

RED ICE ON THE BLACK SEA

An Advanced Fighting Fantasy adventure for 3-5
low-experienced adventurers in the Blackmoor Living World

For Directors' eyes only!



GALFIERO RISALITI



CHIMERA E

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We welcome your feedback about your Advanced Fighting Fantasy adventures in the Blackmoor Living World and about this humble publication. That is the main thing that pushes us to publish more and, if we can, better. Please contact us at: chimeraehobbygroup@yahoo.it

This adventure is dedicated to Wolfgang Baur.

This adventure is designed for the Blackmoor Living World campaign and is suitable for three to five low-experience adventurers, i.e. adventurers with 1-300 XPs.

Typical Blackmoor Living World adventures take a single gaming session of approximately two to four hours to be played and this adventure is not an exception. This adventure can be used as the first instalment of the story arc *The long vigil* or it can be just a one-off.

The Director is invited to review carefully all notes on the character sheets, as some may be relevant for this specific adventure.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A group of Skandaharian raiders and their associates from other subdued countries, with a base on the island of Frisia, took advantage of a particularly cold spell that froze the Black Sea and, travelling on sledges, took over the village of Greybanner, on the northern coast of Blackmoor, between Maus and the Old North Watchtower. The village was plundered and a good part of its inhabitants were taken into slavery in a gathering place in Frisia, before being finally transferred to Skandahar.

The ultimate leader of this group is a Skandaharian Chaos Mage called Ozmana, that is preparing a ritual to bring an eternal winter on Blackmoor.

Maus is expecting an attack and is keeping all its defences inside its walls, when a messenger from Greybanner, that travelled all the frozen way to Maus with two arrows stuck in his back torso to request assistance, dies and freezes literally few steps from the doors of the city. The characters find him and soon learn that no one will help Greybanner. Will they step in?

ADVENTURE HOOK

It is one of the coldest Winters of your young life and the Black Sea between Blackmoor and Frisia is frozen solid. Nevertheless, you are in search of adventures and you decided that Maus, a famous, ancient and big trading city port on the north-eastern tip of Blackmoor could be the right place to find what you are looking for.

The road to Maus is long and cold, beaten by freezing winds. You join a small group of travellers, all going in the same direction.

This is the perfect opportunity to ask the players to describe their characters and introduce the characters between each other, if they never adventured together before.

Eventually, you see the distant silhouette of the city walls of Maus. The city looks even more imponent than you imagined, so you walk faster, hoping you will soon find a warm fireplace and nice food. Suddenly, you notice, on the frozen path, a corpse, semi-covered by the snow.

If the characters (hopefully) examine the body, they find out the following:

It is the body of a Thonian man, dead and frozen solid. In his back torso are lodged two arrows and in his fist there is a scroll.

Further checks will highlight that:

- the arrows didn't kill the man, although it weakened him and the actual cause of death was freezing (a simple Special Skill Healing roll will suffice to highlight this);
- the arrows are Skandaharian craftwork (this can be found out easily by showing the arrows to any weapon master or dealer in Maus);
- the man has no weapons or other objects with him (this will be clear just by checking it);
- the clothes and shoes worn by this man have a slightly strange design, but anyway are not suitable for walking for a long way in this freezing weather and his body is emaciated (this will be clear just by checking it openly);
- the wrists of this man bear the signs and the bruises of bounds (this will be clear just by checking it openly or by doing an in depth medical examination in a suitable morgue);
- this man has some greenish bruises on his head, as if he was hit by a stick a few days ago (this will be highlighted by an in depth medical examination in a suitable morgue)
- this man bears the signs of a cruel whip on his back (this will be clear if his shirt will be removed).

All the above evidence comes from the fact that the man was surprised in his sleep and cruelly enslaved by the raiders for some time, before he managed to escape with a message by the head of village for the Baron. However, while he was escaping he was injured by a couple of arrows and reached Maus, through the freezing weather, so weak that he passed away very close to its doors.

The scroll in his frozen fist can be removed with some effort. It is a message:

To our Gracious Baron of Maus:

Dear Lord,

The village of Greybanner has been attacked by Skandaharian raiders and has been overwhelmed by these wicked enemies of Maus.

All surviving inhabitants, all devoted to Your Grace, have been enslaved and the dead have been fed to the wolves. Survivors are taken away from the village in groups, stronger and fitter first, and I'm afraid we won't see them anymore.

Please help us, Sir! Deliver us from slavery and death!

I will give this message to one of us that will try escaping tomorrow and seek for help. May all deities help him, as he is our last hope!

Your devout servant

Olutebes Hoek, Village Head of Greybanner

CHAPTER 1: LOOKING FOR HELP IN MAUS

The most likely action by the characters is entering Maus and delivering the message to the Baron of Maus, Piter Rall, begging him to send help to Greybanner.

The walls of Maus are higher than the masts of the tallest ships. Above the walls are black and yellow flags with a red lily in the centre, although they are stiff due to the freezing temperature. Looking up, you can see black smoke raising through the air and you can hear very loud noises. The gates are closed, as if the city was preparing for an imminent war.

The guards at city gates are professional but suspicious, as they are expecting a Skandaharian attack, something that is not uncommon and very feared, given that, in the past, Skandaharians managed to briefly take over the city various times. A group without Skandaharians, Half-Orcs or Afridhi, would be allowed in reasonably fast. A group with the above-mentioned races in it would be allowed to pass only if the Skandaharians, Half-Orcs or Afridhi in the group accept to be held in temporary detention while their companion go for their business in the city.

It would be also possible sending a message to the Baron Piter Rall or the Mayor Berger the Vast from the gates, but it will take at least a long, cold day to get an answer.

The characters may want to enter in Maus and maybe do some shopping, as well as try to contact the local authorities. In Maus you can buy anything is in the ruleset, including magic trinkets, with standard city prices, except food and accommodation, that cost twice as much, and weapons (including only the magical trinkets that may turn very handy in case of war) that cost three times as much. This is due to the fact that everybody is expecting a new Skandaharian raid pretty soon. Entering the city, that characters will see the following: *As soon as the Guardsmen let you in, you are overwhelmed by the huge crowd and the noise! The city walls are thicker than your home, the roads are carefully cobbled, the buildings are all plastered in fancy colours, although in part blackened by thick smoke coming off many chimneys, steam whistles through many relief valves. You also spot some people walking around on legs made of whining gears and clicking metal or shaking clockwork hands as if it was normal for people to have their limbs made of metal gears and levers.*

Neither the Baron, nor the Mayor will personally meet the characters (they are too busy with preparations for the expected Skandaharian raid) but will reply through some low-level delegates. The Baron will state that Greybanner is out of his fief, so he's not required to help them, and will suggest contacting the Mayor, that has a much broader remit (this is one of the most curious legal arrangements of Maus: the city is much larger than the tiny barony that initially spawned it, therefore the City's Mayor influences regional politics to a far greater degree than the Baron). The Mayor will state that Greybanner never contacted the City for many years, when it was time to pay taxes, and nevertheless now asks for help when the City is waiting for a massive raid as well: that's a very selfish behaviour on their side and anyway the message was addressed to the Baron and not to the Mayor, so it's not his business. Neither the Baron nor the Mayor will ultimately send any help, but they will suggest the characters to go to Greybanner and investigate if help is really needed or if it is just scaremongering.

The characters may also gather some local information by frequenting inns and markets, so, if they ask the right questions, they will discover the following:

- The Black Sea is all frozen, leaving the city open to attacks from the Skandaharians and from the Egg of Coot, so everybody is preparing for an attack.
- The people of Maus thought Greybanner was abandoned lots of time ago, when Skandaharian raids depopulated all the coast along the Northern Downs.

- Greybanner is quite close to the Old North Watchpost, that was destroyed by Skandaharian raiders and later on took over by dragons. Challenging the dragons in their home would be suicidal for any hero that is not a living myth.
- South of Maus, along the Trade Road, few years ago some Halflings from Booh founded the village of Pebbletown. It grew up as a comfortable place and it could be a good place to retreat if things turn bad in Maus.
- This terribly cold Winter will make the Goblins and the wolves of the Haven Peaks more reckless and wandering outside the walls may be very dangerous.
- The business outside the city is terrible, now: the frozen sea prevents sailing and hungry Goblins and wolves prevent land travelling. Luckily the business inside the city is thriving, if you have something to sell, such as food and weapons.

If the characters decide to stay in Maus (and maybe help against the Skandaharians allegedly going to raid it), go to Conclusion A, otherwise proceed to Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: THE ROAD TO GREYBANNER

Eventually, after checking carefully your equipment, you start walking the Raider Road, that goes from Maus to Blackmoor City, with the big interruption in the middle represented by the Old North Watchtower, now an impassable lair of dragons. Before the North Watchtower was destroyed by the Skandaharians and taken over by dragons, this road was very travelled, but now it is in total disrepair. At least you can't lose your way: to reach Greybanner you just need to follow it until you pass the Sweetwater River and then walk towards the Black Sea. The weather is freezing, but the landscape looks fantastic, all covered by shiny ice... including the vast surface of the Black Sea, that reflects the pale sunlight in the distance. You hope that you will pass all the time enjoying the landscape, as you know that the trek will be between 60 and 70 miles and many things could go wrong on the road.

Goblin ambush on the Haven Peaks

The first part of your journey takes you through the Haven Peaks and, when you are about 15 miles away from Maus, you notice that a group of hungry Goblins is hunting you. They travel light, armed only with spears and slings, and they are faster than you. You won't be able to keep them at distance for long...

The group of hungry Goblins (see Out of the Pit, pages 60-61), in the same number of the adventurers, will eventually reach them. They don't have complicate plans of attack: they just want to eat and survive.

The village of Oldtower

When you are about 30-35 miles away from Maus, where the Haven Peaks give way to the Crofter's Fen, you notice an old, crumbling tower between the Raider Road and the frozen surface of the Black Sea.

It is the hamlet of Oldtower, once a watch post for a well populated area, now much more isolated, as Skandaharian raids left this coast depopulated. It is made of a dozen log houses built around the crumbling tower, surrounded by a palisade. Once there was a small but safe port nearby, but, when a Skandaharian fleet occupied it, Blackmoorians hurled huge rocks at the ships, making the port almost unusable, as the rocks have never been removed. Nowadays, Oldtower survives mostly on hunting and on a communal flock of sheeps. The inhabitants are very suspicious in the best of circumstances and now are of course spooked, as there is a threat of Skandaharian raids from the frozen sea and another, very real threat from hungry Goblins and wolves from the frozen inland.

Oldtower may be a good place to stop over and sleep or get some food and equipment (at Village prices), but the inhabitants will not open the gates (initial social reaction: unfriendly, unless a Skandaharian is in the group, which will make the initial social reaction: hostile) unless the characters pass a social test as described by the AFF2 ruleset at page 50-51. If the characters manage to find their way inside, they will learn that the messenger from Greybanner passed by a few days before, but he raised suspicions of a sneak attack and the gate wasn't opened. In general, the inhabitants of Oldtower are very suspicious about Greybanner as, during the years, several hunters that went too far west disappeared. People from Oldtower says that, to live so close to the draconic fief of the Old North Watchtower, the inhabitants of Greybanner must have made some kind of ungodly pact with the dragons.

Wolves attack on the Crofter's Fen

When you are in the middle of the Crofter's Fen you hear howling and you spot from afar the scourge of this area: wolves!

There are two Snow Wolves (see Out of the Pit, page 120) for each character and they will not attack in a straightforward way, but they will rather try to tire the characters staying out of reach and attack, if possible, during the night. They will stop and eat food that the characters may want to leave behind.

The ford on the Sweetwater River

You finally reach the Sweetwater River and you know that Greybanner is on the other side of the river, slightly down north. You are quite surprised to see it fast flowing and not frozen, but you guess that the water is very cold, as it carries a lot of pieces of ice with it. There is no bridge, but just a ford and the Raider Road continues towards the Old North Watchtower, that is just 15 miles away from here, on the other side. As soon as you approach, freezing water and slabs of ice erupt from the centre of the strong current, taking a broadly humanoid shape: it is clearly some kind of guardian, trying to prevent you from crossing. It opens its frosted maw full of frozen fangs and, with a voice like the winter winds blowing all together, howls a wordless warning in your direction.

The creature is an Ice Elemental and was left there as a guardian by the Skandaharian Chaos Mage to prevent any disruption to her activities. Although it erupted on the middle of the river, it will follow the characters outside it until persuaded that they went and will never come back, or until they are all dead.

ICE ELEMENTAL

SKILL 8, STAMINA 12, ATTACKS: 2

Armour: Monster Medium Armour

Weapons: the Ice Elemental can attack in three different ways, depending on the distance from the characters (at long distance, the melee attack can't be chosen) and by the roll of a dice:

Dice roll: 1-2 = Blizzard Breath: a blast of freezing breath that hits all the characters on a 90 degrees cone in front of the Ice Elemental, up to a distance of 10 steps causing 2 damages or up to 30 steps causing 1 damage, ignoring armour.

Dice roll: 3-5 = Ice Hammer: the huge right fist of the Ice Elemental causes damages as a Medium Monster Claw.

Dice roll: 6 = Icicle Strike: from the left fist of the Ice Elemental icy darts are propelled towards one character and, on a successful attack, 1d6 darts hit, causing 1 damage each, with armour roll reducing the sum of all damages caused.

Crossing on foot the freezing, fast flowing river requires a 3d6 roll vs. SKILL + STAMINA: if the test is passed it will take 1-3 points of STAMINA, otherwise it will take 2d6 points of STAMINA, plus one point of SKILL due to frostbite (that can be cured with a few days of rest in a warm and comfortable place).

CHAPTER 3: GREYBANNER

This is the right time to hand out to the players the map of Greybanner (see below), but make sure you clarify that the image shows the village in Summer, while now it is all frozen. More background information about Greybanner can be found in Appendix 1.

Finally, in front of you is the village of Greybanner: perhaps two dozen wooden houses built around a stone arena, that looks very old. You notice that none of the chimneys produce smoke. On the outskirts of the village you can notice from afar that there are some cut heads on sticks!

The village was taken over by a raiding group that moved across from Frisia, on the other side of the Black Sea, on sledges pulled by dogs. The band was commanded by the Chaos Mage Ozmana and included a handful Skandaharian fighters, about two dozen Frost Docrae and several dogs. Most raiders retreated to Frisia and only two Skandaharian fighters and ten Docraes (see below) with ten Wolf Dogs (see Out of the Pit, pages 38-39) are holding the village (evenly split between the houses and the rock salt cave). The 36 inhabitants that have not yet been transferred to Frisia (mostly weaker ones, like elders and children) are locked in the rock salt cave just inland (on the snow it is easy to follow the tracks), while 4 of them are held in the arena, providing some fun to their slavers by fighting bare handed against Wolf Dogs. It is the Skandaharian way to identify the fittest, that will become slaves in Skandahar, and let the dogs eat the weakest, that they consider useless. The houses, the stables and the ships nearby, trapped by the ice in the small port, have been thoroughly plundered and the raiders and their dogs, during the night, sleep in the empty houses in small groups.

SKANDAHARIAN FIGHTER

SKILL 8, STAMINA 18

Talents: Strongarm, Hawkeye, Fleet Footed

Special Skills: Bows (2), Swords (3), Leadership (1), Language (Skandaharian) (4), Language (Docrae) (1), Language (Thonian) (2), i.e. they can hold most basic conversation, as well as read and write the Common Language.

Weapons: sword and longbow (the arrows are the same kind that killed the messenger)

Armor: furs and shield

Background and behavior: this seasoned warrior is fiercely loyal to Ozmana and doesn't want trouble in Greybanner right now that most slaves have been already

transferred. If the characters seem to get the upper hand against the Docraes that he leads, he will set the village afire to slow down the pursuers, get on a sledge and cross the frozen Black Sea.

FROST DOCRAE

SKILL 7, STAMINA 14

Talents: Survivor (arctic lands)

Special Skills: Spears (2), Hunting (3), Fishing (3), Awareness (3), Sneaking (1), Language (Docrae) (4), Language (Skandaharian) (2), Language (Thonian) (1), i.e. they know common words and phrases, but they can't read and write the Common Language.

Weapons: harpoon (treat as spear)

Armor: furs.

Background and behavior: these Docraes come from some ever-frozen lands north of Skandahar and are well adapted to the life in arctic regions. Skandaharians often raid their lands for slaves and they are part of a living tribute paid by their tribes to avoid being attacked. They offer their services willingly for a year and their families can fish and hunt whales and seals in peace. For this reason, they are not suicidal: they do their job and expect to go back to their families after some time. Use the rules for morale to determine if or when they flee.

If villagers are freed, they will beg the characters to bring back their relatives and friends held across the frozen Black Sea (tracks seem easy to follow) and they will start marching towards Oldtower and Maus, hoping to get refuge there until all the raiders are defeated.

CHAPTER 4: WALKING ON FROZEN WATER

The Black Sea is frozen solid and the few ships in the port of Greybanner are trapped in the ice. However, you can use the sledges and the dogs that the Skandaharian raiders used to cross on the icy surface the 60 or 70 miles that are between the closest land in Frisia to Blackmoor. The tracks of the Skandaharian sledges seem easy to follow, at least nearby Greybanner.

The tracks will be easy to follow all the way through, as the Skandaharians did nothing to hide them, not expecting to be followed. Every now and then the characters will find the grim remains of villagers from

Greybanner that were given to the dogs to be devoured, either because they tried to escape or because they were not strong enough to survive the conditions while crossing the icy plains. Their red blood stains the ice on the Black Sea. On one of these instances, the characters will find an adult arctic bear (Out of the Pit, pages 19-20) busy scavenging the leftovers and ready to attack them.

After crossing, the characters will see from afar the shiny, icy domes of a small village all made of ice where the frozen sea meets the Frisian mainland. The characters may want to go directly towards the icy village even if they have no cover on the icy wastes (go to chapter 6) or they may want to go to the mainland first and then come back to the icy village after circling around it (go to chapter 5 first).

CHAPTER 5: THE FROZEN LAND OF FRISIA

This part of Frisia is called the Glanos and it is a swampy area during the Summer. However, now it is frozen solid, but there are some hillocks and ice-covered vegetation that can provide good cover, but going with the sledges here it is much slower compared to the flat frozen sea that you recently crossed. While you are struggling to progress in this new landscape, you hear a thundering voice shouting: "WHAT IS ALL THIS NOISE! I AM TRYING TO SLEEP!" It is a human-like creature as tall as three men, one on top of the other, with extremely long, snow-white hair and beard, pale skin and wielding the log of a long pine tree as a huge spear.

The Frost Giant (Out of the Pit, pages 58.59) has very sensitive ears and wants just to go back and sleep quietly. If the characters pass all a Sneak test or find some other way to avoid making noise (for example magic...) the Giant will just turn away and go back to sleep, otherwise he will attack. If the characters instead decide to make a HUGE noise, the Giant will test his morale and, on failure, he will just go away, looking for a quieter place to sleep. If the characters dispatch the Giant and look for his lair, they will find a cave not far away (following giant tracks will be easy) and inside they will find a high tech Pocket Myriad (see AFF2, page 143), a Razor Egg (see AFF2, page 146) and 3 Giant Molars (Sorcery components). Three more Giant Molars suitable as Sorcery components can be extracted from the dead Giant as well. The Frost Giant could potentially read the slab in Chapter 7.

If the characters look for traces, they will find a fresh path in the snow going further inland, to the place where Ozmana is doing her experiments (chapter 7).

CHAPTER 6: THE ICE CAMP

The characters can reach the camp either from the flat ice wastes of the frozen Black Sea (that don't provide any cover, so their enemies will see them and will be ready to face them) or from the frozen swampy area inland (in this case their enemies will be surprised, as they don't expect to be followed).

This is the right time to show the players the handout with the image of the Ice camp, while the Director will be able to track their progresses in the associated map of Annex 2. There is a high number of enemies and probably the characters will have to invent some trick to free the villagers from Greybanner.

You are stunned by the vision of a campsite made all with sparkling, ice domes instead of tents! Perhaps there are a dozen of them and you see that, not too far to the east, the sea is not completely frozen anymore.

If the characters came from the mainland, read also the following: *You notice several Frost Docraes in their traditional furs, tending at sledges, or dogs, or tiny one-Docrae ships, or butchering seals that most likely they got from the nearby stretch of sea free from ice.*

If the characters came directly across the flat, frozen sea surface that doesn't provide any cover, move all encounters with a star outside and read the following instead: *You notice several Frost Docraes in their traditional furs and some Skandaharian warrior pointing at you and shaking their weapons.*

Outside

12 Docraes* (see description below) and 12 Wolf Dogs* (see Out of the Pit, pages 38-39) foraging.

Room 1.

Six Wolf Dogs* left as guards.

Room 2.

Four Docrae guards* and four Wolf Dogs.

Room 3.

One Skandaharian Warrior* (see description below) and three Docrae guards*, sleeping. Every now and then they bring a group of three or four villagers to Ozmana (see Chapter 7), so that she always has some fresh human life to sacrifice.

Room 4.

In this room there is a pile of barrels full of salted fish (looted from Greybanner).

Room 5.

Three Docraes cutting seal blubbers in pieces. They won't fight.

Room 6.

Ten villagers from Greybanner, with their legs bound, are beating seal blubbers with bone tools, to soften them.

Room 7.

This area is a kind of larder, with pieces of seal blubbers and sheeps from Greybanner cut in pieces for eating them later on. There is also a Skandaharian guarding the food and a Docrae assistant.

Room 8.

Six Docraes and six Wolf Dogs guards.

Room 9.

A dozen villagers from Greybanner. They are very bruised, bound and very cold. They don't know where the fellow villagers are, but they are sure that more than the ones at the Ice camp have been transferred across the frozen sea.

Room 10.

A dozen villagers from Greybanner. They are very bruised, bound and very cold.

Room 11.

A dozen villagers from Greybanner. They are very bruised, bound and very cold.

Room 12.

Two Docraes* and four Wolf Dogs* are here as servants and guards.

Room 13.

Three Skandaharian Warriors and six Wolf Dogs sleep here. One backpack with ten walrus tusks (20 gp each).

Room 14.

This area is in part a larder of raw meat cut in small pieces, in part a treasure room, with 80sp and 35gp. There are also many tools, six folded sails, 15 harpoons, 30 axes, 42 knives and about 150 blankets: all stuff looted in Greybanner.

SKANDAHARIAN FIGHTER

SKILL 8, STAMINA 18

Talents: Strongarm

Special Skills: Bows (2), Swords (3), Leadership (1), Language (Skandaharian) (4), Language (Docrae) (1), Language (Thonian) (2), i.e. they can hold most basic conversation, as well as read and write the Common Language.

Weapons: sword and longbow

Armor: furs and shield

Background and behavior: this proud warrior is fiercely loyal to Ozmana, after witnessing how she (allegedly) caused the cold snap that froze the Black Sea, and will fight to death for her, but despises the Docraes, that he considers useless cowards and doesn't hide this feeling at all.

FROST DOCRAE

SKILL 7, STAMINA 14

Talents: Survivor (arctic lands)

Special Skills: Spears (2), Hunting (3), Fishing (3), Awareness (3), Sneaking (1), Language (Docrae) (4), Language (Skandaharian) (2), Language (Thonian) (1), i.e. they know common words and phrases, but they can't read and write the Common Language.

Weapons: harpoon (treat as spear)

Armor: furs.

Background and behavior: these Docraes come from some ever-frozen lands north of Skandahar and are well adapted to the life in arctic regions. Skandaharians often raid their lands for slaves and they are part of a living tribute paid by their tribes to avoid being attacked. They offer their services willingly for a year and their families can fish and hunt whales and seals in peace. For this reason, they are not suicidal: they do their job and expect to go back to their families after some time. Use the rules for morale to determine if or when they flee. After the first Docrae flees, all the other Docraes test for morale with one point of penalty. After each Skandaharian Warrior that falls, all Docraes test for morale with a cumulative penalty point.

If the characters manage to free the villagers held in captivity in this chapter, but do not kill Ozmana, go to Conclusion C.

CHAPTER 7: THE CHAOS MAGE

From the Ice village described in Chapter 6, there is a trail of tracks going inland. It is the path going towards to the house on stilts where Ozmana is doing her studies. The house on stilts can be seen in Handout 3: the little, secluded valley where the house on stilts is found, although cold, is surprisingly clear of ice. This is simply due to the fact that its conformation protects it from the coldest winds, but it is also something that is driving Ozmana crazy, as it contradicts all she believes. There are a dozen bound villagers ready to be sacrificed and twenty or thirty corpses on the ground under the house: all that remains of the villagers that were already sacrificed.

As you approach the strange, wooden house on stilts, you hear a female voice screaming some litanies that you don't understand and cackling loud, on top of other voices, screaming in fear and horror. The cackling voice comes from a crazy woman of undefined age, with a very pale skin and long, perfectly white hair. She wears a tunic made of arctic furs, walks with a quarterstaff and wields a long, saw-bladed, bone knife dripping fresh blood. She drops out of the house on stilts the body of a bound villager, all drenched in blood.

OZMANA

SKILL 6, STAMINA 20, MAGIC 8

Talents: Combat reactions

Special Skills: Chaos Magic (4) (see Heroes Companions, pages 26-28), Acrobatics (1), Knives (3), Staves (2), Language (Skandaharian) (4), Language (Docrae) (1), Language (Giants) (2), Language (Thonian) (2), i.e. she can hold most basic conversation, as well as read and write the Common Language.

Chaos magic mutations: clawed legs, acid saliva.

Weapons: a quarterstaff and a long knife.

Armor: none.

Objects: a glass vial that contains the trapped life force of an Ice Elemental (see Chapter 2) – if the vial is broken, the Ice Elemental will serve faithfully whoever freed it for one hour. In alternative, it will follow a single order until its fulfillment or a tenday, whatever comes first. Of course, Ozmana will use this object as soon as she realizes that the characters came for spoiling her wicked plans.

Background and behavior: Ozmana is a crazy Chaos Mage from Skandahar and she found an ancient slab of stone carved originally by some Frost Giant shaman.

Ozmana few weeks ago improvised some kind of ritual, involving human sacrifice, asking for the world to become a frost desert, and soon after a cold spell froze the Black Sea solid. That happened just by chance, but she believed it was her power combined with the power of the magic slab and therefore she hired some Skandaharian Warriors with some slave-Docrae to get more humans to sacrifice and bring to Blackmoor a perennial cold winter. This was the cause of the raid on Greybanner. The slab of stone (value: 200gp for the Wizards Cabal) actually bears some carvings that are part of a magic ritual, however they have nothing to do with weather control, but rather about dragons. They can be literally read in the language of the Giants as: "Ekil Erif Ekam Erif Erif Erif" and, strictly speaking, they have no clear meaning. Ozmana will fight to death, laughing like crazy.

If the characters do kill Ozmana, but do not manage to free the villagers in Chapter 6, go to Conclusion D. If they manage to achieve both objectives, go to Conclusion E. If the characters managed only to free the villagers in the salt cave in Greybanner and achieved nothing else, go to Conclusion B.

The return trip to Greybanner is uneventful and is left to the Director, as well as the ice melting soon after.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion A

You pass the full tenday in Maus, waiting for a raid that will never come and spending thrice as much as you would do normally on your upkeep, as all prices went up in the expectation of a siege. Staying inside thick walls is surely safer and warmer, but won't make you a hero that quickly.

The characters get 0 Experience Points from this adventure and perhaps leave some debt in Maus, to pay for their *time out of the limelight* according to their social status.

Conclusion B

You managed to free the surviving villagers of Greybanner from the local rock salt cave, but couldn't bring home the fellow villagers that were kidnapped and taken to Frisia. Some time later, you learn that another group of young adventurers, called the Company of the Yellow Flower, managed to free the kidnapped villagers from the frozen land of Frisia.

The characters get 15 Experience Points from this adventure (+5 for each Skandaharian Warrior dispatched) and add the following notes to their character sheets: *The*

Gratitude of Greybanner (partial) and *Bested by the Yellow Flower*. See below what this means.

Conclusion C

You managed to free the surviving villagers of Greybanner from Frisia, but the Chaos Mage that caused all that pain is still free. Some time later, you learn that another group of young adventurers, called the Company of the Yellow Flower, managed to get hold of that Chaos Mage.

The characters get 35 Experience Points from this adventure (+5 for each Skandaharian Warrior dispatched) and add the following notes to their character sheets: *The Gratitude of Greybanner (full)* and *Bested by the Yellow Flower*. See below what this means. Their deeds are told and they also gain one point of Social Status, up to a maximum of 2.

Conclusion D

You managed to defeat the crazy Chaos Mage Ozmana, but couldn't find and free a lot of the villagers of Greybanner. Some time later, you learn that another group of young adventurers, called the Company of the Yellow Flower, managed to find and free them.

The characters get 35 Experience Points from this adventure (+5 for each Skandaharian Warrior dispatched) and the following notes to their character sheets: *The Gratitude of Greybanner (partial)* and *Bested by the Yellow Flower*. See below what this means. Their deeds are told and they also gain one point of Social Status, up to a maximum of 3.

Conclusion E

You freed the villagers of Greybanner and defeated the crazy Chaos Mage Ozmana: you are all heroes! ...at least for the good villagers of Greybanner...

The characters get 45 Experience Points (+5 for each Skandaharian Warrior dispatched) from this adventure and the following note to their character sheets: *The Gratitude of Greybanner (full)* (see below for more detail about this). If you were really impressed by their roleplay, you can add up to 10 extra Experience Points. Their deeds are told and they also gain one point of Social Status, up to a maximum of 3.

All surviving characters, whatever conclusion they reached, can restore their LUCK, STAMINA, MAGIC and MAGIC POINTS scores to their initial levels before taking on new adventures.

CHARACTER SHEET NOTES

Here are the consequences of each note added to the character sheets.

The Gratitude of Greybanner (partial)

The characters that enjoy the gratitude of Greybanner are guest of the village until the end of the tenday, although in a saddened atmosphere.

The Gratitude of Greybanner (full)

The characters that enjoy the gratitude of Greybanner are guest of the village until the end of the tenday and are also invited for another occasion to spend another tenday in Greybanner, eating and drinking like kings, whenever they want.

Bested by the Yellow Flower

On a well-known, public occasion, a group of adventurers known as “the Company of the Yellow Flower” did so much better than you, causing a public humiliation.



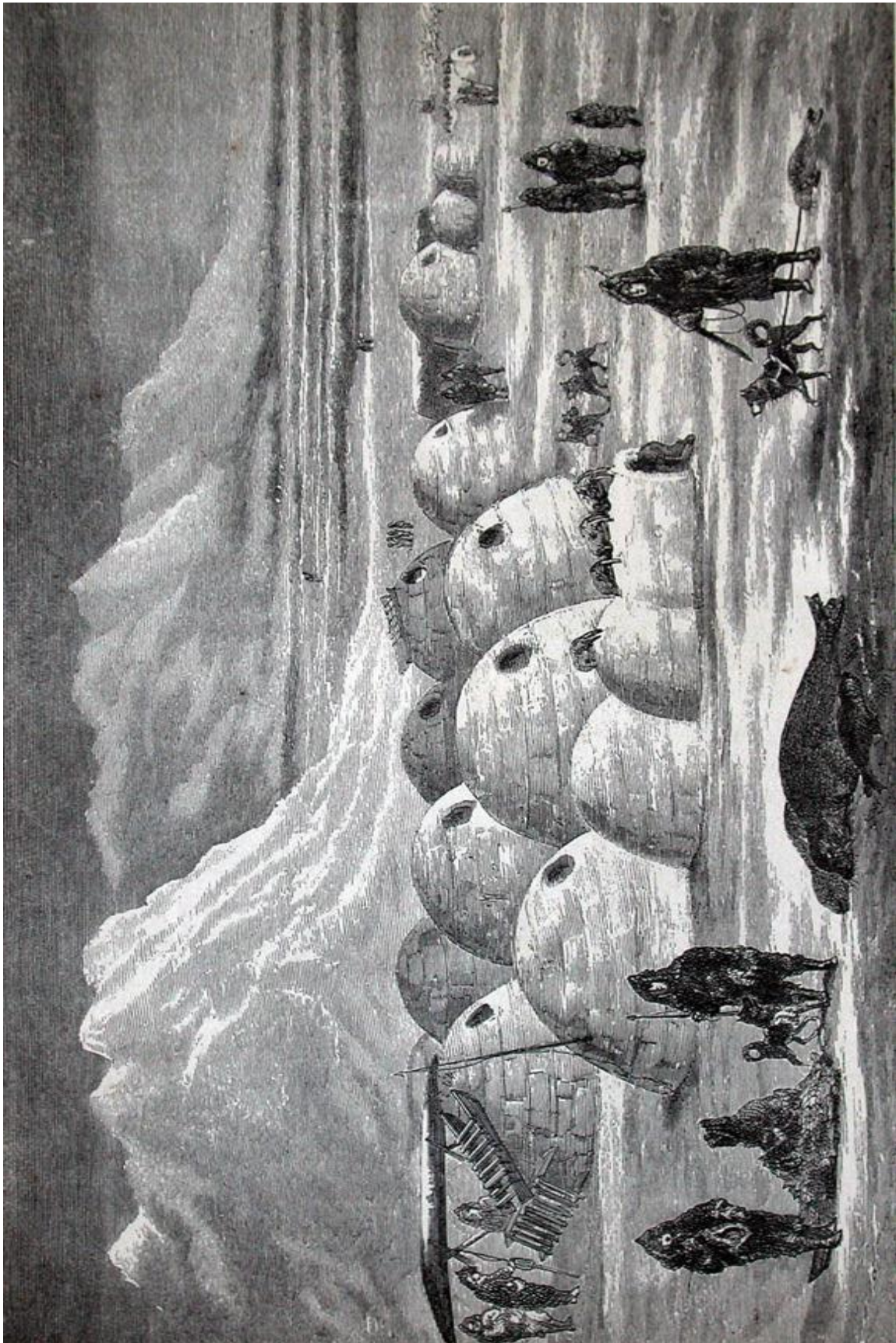
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Handout 1: Greybanner



Image by 2-Minute Table Top from: <https://2minutetabletop.com/gallery/greybanner-city/> CC BY-NC 4.0 Creative Commons

Handout 2: the Ice Village



from the book *Arctic Researches and Life Among the Esquimaux* (1865) by Charles Francis Hall

Handout 3: the house on stilts



Image freely shared by Renato Stecca for use not for profit <http://chiviaggiainpara.blogspot.com/2015/07/stati-uniti-georgia.html>

Appendix 1: the village of Greybanner

Greybanner was founded at the times of the original Thonian colonization of Blackmoor, under Robert of Geneva. The ancient arena was built in stone at that time and, although it is relatively small and poorly maintained, it is still the highlight of the village. The village is on the west side of the Sweetwater River, not far from the Black Sea, next to a small but handy natural port on that side of the river mouth. A couple of miles inland there is a small cave of rock salt, so Summer fishing can be salted and preserved in barrels.

After its foundation, the village had highs and lows, mostly linked to Skandaharian raids. After the last major Skandaharian attack, that led to abandoning the nearby Old North Watchtower, Greybanner was ready to be abandoned as well, but three or four families of fishermen decided to stay, and this led to the village rebirth. Greybanner this way survived by keeping a very low profile and the number of villagers grew up once more.

In 1035NC, the village consists of about 25 log houses.

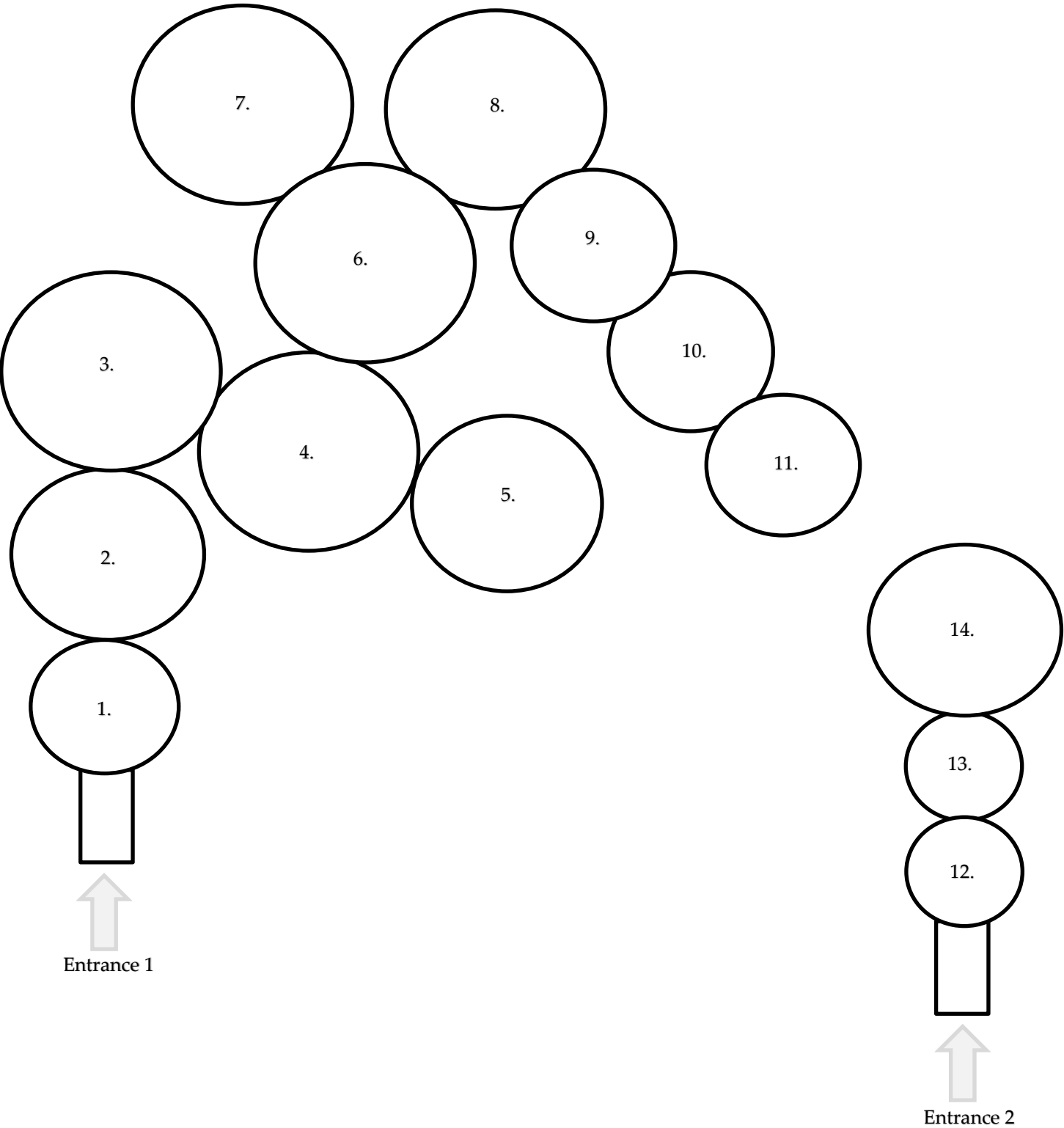
All its inhabitants, 120 people, before the attack of Ozmana, are Humans of Thonian descent and the village header is Olutebes Hoek. Olutebes will die during the attack and later on he will be replaced by one of the villagers transferred to the Ice camp in the land of Frisia.

The villagers of Greybanner, although Thonian, follow a Skandaharian practice with their dead: they do not undertake them, but they place them on a small ship, send it out on the seas at sunset and then burn it with flaming arrows. Perhaps this use comes from the fact that the land nearby the village is full of stones and difficult to dig, perhaps because of the realistic risk that wolves will find and eat the corpses.

There is a secret that all villagers share and they won't tell about this to any outsider: Greybanner has a long standing agreement with the dragons of the Old North Watchtower: every now and then the dragons light up a beacon in the Watchtower with their fire and the day after one of them flies to Greybanner. On that occasion, the villagers leave one person bound in the middle of the stone arena and the dragon picks that person up and flies back to the Old North Watchtower. Nobody knows what happens to the people taken by the dragons, but of course nobody has high expectations about them. Typically, dragons take one or two people per year and, often, old villagers volunteer for this grim duty. Other times the villagers kidnap stray hunters or travelers and offer them for the dragons. During the years, various hunters from Oldtower met this fate at the hand of their neighbors from Greybanner.

Probably linked to this tough relationship with the dragons, the patron deity of Greybanner is Chambers, although there is no organized cult and no proper temple in the village. The people of Greybanner doesn't like to talk about religion.

Appendix 2: map of the Ice Village for the Director





It is one of the coldest Winters of your young lives and the Black Sea between Blackmoor and Frisia is frozen solid. Nevertheless, you are in search of adventures. A small, isolated village in front of the newly formed ice pack has been assaulted and nobody else apart from you can help them: will you answer to their plead?

Part one of *The long vigil* adventure arc.

