) to load and position components
- Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) to precisely lash together boards and timbers
- Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) to check positioning and balance
- Charisma (Persuasion) to properly direct the work of Beirn and his friends as they pitch in

Any character who has proficiency with carpenter's tools or water vehicles, or who has a background involving woodworking or vehicle crafting, has advantage on their check. The raft is completed regardless of the result of the group check. But if the group check fails, the raft's rickety construction imposes disadvantage on each character's first ability check made in the next section.

GO WITH THE FLOW

At the top of the flume, Beirn and his crew hold the raft tight by its guide ropes as the characters get on board. The villagers make it absolutely clear how sorry they are they can't come with the party on this suicidal plunge down the mountainside, but the characters should be equally clear that the still-somewhat-inebriated fools will be of no use in the fight. Beirn promises that they'll get back to the village along the main trail.

Any gear that might be damaged by water should have been stowed away by now, as it'll be obvious to all the characters how wet this trip is going to leave them. When Everyone's ready to go, read or paraphrase the following:

Beirn and his companions toss you the raft's control ropes and scurry back. For a moment, you simply sit motionless, stuck against the walls of the flume. Then with a lurch, weight overcomes friction and you begin to move—pushed by the stream, dragged on by gravity, and picking up speed!

The trip down the log flume is a chaotic, wet, and terrifying few minutes, as the raft slams and rattles against the shaking, groaning aqueduct. The characters will be focused on tugging the control ropes, shifting their weight to take corners, and just generally hanging on for dear life. But a number of sudden hazards will require special attention.

TAKEN TO TASK

Go through the characters one at a time, choosing or rolling a task for each from the Raft Task table. After you explain the task, a player who instinctively suspects that their character will fail it can pass that task to another character with that character's permission. The character passing the task must undertake the "hold on" task, and is then assigned another task after the chosen player completes the first task. This second task cannot be passed off.

If the group ability check to construct the raft failed, its slapdash construction makes the tasks harder. Each character has disadvantage on the first ability check they make in this section. With your approval, characters can make other types of ability checks other than those suggested. They might also be able to use class features or magic to grant advantage on checks, or even automatically succeed on a task.

If you have time in your session and the players are enjoying the ride, roll for or choose a second task for each character after the first round of tasks is done.

RAFT TASK

d6	Task
1	Clear critters
2	Grab gear
3	Haul back
4	Hold on
5	Move out
6	Raft repair

CLEAR CRITTERS

At one of its many anchor points, the flume aqueduct has been taken over as a lair by local forest creatures. The character with this task is the one to spot a critter ahead (of a type determined by rolling on the table below), and must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check to inspire the critter to get out of the way. On a success, the critter leaps to the side but takes a shot at the character for 2 (1d4) bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (depending on its natural attacks). On a failed check, the critter is launched into the air by the raft and lands in it, bouncing between the character undertaking the task and two other random characters, and dealing 3 (1d6) bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage to each character before it hops off.

If you have time in your session, you can forgo the automatic damage on a failed check to have four critters of the specific type land on the raft. Run 1 round of full combat with the critters, after which any survivors flee.

d4 Critter

- 1 Nesting eagle
- 2 Giant muskrat (use the **giant rat** stat block)
- 3 Giant otter (use the **giant weasel** stat block)
- 4 Constrictor snake

GRAB GEAR

In all the focus on keeping themselves on the raft, the character is late to notice some part of their gear (a backpack, a weapon, and so forth) caught by a stray spar or broken strut from the aqueduct and hauled off. The character must grab the errant gear with a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or plot an intercept path with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. On a success, the character hauls the gear back but takes 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage as the spar or strut smacks them. On a failure, the character takes damage as above, and one other character at random takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage as the gear smashes into them. If the gear is an unsheathed weapon, it instead deals damage according to its type.

HAUL BACK

As the raft slams up against a banked corner of the flume, a character next to the character attempting the task goes flying out of the raft. The character must grab and haul back their companion with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a success, the falling character is safe, but gets caught up in garrotte-tight guide ropes that deal 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage before they can be unraveled. On a failed check, the tumbling character manages to cling to the raft but takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from being battered by the flume before finally scrambling back on board.

HOLD ON

As the raft shudders and shakes, the character must hold on tight to something to avoid going over the side. The character makes a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to seize a convenient anchor point, or an Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check to locate the best place to latch on. On a success, the character stays on the raft, but gets bashed around to the tune of 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage. On a failure, the character stays on the raft and takes damage as above, but the only thing they could find to hold onto is another character. That character (chosen at random) takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

MOVE OUT

The raft starts to slow erratically, caught up by broken supports along one section of the flume. Getting unstuck requires a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check as a character pushes against the flume with all their might. With a success, the character takes 2 (1d4) slashing damage from splinters and slivers. On a failed check, the raft advances only when the log flume starts to collapse underneath it, causing the raft to tip forward, then slam back down before racing on. Each character takes 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

RAFT REPAIR

With an alarming crack, part of the raft starts to split apart as a result of the endless pounding it takes as it descends the flume. A character must quickly figure out and improvise repairs with a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or a Dexterity, Intelligence, or Wisdom check using proficiency with carpenter's tools or water vehicles. On a success, the fast repairs are completed, but the character's fingers are caught for 2 (1d4) bludgeoning or slashing damage.

HARD LANDING

As the last task is completed, the flume starts to level out. The character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score is the first to spot where the aqueduct comes to an end ahead in a broad holding pond—which is chock full of logs, branches, and other dangerous debris. As the raft comes crashing into the pond, each character must make a DC 14 Dexterity or Intelligence saving throw to either instinctively leap to safety or choose the best moment to jump and roll. Each character takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and 7 (2d6) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

The characters can take a few moments to wring out their cloaks and try to get their bearings. With all the twists and turns the flume route took, they aren't a hundred percent sure where they are relative to the route to Wreldor's lair. However, even as they look around, the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score spots something.

Only a few hundred strides away, the forested hillside is shifting. The trees shiver from side to side as if caught by some unseen wind—or as if disrupted by a huge creature pushing through them at speed.

By moving quickly, the characters can get into position to intercept Wreldor before the giant and his ogres reach the village, in the adventure's exciting conclusion.

STAY FROSTY

As the characters move to intercept Wreldor's path, they find themselves in a small clearing dotted with the ruins of an ancient fortress. Give everyone time to get into position, then read or paraphrase the following:

With a shuddering crash, a stand of scrub pine is uprooted as a hulking figure impatiently shoulders through it. The frost giant Wreldor is armored up and has a massive battleaxe in hand. Close behind him amble three ogres, all whistling the same off-key but cheery tune. One carries an enormous spiked chain over their shoulder. Another lovingly cradles a massive crossbow. The third has a huge basket strapped to their shoulders, from which rises an intermittent oinking.



If the characters watch unseen for a few moments, Wrerdor grumpily snarls at the ogres to stop their whistling, saying, “You couldn’t make my mood worse if you tried, so stop trying.” He slows as soon as he sees any characters in his path, warning them to get out of the way. He then adds: “Unless you’re folk of Hornfirth. In which case, come closer. I’ve got a joke for you ...”

The characters will have a chance to get on Wrerdor’s better side eventually, but the frost giant is initially too angry to be reasoned with. Any attempt at negotiation or intimidation turns immediately to confrontation as the giant attacks.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any forest clearing with stone ruins for this fight.

DOWN TO FIGHT

Though it’s been years since Wrerdor was on a battlefield, the retired frost giant scout has lost none of his edge. He charges the best-armored characters with greataxe attacks, looking for a challenge, or picks up and hurls rocks if the characters remain outside melee range. Wrerdor uses the **frost giant** stat block with the following changes:

- He is neutral.
- He has an updated Multiattack action:

Multiattack. The giant makes two greataxe attacks or two rock attacks.

Wrerdor’s ogre servants—Taunka, Troy, and Tad, all neutral in alignment—hoot and holler as they join the fray. Taunka uses the **ogre chain brute** stat block, Troy uses the **ogre bolt launcher** stat block, and Tad uses the **ogre howdah** stat block, all from *Mordenkainen’s Tome of Foes*. Rather than bearing smaller warriors, Tad’s howdah basket holds four teacup boars (use the **boar** stat block, but these are Small creatures). Each can attack targets within 5 feet of Tad, or the ogre can hurl a boar as an action to make a ranged attack:

Airborne Boar. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 5 (2d4) slashing damage.

A boar thrown by Tad uses the Dash action at the start of the oge’s turn to scurry back to the basket.

(If you don’t use *Mordenkainen’s Tome of Foes* in your game, Taunka, Troy, and Tad use the standard **ogre** stat block. Treat Taunka’s spiked chain as a greatclub attack that deals slashing damage, treat Troy’s crossbow as a javelin attack, and give Tad four boars and the new attack noted above.)

WHY SO SERIOUS?

During the fight, Wrerdor underlines how Beirn’s joke-gone-bad has fueled his anger, asking the characters, “Are you laughing now?” or “Funny enough for you?” each time he or one of the ogres hits. But the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Insight) score is able



TAUNKA, TROY, AND TAD

FROM PREVIOUS SECTIONS

Characters who have claimed some of the traps abandoned on the trail in “Following Fools” can put them to good use here. In addition to hindering the giant or the ogres, the successful use of any of the traps makes an ogre targeted by the trap laugh hysterically (see “Why So Serious?”).

to intuit that the frost giant’s anger covers a deep sadness that practically demands to be treated with laughter.

As an action, any character can try to distract Wreldor with a joke, a sight gag, a pratfall, or some other attempt at humor. You can let the players perform their characters’ jests, then judge how funny each attempt is. Alternatively, a character can make a joke that tickles Wreldor’s funny bone with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Performance or Persuasion) check.

The ogres laugh uproariously each time they hit or are hit by a character, making it clear that they take things a bit less seriously than their boss. Savvy characters can make use of this to keep the ogres distracted, by engaging in any form of broad comedy during the fight. This can include such things as trip attacks, ear pulling or nose tweaking, pulling off an ogre’s loincloth during a grapple, and so forth. Each time a character lands a jest that you judge to be distracting enough, the ogre targeted by the joke laughs so hard that they have disadvantage on attack rolls until the end of their next turn. At your determination, the ogres might also choose to get in on the comedic action in their attacks against the characters, though they gain no benefit in combat from doing so.

AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, give one ogre a Multiattack action that allows them to make two melee or ranged attacks. For a party of 10th-level characters, give all three ogres that Multiattack action.

ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

When the characters have successfully dazzled Wreldor with five quality jokes (or a higher number of your choice if time permits and the players are having a good time), the frost giant sets his axe down and breaks out in uproarious laughter. The ogres cease fighting to join in, and all injuries and insults are forgotten.

BACK TO HORNFIRTH

Wreldor ruefully confesses that he’s been under a lot of strain lately. Although he remains happy in his choice of retirement lair, he has a fairly lonely life in the mountains. Especially if the characters came to Hornfirth seeking Wreldor’s sagely services, they might use this as an opportunity to create a relationship with the giant, allowing you to use his ongoing research as a source of adventure hooks.

Wreldor expresses concern over the fate of the pranksters who came to his caverns. When told that they’ve been rescued, he travels into Hornfirth with the



characters to apologize. Though it takes a bit of doing to convince the locals that the giant and his ogre companions are no longer a threat, the people of Hornfirth (including Beirn and his crew, who make it back safely) quickly welcome Wreldor, Taunka, Troy, and Tad to their celebrations, and the Festival of Fools gets underway again!

TREASURE

As thanks for helping to prevent a potentially dire misunderstanding, Wreldor offers the characters a collection of fine walrus-tusk scrimshaw carvings (worth 2,700 gp) and an *amulet of health*. If you feel like using the frost giant sage as a hook for future adventures, Wreldor might treat that reward as a retainer before sending the characters out on missions seeking magical relics or lost lore.