

# THE GIANT'S BANE TAVERN

An Adventure for Characters of 8th to 10th Level



Caught up in one of the furious blizzards that scour Icewind Dale under the gloom of the Everlasting Rime, the characters seek respite in an out-of-the-way tavern—and end up in the front lines of a frost giant assault alongside the legendary adventurers Beadle and Grimm!

**BEADLE  
& GRIMM'S**

**IDLE  
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OF THE  
FORGOTTEN  
REALMS™

The logo for Idle Champions of the Forgotten Realms features a red, multi-limbed creature with a central eye and several smaller eyes on its limbs, set against a black background.

**T**he *Giant's Bane Tavern* is 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! This tabletop version of *The Giant's Bane Tavern* sees a party of 8th-level characters stopping a frost giant attack on a town in Icewind Dale—and meeting the notable adventurers Beadle and Grimm in the process!

This adventure is balanced for five characters of 8th level, and offers instructions for running it with a 9th-level or 10th-level party.

## BACKGROUND

The unnatural dark winter caused by the Everlasting Rime of Auril the Frostmaiden has locked Icewind Dale into a state of increasing gloom and despair. As the folk of this land's scattered settlements fight to survive, creatures of cold and darkness grow more emboldened, convinced that they are destined to become the undisputed lords of Icewind Dale thanks to Auril's endless winter.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure begins with the party traveling across Icewind Dale. You can use any of the following hooks to get the characters into the adventure, or as inspiration for hooks of your own.

### WRONG TURN

One of the blizzards that scour Icewind Dale with increasing fury as a result of Auril's Everlasting Rime has caught the characters off guard on what should have been a routine journey through the dale. The characters are now hopelessly lost, desperate to find shelter, and at the mercy of any predators using the cover of the storm to hunt.

### ONE NIGHT ONLY

A bard the characters know has invited them to the Giant's Bane Tavern for a special performance. Having been hired for something called "The Battle of the Bards," the characters' friend wants to make sure they have a cheering squad on hand. But a blizzard descends while the characters are en route to the tavern, causing a slight combat-related delay.

### SPECIAL DELIVERY

With travel in Icewind Dale growing ever more dangerous, the characters are hired to escort a shipment of fine dwarven ale (conveniently stored in a *bag of holding*) to the Giant's Bane Tavern. The characters might know or have visited the tavern in this scenario. However, not knowing much about Beadle or Grimm will make for better drama during certain revelations later in the adventure.

## SNOW BIND

The adventure begins with the characters caught in one of the sudden, furious blizzards that scour Icewind Dale under the gloom of the Everlasting Rime. Trying to hold

the trail in the storm is tough enough, but crossing paths with a hunting pack of winter wolves and the squad of ice mephits accompanying them turns the journey downright lethal.

This encounter takes place at night and outdoors. Characters must have darkvision or a light source to see.

## FURY OF THE STORM

When you're ready to start this encounter, jump straight into the action by reading or paraphrasing the following to set the scene.

The storm came out of nowhere, as most of Icewind Dale's storms have of late. The gloom of day was already waning, but now full-on night descends. A wall of wind and snow slams down around you, threatening to drive you from the trail you're trying hard to follow—and trying even harder to see.

### STAYING ON COURSE

As the encounter begins, the characters have been attempting to stick to a barely visible trail winding along a rocky hillside, hoping to find some sheltered location before the storm gets even worse. Have everyone make a DC 17 group Wisdom (Survival) check to determine how well the party as a whole is sticking together in the

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storm. Then let the players choose one character to be the party's navigator, and have that character make a separate DC 17 Wisdom (Survival) check. If the group check succeeded, the navigator has advantage on this separate check.

If the navigator succeeds on their check, the characters hold to the trail, and are able to react quickly when they stumble into trouble in the next section. If the navigator's check fails, the characters need to fight the storm to stick to the trail, and are surprised when trouble finds them.

## PACK ATTACK

At the point where the trail the characters are following intersects another trail perpendicularly, the characters cross paths with a pack of three **winter wolves** and five **ice mephits** moving across their route at speed. The wolves are a hunting pack, and are ecstatic to stumble into a chance for a bit of exercise before the main event to come. (The characters will learn more about the wolves' goals and their allegiances later in the adventure.)

If any character speaks Giant, they hear the lead winter wolf snarl laughingly in that language before the assault begins:

"Warm-bloods moving out. You running away from dale? Everything too cold for you? Should have run faster, then! Ha!"

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any area of snowy terrain for this fight.

## AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, use three winter wolves and six ice mephits. For a party of 10th-level characters, use three winter wolves with 95 hit points each and six ice mephits.



## WELL-DRESSED WOLVES

During the fight, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 17 or higher catches sight of something tucked into the fur of the winter wolf they're fighting—a distinctive object woven of twisted bones. (Even if no character spots the wolves' accessorizing, all the characters will learn what this object is at the end of the fight.)

## THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

When one winter wolf has fallen, if all remaining wolves start their turn at 20 hit points or fewer, the fight is interrupted by the booming of a great horn rising above the howling wind. The wolves turn toward the sound, then snarl and flee, vanishing quickly from sight. Any surviving mephits stick around for one final attack, then follow the wolves into the storm. (The horn was the call of the frost giants the wolves serve, as the characters will later learn.)

## SIGN OF THE RIME

A quick search or inspection of any fallen winter wolves reveals that each wolf wears a fetish woven of twisted bones tied into its fur. The fetish radiates enchantment magic to a *detect magic* spell, and is recognizable as some sort of frost giant tribal insignia by any character with the outlander background or specific knowledge of frost giants. If any of the characters is a lifelong resident of Icewind Dale, they recognize the fetish as the symbol of the reclusive Boneaxe frost giant clan. Otherwise, the specific clan is not known to the characters—but will be shortly.

## WHITHER WEATHER?

In the outdoor encounters that are part of this adventure, the unnaturally foul weather plaguing Icewind Dale poses as much of a threat as any foes or monsters. When blizzard conditions are in effect during combat, the characters and their enemies must deal with the following restrictions:

- Visibility in the blizzard is 30 feet. Not even darkvision is of any use beyond that range.
- Harsh winds limit all characters' hearing to 100 feet.
- Creatures making Wisdom (Perception) checks based on sight or hearing do so with disadvantage.
- Open flames are immediately snuffed out by the wind, which also immediately disperses any fog effects.
- Ranged weapon attacks are made with disadvantage.
- A creature that flies by nonmagical means and cannot hover must land at the end of each of their turns or fall.
- Tracks and trails are quickly obscured by drifting snow.
- A creature concentrating on a spell must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of its turn or have their concentration end.

## TIMELY SHELTER

The blizzard makes it effectively impossible for the characters to track the winter wolves unless you want to expand this encounter. However, any successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check suggests that the trail the wolves are following leads up across an exposed slope that will worsen the effects of the storm. The trail the characters were following leads down toward a tree-lined slope that offers a bit of cover—and signs of real shelter in the distance, which the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score is the first to spot as the party continues on.

Where the tree line provides a break to slow the fury of the wind-driven snow, a flickering light appears in the distance. As you draw closer, bright-glowing magical lanterns bring the outlines of a sturdy building into relief. Smoke rises from its chimneys, its windows bright with light even under encrusted ice. This isolated roadhouse promises shelter from the storm, and bears its name proudly on a sign hanging beside the door—“The Giant’s Bane Tavern.”

## BATTLE OF THE BARDS

In the aftermath of their winter wolf fight, the characters take respite in the light and warmth of the Giant’s Bane Tavern, meeting that establishment’s notable proprietors, Beadle and Grimm. But the promise of rest and an evening’s light entertainment is not to be.

## WELCOME TO THE GIANT’S BANE!

The Giant’s Bane Tavern is a rustic, unsophisticated, rough-and-tumble establishment. As the characters enter, they feel the warmth not only of the tavern’s bright-burning fires, but of its boisterous clientele—hardy folk of Icewind Dale who frequent the tavern from dozens of small local settlements. (The location of this special version of the Giant’s Bane Tavern is not fixed in any part of Icewind Dale. It can be close to Ten-Towns if you wish, or it could be the center of an even more remote group of dale villages.)

As the characters enter, read the following to set the scene:

### THE PLANE TRUTH

The original Giant’s Bane Tavern was located in Perrenland in the Greyhawk campaign setting. If you want to maintain that connection in your Forgotten Realms campaign, you might decide that the Everlasting Rime is producing localized plane-shifting effects, drawing travelers, settlements, and even whole areas into otherwise empty stretches of Icewind Dale. But you are likewise free to place this special version of the Giant’s Bane Tavern into the snowy northern territory of your own campaign setting.

The Giant’s Bane Tavern is a nearly full house this night, the high rafters echoing with raucous conversation and wreathed in woodsmoke. The walls of the place are festooned with trophies, from shattered giants’ axes to old maps, clan signs to shields, along with the skulls and mounted heads of dozens of creatures—including a massive white dragon skull with a distinctive notch in its frill crest. All the love of life known by the people of Icewind Dale is on display among the patrons here, as folk look to warmth, friends, and a mug of strong ale to set aside the hopelessness that has descended on these lands, even for a short while.

Behind the bar, an unnaturally tall human is hefting a barrel of ale like it weighs nothing. His well-dressed barbarian chic includes polar-bear hide trimmed with thick fur, and set with what looks like white dragon scales. Over at the huge stage that dominates the far side of the common room, a dwarf in fine furs nimbly adjusts the *driftglobes* that light the performance area, while a group of bards sitting at nearby tables tune up for what looks like it’ll be an impressive performance.

“Welcome, folks,” the barbarian proprietor calls out in a booming voice. “I’m Grimm. That’s Beadle.” He tilts his head in the direction of the dwarf, who appears too busy to notice. “You’re welcome to the Giant’s Bane Tavern. Grab a seat if you can find one.”

## ROLEPLAYING BEADLE AND GRIMM

Part of the fun of this adventure is the characters meeting Beadle and Grimm, the retired adventurers who have made the Giant’s Bane Tavern the go-to gathering place for folk in this part of Icewind Dale. You can use the following general guidelines to have fun with these larger-than-life NPCs—and go to <http://www.beadleandgrimm.com/idlechampions> for full details on the NPC versions of Beadle and Grimm!

### BEADLE

Beadle is the most handsome dwarf wizard-rogue you’ve ever seen—and he’s always happy to remind you of that. Nimble, surly, feisty, and opportunistic in equal measure, he has a passion for magic matched only by his passion for his own heroic reputation. And Beadle is always certain to make sure that reputation never suffers as a result of certain disreputable actions sometimes attributed to him. With no evidence whatsoever. Seriously, you can’t prove anything.

(Beadle’s love of hearing his heroic life performed large plays a part in this section of the adventure, as the characters will discover shortly.)



## GRIMM

Grimm is a well-spoken human barbarian—a man of the world who has seen much, done more, and thankfully only rarely learned any kind of lesson from his many adventures. Sure, lessons are fine for other people, but they're not really Grimm's thing. In his mind, he lives in a world where anything and everything can be defeated in combat—and where if something needs to be defeated in combat, he's the one destined to do it.

(His worldview forces Grimm to now carry a dark secret, which the characters will learn more about as the adventure progresses.)

## SETTLING IN

The characters can spend as much time with Grimm as you desire, ordering drinks, dishes of hearty stew, fresh bread, and other tavern fare. Beadle might pop into the conversation briefly as he bolts back and forth from the bar to the stage, letting the characters know that they're in for a treat.

“The Battle of the Bards is about to start! Fifteen sterling skalds vying for supremacy! Who will take the crown?!”

For his part, Grimm is noticeably less enthusiastic about the evening's entertainment. If any character asks why, the barbarian simply tells them to wait and see.

## A LEGEND IN HIS OWN MIND

With an impresario flourish, Beadle takes the stage and announces that the Battle of the Bards has begun! The first musician proudly steps forward—and the characters immediately come to understand Grimm's misgivings.

(It's not required that you sing the snippets of bardic performance provided in this encounter. But it's definitely a power DM move. Your players will love it!)

“Oh, let me sing of mighty deeds/Of valor in-cred-eeble/  
And of that roguish dwarven mage/The legendary Beadle!”

As the crowd hoots and hollers in response, the characters come to realize that the Battle of the Bards apparently involves the contestants attempting to outdo each other in performing tales of Beadle's amazing exploits. The idea that the bards are playing to Beadle's direct specifications is made clear by seeing the dwarf at the edge of the stage, cheerfully mouthing along to the words in real time. However, as the characters will momentarily discover, even more visceral entertainment is in the offing at the Giant's Bane Tavern this night.



## NO BRAWL LIKE A TAVERN BRAWL

As the bard battle begins, have each character make a Wisdom (Perception) check. The character with the highest check notices a disturbing trend in the crowd.

Though most of the tavern's patrons are chuckling in response to the overly earnest hagiography of the bard's song, one group in a corner close to the fire are looking increasingly sullen. A hulking lumberjack stands, staring daggers at Beadle—and snarling as he picks up a chair and hurls it at the stage!

As it turns out, Beadle is somewhat less well loved than he believes, and an uppity faction of patrons have already had enough of hearing the dwarf's praises sung. But even as a bar brawl breaks out, the character with the second-highest Wisdom (Perception) check spots movement outside the frosted front windows of the tavern.

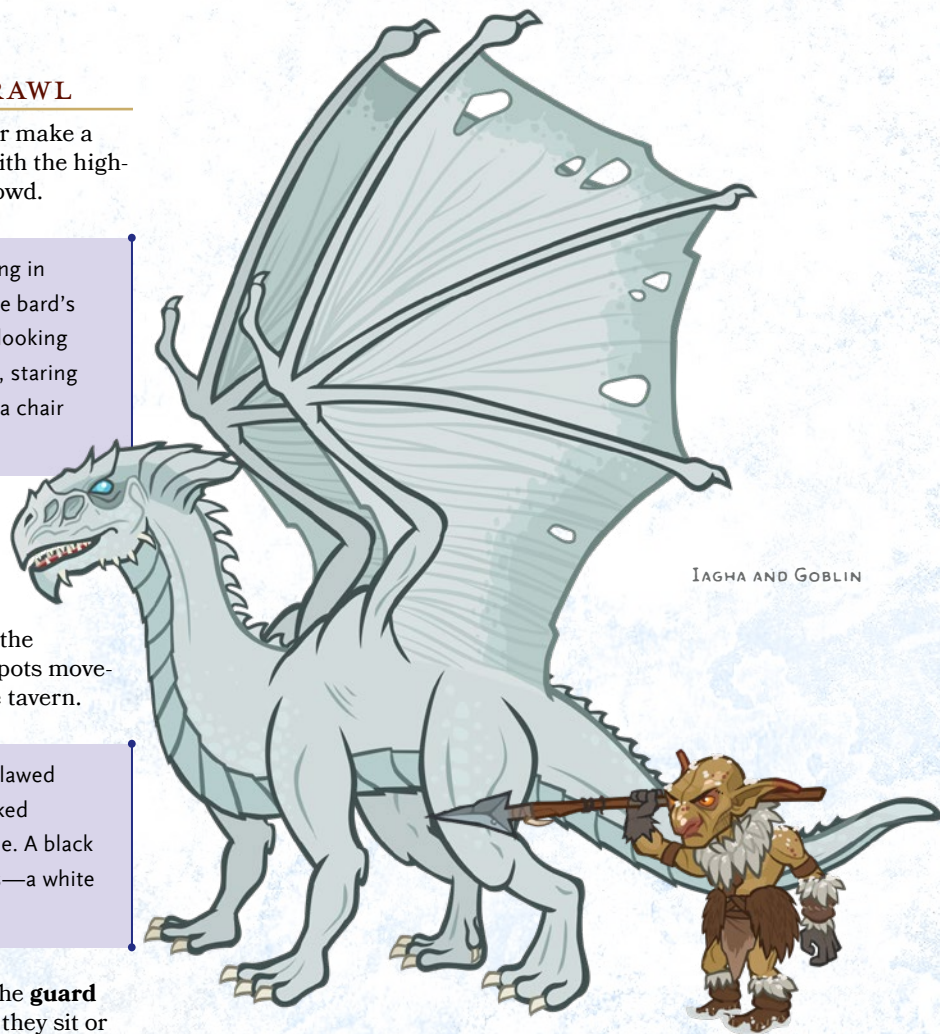
Sinuuous movement shifts along the glass, as a clawed hand scrapes frost away. Some kind of long-necked creature presses up to the window, looking inside. A black eye blinks slowly as the tavern devolves to chaos—a white dragon, whose lips curl back in a toothy smile!

In **round 1** of this fight, five townsfolk using the **guard** stat block crash into the characters wherever they sit or stand. (More people than this are caught up in the fight, with a third of the tavern's patrons throwing furniture toward the stage, a third trying to put the aggressive music critics down, and a third fighting to stay out of the way. These five NPCs are just the ones the characters must deal with.) In place of their spear attack, the townsfolk either bash the characters with furniture or hurl heavy tankards, dealing bludgeoning damage in either case.

In **round 2**, the **young white dragon** and five **goblin** followers burst into the tavern. If the character who saw the white dragon shouted out a warning in round 1, the townsfolk closest to the doors quickly attempt to barricade them. This doesn't prevent the dragon and her goblins from breaking in, but it disrupts their focus, imposing disadvantage on the goblins' attack rolls and preventing the dragon from using her cold breath this round.

As the dragon watches folk scatter away from her, she delivers a pre-fight victory speech:

"Yes. This place will do nicely. Iagha seeks a new lair. Iagha's frosty goblins will clear out you rabble. Flee, warmbloods! Icewind Dale belongs to you no ... !"



IAGHA AND GOBLIN

Then the dragon's voice trails off as she catches sight of the enormous, notch-frilled white dragon skull on the tavern's back wall. "Grandma?!?" she shrieks. From the corner of your eye, you see Beadle and Grimm exchange uneasy looks.

As with the townsfolk, assume that additional goblins spill into the tavern, to be fought by the other patrons. Iagha the white dragon homes in on Beadle and Grimm in her rage over recognizing the skull, and conveniently focuses her attacks on the characters where they're tucked up next to the pair, judging by their gear that they must be dangerous.

Because Iagha is presently in search of a lair, she cannot use her lair actions during this fight.

### FREE-FOR-ALL

This wide-open fight is meant to feel frenetic and crazy. On their own, the townsfolk and the goblins are barely a threat to adventurers of the characters' level. But dealing with two different groups at once can pose a challenge—especially if the characters try to not do any lasting damage to the townsfolk. The goblins are canny combatants who use their Nimble Escape to slip under tables and attempt to strike from hiding.

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

### AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, add one goblin and one townsfolk guard. For a party of 10th-level characters, add two goblins and two townsfolk guards.

### SPECIAL GUEST STARS

Beadle and Grimm both take great exception to their establishment coming under attack, and the two are front and center alongside the characters as they try to get things under control. You can either hand wave the pair's role in the combat, describing them as taking on foes of their own alongside the characters—or you can use the downloadable stat blocks (see the link on page 4) to have the players take on the NPC roles of the retired adventurers alongside their own characters.

**Fighting with Beadle and Grimm.** If having Beadle and Grimm fighting alongside the characters increases the party size beyond five, add one additional goblin and one additional guard to the fight.

### BARDIC DESPERATION

As the tavern brawl unfolds, a succession of bards are swept off the stage by thrown furniture, only to have another bard pop up to perform in their stead. Feel free to punctuate the fight with more odes to Beadle's greatness, making use of the following snippets or using them as inspiration for your own lyrics.

"Oh, that horde of ogres ran away/And that's how Beadle,  
wands all blazing/Once more won the day!"

"'B' is for bravery!/'E' is excitement!/'A' is amazing! 'D' is  
delightment!"

"His step is light/His moves are tight/He leaves the ladies  
swooning/As you will be/When I lay down/This tale that I  
am crooning!"

"Who's the dwarf with the magic hands?/Who's the  
thief whose skills are in demand?/It's Beadle! Beadle! All  
together now!"

"Lost for years in that magic drill/Folk mourned poor  
Beadle, as even still/His legend spread, that dwarf of  
renown/And then back he came! Turning every frown/  
To happiness and joyful cheers/As all his foes shed  
frightful tears!"

As an action, any character who lays down the boom and succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check convinces all remaining bards to clear out, and the tavern

returns to the more relaxing sounds of an all-out three-sided brawl.

### WINDING DOWN

When the dragon is reduced to 0 hit points, any remaining goblins scatter. Any still-fighting townsfolk are caught up in the sense of accomplishment of having vanquished the dragon, and the fighting quickly winds down. Beadle and Grimm survey the property damage—but the characters might want to focus more on the dragon where it has fallen.

### THE BONEAXE SIGIL

Any character who inspects the dragon's body, or who glances over while the townsfolk haul the dragon outside, spots a familiar mark inscribed into the scales of the dragon's chest—the same sigil of the Boneaxe frost giant clan seen in the fetishes worn by the winter wolves in part 1 of the adventure. If the characters make any mention of this fact, Beadle overhears them. If they don't, the canny dwarf spots the sigil himself. In any event, he calls out to Grimm, who reacts darkly to the sight of the sigil.

His face ashen, Grimm lunges for the bar, retrieving a pair of oversized swords from beneath it. "I told you I heard those horns," he hisses to Beadle. "Boneaxe wolves are on the march. And they've got dragons fighting for them now?"

"You're not so much jumping to conclusions right now as jumping past conclusions," Beadle says darkly. "Then you have to walk back to actually get to the conclusions, that's how far you've overshot them."

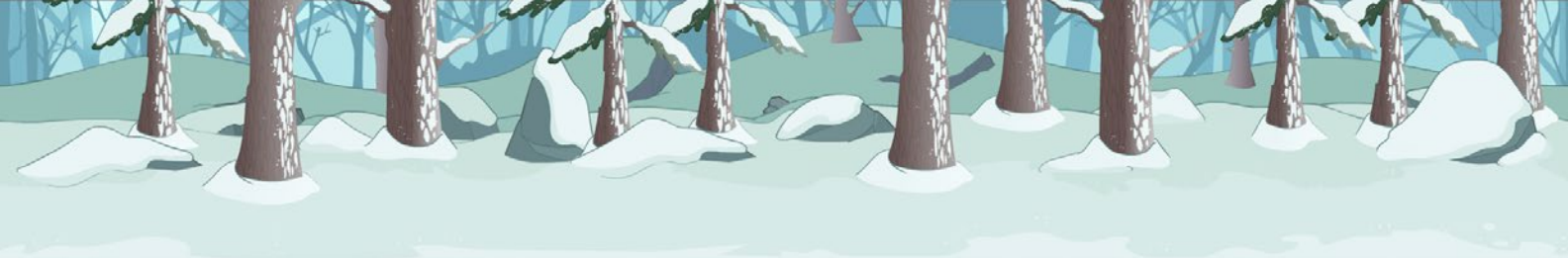
If the characters engage Beadle and Grimm, Grimm asks what the characters know, paying close attention to the details of the winter wolf fight—and specifically, the location of the trail the wolves were taking. Whether with the characters' input or not, however, the hulking barbarian comes to the same dark and mysterious conclusion.

"No ..." the barbarian whispers darkly. "Not again!" And with that, Grimm sprints for the door, pushing past confused townsfolk and into the storm.

"I'm not following him, I'm not following him," Beadle murmurs, shaking his head. Then he looks at all of you. "If you're as good in a fight as you showed off here, follow me now. I'm going to kill Grimm if he's wrong. But if he's right, there'll be more dead than him before this night's out!"

### GRIMM DISCOVERY

In a state of dark rage, Grimm has headed out into the deadly storm, with Beadle and the characters close behind. If the characters ask Beadle what's going on while they race through the blizzard in pursuit of Grimm, he



responds only by saying, “That barbarian’s got a long memory and a guilty conscience.” If pressed for more, he grows uncharacteristically cagey as he tells the characters that the full story isn’t his to tell.

## GRIMM’S TALE

Catching up to Grimm is easily done, given that the barbarian’s great height makes him easy to see even through the storm. Beadle’s strident call brings Grimm to an eventual halt, and the two quickly start arguing about Grimm’s thickheadedness, Beadle’s lack of empathy, and similar themes—none of which shed any light on why Grimm pelted out into the storm. You can play out this section as a monologue if you wish, but you can also allow the characters to intervene between the two irate friends, calming both down with suitable roleplaying.

At any point, the characters can and should ask Grimm directly what’s going on. In response (or of his own volition if the characters don’t engage him), the barbarian’s expression shifts from anger to an unexpected sadness, as he and Beadle share the following story.

“It was long years ago,” Grimm says, “before Beadle and I retired to open the Giant’s Bane Tavern. I called myself ‘the Giant Slayer’ then, and yearned to live up to the name. But I did in the end. I took down a giant in single combat. Glorious. Or so I thought...”

The barbarian’s voice breaks, but Beadle steps up beside him. “Grimm, move over. I’ll tell them. Grimm left a sign when the fight was done. Said that ‘Grimm the Giant Slayer’ had done the deed, and that the giants should fear him.”

“So they attacked the town of Forstford in retribution,” Grimm says, voice barely a whisper against the storm. “Left it in ruins. Left messages written in the blood of the dead. Saying that Grimm had caused this.”

Allow the characters to ask for more information, using the following points to guide the conversation:

- The giant Grimm killed was of the Boneaxe clan, and it was the members of that clan who took revenge on Forstford. The Boneaxe frost giants have grown even more powerful in the years since, and countless other creatures pay fealty to them.
- The sigil seen on the winter wolves in “Snow Bind” and the white dragon in “Battle of the Bards” is the sign of the Boneaxe clan, marking those creatures as allies and servants of the clan.

- Rumors of winter wolves gathering in the wilds near the Giant’s Bane Tavern have been heard for the past two weeks.
- The trail taken by the winter wolves who fought the characters leads directly to Forstford. From outside the tavern, Grimm heard the same distant hunting horns that the characters heard in “Snow Bind,” and the barbarian fears that the wolves might have been heading there as part of a Boneaxe force.
- Forstford has long been rebuilt, but remains a small settlement. The folk there are capable of looking after themselves in the face of most threats, but not if frost giants are on the attack.

If what Grimm believes is true, the party needs to get to Forstford—and quickly.

## STORMY SHORTCUT

The trail that Grimm set out upon is not the main trail that the winter wolves were taking, but rather a shortcut that twists through a few miles of dangerous ground that the main trail curves wide to avoid. At three points along the journey, the characters must make ability checks to deal with particular hazards. Have the characters roll for Beadle and Grimm using their character sheets.

On the first hazard where two or more characters fail skill checks (either made individually or as part of a group check), a wandering pack of snowy owlbears catches sight of the characters and sets up an attack. See “Owlbear Ambush” below for more.

### BLIZZARD CONDITIONS

Blizzard conditions are in effect during the characters’ journey. See the “Whither Weather?” sidebar earlier in the adventure.

### SNOWY SINKHOLE

Heavy snow atop the rocky shortcut trail conceals a number of sinkholes. Each character must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check to intuitively note the subtle shifting of the snow as they walk that gives the location of the holes away. On a failure, the character plunges down a sinkhole and is buried up to their neck in snow, taking 7 (2d6) slashing damage from razor-sharp ice and rocks. Another character who succeeded on their check can attempt a quick DC 16 Strength saving throw to try to grab a sinking character, plucking them to safety on a success. On a failure, the character doing the plucking is dragged down and takes the same damage.

Characters who fall into the sinkhole can dig themselves out in 1 minute with assistance from characters outside the sinkhole, or in 5 minutes without assistance.





### A BRIDGE TO FEAR

A twenty-foot-deep, twenty-foot wide gorge along the shortcut trail is crossed by a bridge that could only charitably be described as 'rickety.' Grimm swears the bridge is safe. Beadle says anyone who tries to walk across it will absolutely die.

Each character who walks across the bridge must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Intelligence (Investigation) check to avoid one of its many dangerously weak spots. Grimm has advantage on this check for having made this journey many times, and goes first to prove his point. Or, if he fails the check, to prove Beadle's point. On a failed check, a character plummets to the bottom of the gorge, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall and 3 (1d6) slashing damage from ice and rocks. Climbing up the gorge requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check.

Three or more characters who rope themselves together while crossing the bridge can make a group ability check to cross instead of individual checks. On a failed group check, all the roped-together characters fall.

The gorge can be crossed easily with appropriate magic, or can be jumped by any character with a Strength of 20 or higher who takes a running start. However, a character who jumps must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or succumb to a patch of ice on the far side, falling prone and taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

### FROSTBITE FALL

Along a steep slope, the shortcut trail gets slippery. Each character must carefully pull themselves along with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, or plunge down the hillside. The slide down deals no damage — but the ice covering a three-foot-deep stream at the bottom of the slope shatters when the first character hits it, plunging all characters who fall into ice-cold water. Unless a water-soaked character can quickly and completely change all their clothing, they gain one level of exhaustion by the time they reach Forstford.

Three or more characters who rope themselves together while traversing the slippery slope can make a

group ability check to cross instead of individual checks. On a failed group check, all the roped-together characters fall.

## OWLBEAR AMBUSH

The point at which this encounter occurs dictates whether the characters are the ambushers or the ambushees. On the first hazard where two or more characters fail ability checks, the characters stumble into the owlbear pack as soon as the last effects of the hazard are resolved. The owlbears' sudden appearance from out of the storm gives them advantage on their attack rolls in the first round of combat. Once the fight is done, no more owlbears appear, even if two or more characters fail checks against subsequent hazards.

If the characters make it through all three hazards with only one character (or no characters) failing a check, they run into the owlbear pack at the end of the journey. The characters' formidable skill at navigating the hazardous terrain of the shortcut means the owlbears are surprised as the fight begins.

The pack consists of three **snowy owlbears** spoiling for a fight. These expert hunters are not gluttons for punishment, however, and each owlbear flees if reduced to 10 hit points or fewer.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any area of snowy terrain for this fight.

### AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, use the same setup as for an 8th-level party. For a party of 10th-level characters, use four snowy owlbears.

### FIGHTING WITH BEADLE AND GRIMM

If the players are running Beadle and Grimm, and if having the retired adventurers fighting alongside the characters increases the party size beyond five, give each owlbear an additional 25 hit points.

## CARRYING ON

When the three hazards have been passed and the fight with the owlbears is done, the characters can easily complete the last leg of the journey to Forstford.

## BAD BLOOD

The scent of woodsmoke and the shimmer of firelight through the blizzard mark the characters' arrival in Forstford as they breathlessly push in along the snowy shortcut trail. The storm slows as the town comes fully into view, revealing that it appears very much not under attack by frost giants or anyone else, which lightens Grimm's mood a bit. But as the characters pass the first outlying houses, the barbarian and the character with the best passive Wisdom (Perception) score both hear a chilling sound.

Just audible above the hiss of the wind, an echoing horn call sounds out—a deep, booming tone that rises, then fades to silence.



Grimm grows frantic again, and can confirm from the direction of the horn sound on the wind that it came from the main trail. The giants are coming!

## EASYGOING DETENTE

As the characters reach the center of town, a number of townsfolk are already on the streets, having heard the horn as well. But before anyone can even introduce themselves, a middle-aged human woman pushes up to the characters and speaks—aiming her ire straight at Grimm and Beadle.

“You! You two reprobates have some nerve showing up here. Have you no shame? Have you no conscience?!”  
Glancing disdainfully at the rest of you, she says, “You’re being judged by the company you keep. What darkness do you bring here?”

This is Quilla, owner of the local inn, and headfolk and speaker of the town—and she bears a long-simmering grudge with Grimm and Beadle over the giant attack from years before. Grimm is too daunted by Quilla to respond to her, so Beadle steps up. As you describe her blistering attacks and Beadle’s deft attempts at quelling her anger, have the characters make Wisdom (Insight) checks. The character with the highest check is the first to note that many other folk in the town are glaring at Grimm and Beadle with dark looks, and it becomes immediately clear that some impartial figure needs to step up and defuse the tension.

Any character can slip between Quilla and Beadle to interrupt their conversation with roleplaying and a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If two or more characters roleplay together, the character who makes the check does so with advantage. If the check is successful, all the characters can see that their warning is being taken seriously by some of the worried townsfolk. But whether the check succeeds or not, Quilla obstinately refuses to believe any word of an imminent giant assault.

“I won’t listen to lies and bravado, not from these two or any companions of theirs! None of you are welcome here! We remember what you did, Grimm, and those we lost for the sake of your arrogance. And if this is some game meant to dredge up those memories, you’ll pay!”

Even as Quilla monologues, though, a shout goes up from behind her. The characters and the townsfolk alike see a squad of frost giant raiders pushing in along the main trail, driving packs of furious polar bears before them!

## FROST GIANT VANGUARD ASSAULT

The first wave of the frost giant assault is a group of young giants directing packs of bears, who were expecting to catch Forstford off guard. But the presence of Beadle, Grimm, and the characters—not to mention Beadle and Quilla’s ear-splitting argument—has thankfully brought all the folk of the town outside. All the townsfolk quickly grab up weapons and mount a defense, with archers climbing to the rooftops and axe-wielding warriors wading into the thick of the fray.

During this fight, the characters, Beadle, and Grimm focus on a lone giant raider who singles the party out for attack. This young frost giant uses the **hill giant** stat block with these changes:

- She has immunity to cold damage.
- Her greatclub attack is a greataxe attack that deals slashing damage.

Under the giant’s command, three **polar bears** tear into lightly armored characters, while the giant focuses on armored martial foes.

The bulk of the giants and bears are fought by townsfolk along the edges of the characters’ fight, but the townsfolk might lend initial assistance depending on how earnest the characters were in their attempts to warn them of the attack. If the earlier Charisma (Persuasion) check was a success, the locals help to harry the giant and the bears attacking the characters in the first round of combat, before turning to their own foes. This distraction means that neither the giant nor the bears can use their multiattack in the first round.

The temporary slackening of the storm means that blizzard conditions do not come into play during this fight.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any small town setup, or any open space at the center of a few houses for this fight.

### AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, use the same setup as for an 8th-level party. For a party of 10th-level characters, use four polar bears.

### FIGHTING WITH BEADLE AND GRIMM

If the players are running Beadle and Grimm, and if having the retired adventurers fighting alongside the characters increases the party size beyond five, give the giant and each polar bear an additional 20 hit points.

### FIGHTING WORDS

During the fight, the young frost giant shouts out a repeated invocation, which any character who understands Giant can translate. (This includes Grimm if none of the characters do so.)

“Thrym’s voice!” the giant calls out. “We follow Thrym’s voice!”

As the fight goes on, the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score notes the same phrase being repeated by the other giants, all of whom shout it like a blood oath.

## FALLEN FOE

The polar bears fight to the finish unless the young frost giant falls (as noted below), whereupon they snarl and flee. Any attack that reduces the giant to 10 or fewer hit points causes her to stumble back and fall prone. (If an attack reduces her to 0 hit points, leave her conscious at 1 hit point instead.) As her helmet goes flying off, the characters are all shocked to realize how young the giant is.

With her helmet off, you can tell as you couldn’t before that the badly wounded giant is barely a child. Tall, but perhaps only twelve years old in human terms. “We follow Thrym’s voice...” she whispers, but her eyes are full of fear now.

Characters who glance around to the rest of the fight can see that the townsfolk have the unprepared giant strike force on the run, with the giants clearly not having expected a full-on defense of the town. If the players want to simply finish their young giant off, they’re free to do so. But those who note the giant’s fear can take a few moments to interact with her, in either Giant or Common. Convinced that she’s about to die, the giant shares what she knows willingly. Use the following points to guide the conversation:

- The young giant’s name is Agnadh, of the Boneaxe clan.
- The Boneaxes have no real quarrel with the folk of Forstford or any other settlement. The frost giants have long understood that battles with the humanoids of Icewind Dale only lead to reprisals and attacks by adventurers, and are content to leave well enough alone.
- Recently, though, the clan jarl, a brutal warrior named Mekkar, has begun to talk relentlessly of the bad blood that has so often linked giants and humanoids, and to instill the giants of the clan with a hunger for combat.
- Years before, Mekkar was the giant who led the retribution mission against Forstford after Grimm slew his cousin, a murderous frost giant brigand.
- Three days past, Mekkar announced that he had received a vision from Thrym, calling for vengeance against indeterminate historical slights committed by the humanoids of the dale against giantkind.
- The attack on Forstford is to be just the first of many, with an army of giants, winter wolves, and bears attracting other monstrous forces to join it as it rolls inexorably toward Ten-Towns.

## GRANTING QUARTER

The fight around the characters is wrapping up, with a few giants fallen but most of them fled in response to the town’s forthright resistance. Any of the characters can make the case to let the young giant go, or you can have Grimm step toward her, swords in hand. Then he tosses one sword aside to reach out a hand and lift her to her feet.

“Go,” Grimm says, the giant towering above him but looking no less afraid. “Go home. And tell the others to end this senseless assault. Tell them this all needs to stop...”

Allowing the young giant to flee works to the characters’ favor, as they will discover in the final encounter.

## A BREAK IN THE ACTION

The folk of Forstford are jubilant in the aftermath of their successful defense of the town, with only a few people injured and no one killed. But based on what the young giant has revealed (or based just on the knowledge that winter wolves are part of the assault but have not yet been seen), the characters know that the worst is yet to come.



## FROST GIANT FRACAS

In the aftermath of the initial vanguard assault, no one in Forstford doubts the word of the characters, Grimm, and Beadle that another wave of giants and allied creatures is coming. The townsfolk are ready, and busy themselves blocking off the tracks that lead to town, sealing up buildings, preparing barricades, and setting archers onto every rooftop. Most of the folk of Forstford are not seasoned adventurers, though, and the characters' aid in these preparations can help swing the tide of the fight.

### PREPARING FOR BATTLE

Ask the players to suggest three tactical setups for the town. You can allow the characters to make initial suggestions with no prompting (with the expectation that some of the activities above will likely be suggested). Or you can lay out the activities above and ask for specific ideas on how best to accomplish them. Whatever approach the players want to take, call for a DC 15 group ability check for each tactical setup, with individual characters using any ability and skill combination germane to the activity. For example, to assist with setting up barricades to slow the giant advance, one character might make a Strength (Athletics) check to help carry timbers or push wagons into place, another character might make a Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check to help pick the best defensive location for the barricade, and so forth. Feel free to allow characters to apply skill proficiencies to nonstandard abilities, as you determine.

On the first successful group check, each character (including Beadle and Grimm if the players are running them as NPCs) gains a d4. Once during the giant attack, the character can roll that die and add the number rolled to any ability check, attack roll, or saving throw they make. The character can wait until after they roll the d20 before deciding to use this die.

On a second successful group check, the die increases to a d6. On a third success, it increases to a d8.

### WORKING AGAINST TIME

As the folk of Forstford prepare for the attack, the sound of horns rings out in the night, getting closer each time. The blizzard that had abated now returns in full force, with heavy snow blasted by driving winds.

As soon as the characters have made their final group ability check to help with the defensive preparations, the attack begins at "Giant Assault" below.

### BLIZZARD CONDITIONS

Blizzard conditions are in effect during this climactic encounter. See the "Whither Weather?" sidebar earlier in the adventure. Additionally, Mekkar the frost giant jarl is channeling the power of Auril and the Everlasting Rime to make the effects of the weather even more potent. See "Weather or Not" below for more information.

### GIANT ASSAULT

When the characters are ready to begin the fight, read or paraphrase the following to set the scene.

A thunderous booming of horns sounds out from all around the town, and dark forms suddenly loom to all sides. An eruption of howling marks the appearance of winter wolves driving forward out of the storm—and being met by a hail of arrows launched from every rooftop. Voices rise in shouted warning as the first frost giants appear, lumbering forward with axes in hand. And as they come, they and the wolves alike shout out their familiar battle cry: "We follow Thrym's voice!"

### FOCUSED FIGHT

As with the previous encounter, set up for the players that the fight is happening all around them, with the townsfolk stepping up to defend Forstford while the characters, Beadle, and Grimm focus on one group of assailants—the frost giant jarl Mekkar and his wolf and bear pack, who lead the charge. Through intermittent breaks in the blowing snow, the jarl is noticeable for the shoulder pauldrons he wears, shaped from the spiked skull of some ferocious monster. If the characters don't think to make Mekkar their focus in combat, Grimm assists them by swearing bloody oaths as he sprints across the battlefield toward him.

### GETTING THERE

As the characters move for Mekkar, they'll have to slip through and avoid other fights as townsfolk, wolves, bears, and giants lay into each other. Have each character make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw to sidestep stray attacks or avoid arrow fire, or an Intelligence saving throw to quickly assess and follow a safe course through the fray. A character takes 10 (3d6) piercing or slashing damage (your choice) from random attacks on a failed check, or half as much damage on a success.

### MEKKAR'S REVENGE

As soon as it becomes clear that the characters are moving for Mekkar, the **frost giant**, his **winter wolf** companion, and two **polar bears** change their own course to meet them. The characters can see the moment when Mekkar recognizes Grimm as the party closes to within 30 feet of the giant, inspiring a snarl of rage and a rock attack at one random character.

Mekkar's winter wolf uses its Cold Breath indiscriminately, focusing bite attacks on lightly armored characters while they wait for that attack to recharge. The bears also target lightly armored foes, hoping for a quick kill.

In addition to his normal attacks, Mekkar can make a gore attack using the steel-sharp spiked horns of his pauldrons. This uses the same statistics as his greataxe attack but deals piercing damage. He can make one gore attack as part of his multiattack. During the fight, Mekkar monologues relentlessly, telling the characters that the rule of humanoids in Icewind Dale is at an end, and that a new order is rising.

The winter wolf and the bears are Mekkar's devoted servants, and the giant's rage cannot be abated. All these foes fight to the finish.

If you prefer to play combat on a grid, you can use any open area surrounded by houses or other buildings for this fight.

### AT HIGHER LEVELS

For a party of 9th-level characters, use two winter wolves. For a party of 10th-level characters, use three winter wolves and give Mekkar 175 hit points.

### FIGHTING WITH BEADLE AND GRIMM

If the players are running Beadle and Grimm, and if having the retired adventurers fighting alongside the characters increases the party size beyond five, give each winter wolf an additional 20 hit points.



MEKKAR AND POLAR BEAR

### WEATHER OR NOT

The blizzard creates enough of a hindrance to the characters as they fight, but magic that Mekkar channels makes this battle even more formidable. On initiative count 0 each round, one random character must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw as they are slammed by a vortex of snow and freezing air. On a failed save, the character takes 14 (4d6) cold damage and is either blinded or has their speed reduced by half (choose randomly) until the end of their next turn. On a successful save, the character takes half as much damage and suffers no additional effect.

This effect ends if the sigil Mekkar wears is removed from him (see below) or if Mekkar is reduced to 0 hit points. As the characters fight, they notice similar effects afflicting the townsfolk fighting around them, many of whom are dropping as a result. The weather is Mekkar's ally in this fight, and is providing deadly backup to the giants and their allies.

If the characters are having a tough time in this fight, you can choose to target Beadle or Grimm with this attack, or simply have it ignore the characters while the unnatural effect grinds through the town's other defenders.

### SOMETHING IN MIND

At the start of round 2 of the fight, it becomes clear to all the characters that Mekkar's fury has an unnatural edge to it—almost as if he's under some sort of compulsion. With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom

(Perception) check (no action required), a character catches sight of the sigil of the Boneaxe clan bound to Mekkar's armor—and notes that it is glowing unnaturally.

The sigil can be torn from the giant's armor as an action with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics check), but doing so provokes an opportunity attack from Mekkar. With the sigil removed, Mekkar's rage takes on an erratic quality. Though he fights to the finish regardless, he has disadvantage on attack rolls, and the deadly weather effects noted above fade away, leaving only the blizzard's mundane effects behind.

### REWARD FOR MERCY

If the characters allowed the young giant Agnadh to flee to safety at the end of "Bad Blood," she worked hard in the short time before the assault to convince other giants that Mekkar's vengeance is a fool's plan. At the start of round 3 of the fight, the characters notice several giants engaged with the townsfolk who suddenly break and run, distracting Mekkar in his rage. Until the end of the round, Mekkar has disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws, and all attacks against him are made with advantage.

### AFTERMATH

Even before the fight ends, the tenacious defense of Forstford has many of the giants rethinking their attack (especially if the characters spared Agnadh; see above). As soon as Mekkar falls, the giants begin to break, shouting out to each other that the jarl is dead. Within a few rounds, the giants, winter wolves, and bears have retreated, and the battle is done.

### AURIL'S PLOTS

If it hasn't been claimed already, the glowing sigil that Mekkar wears is automatically noticed and can be removed when the fight is done. The sigil radiates enchantment magic to a *detect magic* spell. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check made to study the sigil confirms that it was intensifying and directing the frost giant's natural state of hostility and rage, and would have granted him an edge in convincing others to follow him. Any Intelligence (Arcana) check made to study the sigil also notes a pattern in its glow that forms the shape of a six-sided snowflake—the sign of Auril, the Frostmaiden.

The clear conclusion is that Auril or her agents provided Mekkar with the sigil, which channeled power dedicated to seeing the frost giants rise in anger across Icedale. This suggests that Auril was somehow impersonating Thrym to inspire Mekkar's vengeance. Her reason for doing so is left to your determination if you want to expand this adventure as part of your campaign, but it undoubtedly has something to do with the creation of the Everlasting Rime.

### TREASURE

The folk of Forstford work with the characters to collect any valuables from the fallen giants. The party's share of the loot amounts to 2,600 gp in gems and jewelry, a *po-tion of animal friendship*, and a *potion of greater healing*.

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## SPECIAL THANKS

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## ADVENTURING CONNECTIONS

This adventure takes place with Icedale under the threat of the Everlasting Rime—part of the backstory of the *Rime of the Frostmaiden* adventure. Although characters who play this adventure will be too high a level to take part in a *Rime of the Frostmaiden* campaign, you might have fun with the idea that characters in that campaign who are native to Icedale come from the town of Forstford, and were present during this giant attack. Those characters will be able to talk of fighting from the back with the rest of the townsfolk, and getting a glimpse of Beadle, Grimm, and a group of kick-ass adventurers going toe-to-toe with the frost giant jarl.

## WRAPPING UP

With the threat to Forstford ended and the giants dispersed, the townsfolk's disdain for Grimm and Beadle has been somewhat softened. The town speaker Quilla names the characters as friends of Forstford, and says that any chance to repay the favor they've done will be her pleasure. The characters can now count Beadle and Grimm among their friends, and you are free to make use of the retired adventurers and this special version of the Giant's Bane Tavern in your own campaigns.