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FROZEN RESEARCH

An Ice Forest adventure for 4-6 level 7 characters

ADVENTURE

Save Researchers from an unknown Entity

FROZEN RESEARCH

Frozen Research is a 5e adventure designed for 4-6 level 7 characters for use with the 5th Edition ruleset.

GM Note. This adventure is designed to be used with and references content from the free **Ice Forest** biome from troveoflore.com.

Contents

Structure of the Adventure	3
Frozen Research — Overview	4
The Adventure	5
Chapter 0: Introduction	5
Chapter 1: Baxburns	6
Node 1: Adrea Silverhorn	6
Node 2: Research Labs	8
Node 3: House of Emerald Glor	9
Node 4: Penbeg Lomdem	10
Chapter 2: The Forest	11
Node 5: Forest	11
Node 6: Emerald Glor	11
Node 6A: Emerald Glor vs. Shadow Wolves	11
Node 6B: A Researcher's Remains	13
Node 7: Yak-Lemming Caves	14
Node 8: Causterberry Bushes	16
Chapter 3: Confrontation	16
Node 9: Ice Beak Nest	16
Node 9A: Mudlake and Ice Beaks	16
Node 9B: Ice Beaks	17
The End	18

Credits

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Trove of Lore

FROZEN RESEARCH

STRUCTURE OF THE ADVENTURE

GM Note. Interesting for new GMs who have not played often or at all to better understand the structure of the adventure.

HOOKS

At the beginning of the adventure, several hooks will be suggested to you, which you can use to make your players aware of the actual problem. Each hook "captures" the PCs in a different way, so ideally one of the hooks should make the players want to address the problem.

The GM can decide whether to give the players all the hooks or fewer. Of course, there is also enough room for more hooks that the GM can come up with.

If the PCs are not yet a party, the various hooks are a good way to bring them together. Each PC can get their own hook for the adventure, so they can all "randomly" come together and form a party at the beginning of the actual adventure (Node 1).

NODES

The adventure consists of several "nodes". Nodes are the building blocks of the adventure. A node is an encounter where there are clues. These clues lead to other nodes.

Thus, nodes can be divided into the same three types as encounters: social, combat, and exploration.

EXPLORATION

In this type of node, players have to investigate something to find clues. This could be different places like rooms, streets, houses, or areas in the environment.

SOCIAL

In a social node, players must interact with NPCs. Mostly this happens in the form of conversations. However, depending on the party or PC, other ways can be found to get the clues of such a node. Here it is especially important that the GM remains flexible and gives out the clues even without a conversation. This can happen, for example, in the form of a diary of the corresponding NPC, in which the required information is written down.

COMBAT

Combats can also be nodes where clues can be found. For example, after a successfully defeated enemy, clues may be found nearby, or the enemy may be carrying something that leads to the next node.

CLUES

A clue is a piece of information that leads from one node to another. In our adventures, each node usually has at least 3 clues that lead to it and also three that lead away from it. This ensures that the players will definitely understand one of the clues and won't get stuck anywhere.

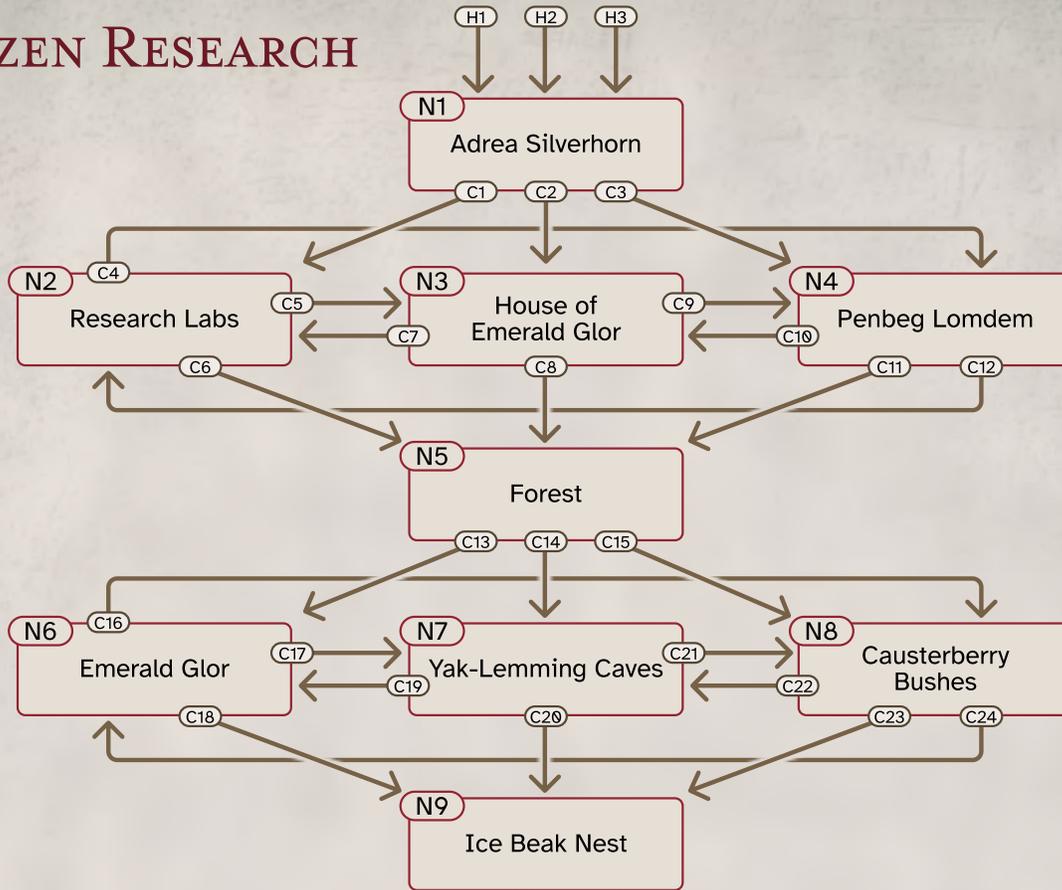
GM Note. Players are always given all the clues at the appropriate nodes without having to pass a check. This prevents reaching a point in the game where players are missing information to progress further.

Additional clues/information that is not mandatory can be obtained through successful checks. It may make sense to make a check when looking for clues, but players will get the clue regardless of the result of the check. A fail can mean that it takes longer to get the result. A good result could lead to extra information.

If you want to read more about this concept, you can read the great article on the ["Three Clue Rule" on the Alexandrian](#).



FROZEN RESEARCH



H1 → N1: Conversations about missing researchers. Adrea has offered a reward.

H2 → N1: Placard from the institute, reward for finding the researchers.

H3 → N1: Camp guard blames party for the disappearances and threatens arrest.

C1 → N2: Adrea found nothing out of the ordinary in the missing researchers' labs.

C2 → N3: Emerald Glor, one of the missing researchers, lives in a small house near the institute.

C3 → N4: The locals may have seen something.

C4 → N4: A notebook on which a note is stuck, saying:
Penbeg has been snooping around my place again. Here the book is safer.

C5 → N3: A key with the pendant *spare key house*.

C6 → N5: A pile of books about ice beaks and a piece of paper with the inscription *GIB => forest?* in one of the books.

C7 → N2: Note with ideas for research.

C8 → N5: Claw marks in front of the house, first leading in the direction of the nearby forest and then suddenly disappearing.

C9 → N4: As the party makes their investigations outside the house, they are observed by a man.

C10 → N3: Penbeg saw a giant bird grab Emerald in front of his house and fly him to the forest.

C11 → N5: Penbeg saw a giant bird grab Emerald in front of his house and fly him to the forest.

C12 → N2: Penbeg reports that Ayan Hunt, one of the kidnapped researchers, has talked about having made an outstanding discovery. Penbeg would love to know what it is, but they won't let him into the research labs.

C13 → N6: The tracks of several wolves.

C14 → N7: The entrance to a small underground cave that leads to an elaborate system of tunnels.

C15 → N8: A place with several causterberry shrubs.

C16 → N8: A small ice beak flies to a cluster of bushes with red berries.

C17 → N7: The entrance to a tunnel system.

C18a → N9: Emerald shows the party the way to the ice beak nest.

C18b → N9: Emerald's tracks lead to the ice beak nest.

C19 → N6: Screams from the surface. / Several dead yak-lemmings with blood trails leading to an exit.

C20a → N9: The researcher shows the party the way to the ice beak nest.

C20b → N9: The researcher's tracks lead to the ice beak nest.

C21 → N8: A few red berries leading to an exit.

C22 → N7: Entrance to caves hidden by the bushes.

C23 → N9: Follow (the direction of) an ice beak.

C24 → N6: Follow (the tracks of) shadow wolves.

THE ADVENTURE

GM Note. The adventure is set in a polar region in the immediate vicinity of an *Ice Forest*.

Therefore, the adventure uses lots of content from the *Ice Forest* biome, which you can find for free on troveoflore.com. It contains a lot of information that is useful for running this adventure.

TIME MARKS

In this adventure, we work with so-called time marks. For each node that the party passes on its way through the adventure, add a time mark to a tally. In addition, some checks may ask you to add a time mark as well.

The time marks are a simplified way to measure elapsed time and are important at a later point in the adventure, as the number of time marks can change the content.

If the party unnecessarily wastes a significant amount of time during the adventure, feel free to also add a time mark.

THE PLOT IN A NUTSHELL

For quite some time, a researcher in the small town of Baxburns has been working on a means to give living creatures a higher intelligence. In order to test the finished remedy, he went into the adjacent forest to administer it to an ice beak. The ice beak then captured the researcher in order to extort more of the drug from him so that his fellow swarm members could also benefit from the increased intelligence, and they could take control of the forest. When the researcher refuses to give the bird any more doses, the ice beak begins kidnapping other researchers at the research facility.

The party quickly becomes aware of the missing researchers in Baxburns and begins investigating. Various clues eventually lead them to the forest where, after a few encounters, they discover the ice beak's nest and free the kidnapped researchers (more or less alive), and escort them back to camp.

CHAPTER 0: INTRODUCTION

H1 → N1 (Adrea Silverhorn): Conversations about missing researchers. Adrea has offered a reward.

H2 → N1 (Adrea Silverhorn): Placard from the institute, reward for finding the researchers.

H3 → N1 (Adrea Silverhorn): Camp guard blames party for the disappearances and threatens arrest.

Around the research center, *The Central Polar Institute* in the icy Baxburns, a small tent camp has formed over the years. Even a few isolated houses have been built, mainly for the people who stay permanently at this place because of the research. However, the small place does not seem to have particularly many inhabitants. Not least because of the hostile environmental conditions: It is cold. The icy wind penetrates even through the thickest skins and coats and seems to freeze you to the bone. You don't want to stay outside unprotected for too long. This is also the reason why you only occasionally meet someone between the tents.

The snow between the dwellings has been trampled into small paths by the heavy steps. On some tents hang signs with inscriptions like *Herbs'n'Potions* or *Food and Whisky*. However, this is rather the exception. Those who live here do not need stores to survive.

HOOK 1: RUMORS

The party is walking in Baxburns and looks around a bit. As they pass a small group of people, they overhear the words "...another one disappeared. Adrea even offers a reward now if someone finds them."

When the party decides to approach the group, they learn that researchers have disappeared from the research center in the last two weeks. No one knows where they are or what happened. The residents of Baxburns are starting to get restless about this. Some hardly dare to leave their tents. The head of the facility, *Adrea Silverhorn (NI)*, is now promising everyone a reward of 500gp if the researchers are found.

GM Note. Adjust the reward to your party and world if necessary.

HOOK 2: "HELP WANTED"

On a half-snowed-in wooden board, the party finds an official-looking notice from the Central Polar Institute, along with some uninteresting pieces of paper. They are looking for someone willing to find and bring back missing researchers from the institute. If successful, there will be a compensation of 500gp.

GM Note. Adjust the reward to your party and world if necessary.

HOOK 3: ACCUSATIONS

On their way through the camp, the party is stopped by a massive orc named Gnorth Atub, who they assume to be some sort of camp guard because of his uniform. He is quite unfriendly and wants to know what the party is doing in Baxburns. He firmly believes they have something to do with the disappearance of the Institute's researchers because they are the only new element since people started disappearing. He threatens to arrest them if the researchers do not reappear or they do not leave the camp immediately.

CHAPTER 1: BAXBURNS

GM Note. Read the first two paragraphs under *Chapter 0* to the players to set the scene, and to give them a feeling for the location the adventure is set in.

NODE 1: ADREA SILVERHORN

Social

C1 → N2 (Research Labs): Adrea found nothing out of the ordinary in the missing researchers' labs.

C2 → N3 (House of Emerald Glor): Emerald Glor, one of the missing researchers, lives in a small house near the institute.

C3 → N4 (Penbeg Lomdem): The locals may have seen something.

GM Note. If the PCs are not yet a party and instead independently decide to investigate the disappearance of the researchers, they can form a group at this point to work together on the case.

When the party decides to address the problem of the disappeared researchers and make their way to the Institute, they are warmly welcomed and brought to Adrea Silverhorn.

You can read this to your players:

The Central Polar Institute

You make your way to the Central Polar Institute. It is not difficult to find because it towers over the small tent city many times over. Even the isolated houses you pass are nothing compared to the huge stone and glass colossus that now stands before you.

The institute is a large, round building with a glass dome that, to your amazement, is not snowed in. The gray walls rise smoothly into the sky and do not appear to let even the slightest bit of the icy climate inside. The stone is pierced by wide rings of glass, but they begin at a height that makes it impossible to see inside the building from the outside.

The only access that seems to exist is a heavy double door made of stone. As you step closer, you can see some writing engraved above the door: *The Central Polar Institute - research on adaptation to climate extremes.*

Adrea is very pleased that somebody decided so quickly to look for her missing colleagues. In conversation with her, the party learns the following:

- in the last 2 weeks, a total of 5 researchers have disappeared. They simply stopped showing up for work.
- Meanwhile, the few remaining researchers are so afraid they stay away from the institute or have even left the camp. Adrea is very upset about this because the research is obviously at a standstill now
- the institute mainly researches creatures of the polar region, as much knowledge can be drawn from their adaptations to the extreme climate
- Ayan Hunt, one of the missing researchers, has long been talking about having made a great discovery and that his findings would soon have to be tested experimentally
- she promises the group a reward of 500gp if they find and bring back the researchers

Adrea also drops the following sentences to lead the party to the next nodes:

- "I've already had a quick look around the research labs but haven't noticed anything out of the ordinary."
- "Emerald Glor, one of the missing people, lives right around here in a small house."
- "Maybe one of the camp residents saw something."

GM Note. Adjust the reward to your party and world if necessary.

ADREA SILVERHORN

Appearance. Adrea is a tall half-Elf, looking to be in her mid-40s (her real age is much older). She has a serious face, long brown hair artfully braided into pigtails, and wears a white lab coat that indicates her work as a researcher.

Personality Traits.

- She is very disciplined and places a high value on accurate work. She expects the same discipline and high commitment from others.
- She is a logical and rational person who has problems recognizing and interpreting the emotions of herself and others and generally keeps them out of decisions.
- She is very direct in conversations and does not think about how her statements might affect others.

Rules for Living.

- "Those who work hard are rewarded with corresponding knowledge."
- "Knowledge means social growth."
- "Rational thinking is more important than acting out of emotion."

Goal. Continue to advance research of polar environments to use the knowledge gained from it for the advancement of society.

GM Note. If the party decides not to talk to Adrea but tries to get information some other way (for example, by breaking into her office and looking for her diary), they can still get the three clues that way.

In this case, the GM decides what information is given to the players and under what conditions.

NODE 2: RESEARCH LABS

Exploration

C4 → N4 (Penbeg Lomdem): A notebook on which a note is stuck, saying: *Penbeg has been snooping around my place again. Here the book is safer.*

C5 → N3 (House of Emerald Glor): A key with the pendant *spare key house.*

C6 → N5 (Forest): A pile of books about ice beaks and a piece of paper with the inscription *GIB => forest?* in one of the books.

Once the party decides to take a closer look at the missing researchers' labs, they gain access to them, for example, by asking Adrea, breaking in, or otherwise gaining entry.

No matter which way they try, they have to get in eventually. So don't hide this node behind (too many/difficult) checks.

As soon as your players enter the the research labs, you can read this to them:

Research Labs

You enter a large room and are immediately hit by the smell of paper and acrid chemicals. On the long side of the room, you can see Baxburns through a pane of glass that runs the length of the room. To your right, a small staircase leads up to a gallery that winds once around the entire room. Countless shelves of books stand on it, some so high you need a ladder to reach the top shelves. In the lower part of the room, there are several desks, either ordered with complicated-looking assemblies of glass, bottles, and metal constructions or buried under notes, records and books.

To search the research rooms, the players can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check.

In any case, they find the following things in the room, which lead the players to the next nodes:

- Many books about ice beaks; in one of them, there is a small handwritten piece of paper reading the note "GIB => forest?"
- A key with a small tag that reads "spare key house".
- A worn notebook on which a note is stuck, with the inscription: "Penbeg has been snooping around my place again. Here the book is safer."

If the players start reading the notebook, they will find the first few pages of a fictional, handwritten book titled "The Adventures of Avo Frozenlashes". The book appears to be unfinished.

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)

Roll	Result
10 or less	Books, paper, pens, ink, small vials,... exactly what you would expect to find in a research lab. Add a time mark.
DC 12	In the drawer of one of the desks you will find a few (1d6) gold pieces.
DC 20	On one of the shelves, you notice a small bottle with a red liquid that looks familiar. It is a <i>potion of healing</i> .

If the players do further research on the ice beaks, they can use the following checks to get information. However, this will cost them additional time. Add a time mark.

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)

Roll	Result
DC 5	Ice beaks are large birds with white plumage and a very long, pointed beak. Add an additional time mark.
DC 12	Ice beaks are carnivores and hunt in large groups. Their fighting style is very aggressive.
DC 20	The ice beak's plumage is capable of absorbing acid and making it available for attack. This is because the bird has a preference for causterberries. The causterberry shrub contains a lot of acid, so over time, the creatures have adapted to it in order to get to their food unharmed.

GM Note. You can give out the additional information with any other checks if it fits better into the game. Maybe a player is proficient in Nature and already knows a lot about the polar region. In this case, he could also get information about the ice beaks with a Nature check.

NODE 3: HOUSE OF EMERALD GLOR

Exploration

C7 → N2 (Research Labs): Note with ideas for research.

C8 → N5 (Forest): Claw marks in front of the house, first leading in the direction of the nearby forest and then suddenly disappearing.

C9 → N4 (Penbeg Lomdem): As the party makes their investigations outside the house, they are observed by a man.

The party manages to find their way to Emerald Glor's house without issue. It is a simple, small house, with a bed, a fireplace and a desk.

To search in front of the house, the players can make the following checks.

In any case, they notice the following things, that lead the players to the next nodes:

- Claw marks in front of the house, which first lead in the direction of the nearby forest and then suddenly disappear.
- The players notice they are being watched by a man during their investigations.

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)

Roll	Result
12 or less	The snow in front of the house is strangely stirred up. Add a time mark.
DC 13	You find a large, white feather. A subsequent DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the feather to be of an ice beak.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE) OR WISDOM (SURVIVAL)

Roll	Result
DC 5	The claw marks belong to a bird.
DC 10	The claw marks belong to a very big bird.
DC 20	The claw marks belong to a giant ice beak.

If the players have the key from Node 2, they can use it to unlock the door. Otherwise, they can try to get into the house some other way. Let them make a matching check for it. If the score is 10 or less, add another time mark. The players manage to enter the house regardless.

To search in the house, the players can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check.

In any case, they find the following note on the desk, which leads the players to the next node:

CB. acid + spikem. nectar -> reagent?
test w. transmut. elems
=> more vials for extraction? inform Adrea
CB ==> GIB!?

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)

Roll	Result
10 or less	Add a time mark.
11 or more	They find a few (1d6) gold pieces in a drawer.

NODE 4: PENBEG LOMDEM

Social

C10 → N3 (House of Emerald Glor): Penbeg saw a giant bird grab Emerald in front of his house and fly him to the forest.

C11 → N5 (Forest): Penbeg saw a giant bird grab Emerald in front of his house and fly him to the forest.

C12 → N2 (Research Labs): Penbeg reports that Ayan Hunt, one of the kidnapped researchers, has talked about having made an outstanding discovery. Penbeg would love to know what it is, but they won't let him into the research labs.

The party can begin to question the camp inhabitants. Eventually, they will come across Penbeg Lomdem. Alternatively, they can go directly to Penbeg. They won't have much trouble asking their way through to him.

Penbeg is Emerald Glor's neighbor and seemingly dislikes him. It is not easy to get information out of the gnome. In conversation with the party, however, he drops the following sentences, which lead to the next nodes:

- "There was this huge white bird right in front of Emerald's house. The thing just grabbed him and flew with him towards the forest."
- "Ayan Hunt, one of the missing researchers, has been bragging for a while now that he was on the verge of a great discovery. I would love to know what it is. But they won't let me into the research labs."

In addition, the party learns the following with the appropriate checks:

CHARISMA (PERSUASION OR INTIMIDATION)

Roll	Result
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DC 15	Penbeg thinks little of Emerald. Emerald accuses Penbeg of spying on him, and Penbeg is jealous of the researcher's success. That's why he didn't tell anyone he saw Emerald being kidnapped by a bird.
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DC 20	Penbeg overheard a conversation between Ayan Hunt and Emerald about significantly increasing the intelligence of creatures. But he doesn't know precisely what was meant by that.
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PENBEG LOMDEM

Appearance. Penbeg Lomdem is a gnome with piercing eyes, brown hair that sticks out tangled from his head, and a short beard. On his left ear, he wears two small golden earrings. Under the thick cloak that reaches the ground, you can easily see a row of daggers stuck in his belt.

Personality Traits.

- He is very suspicious of strangers, does not like to talk to them, and is short-tempered.
- He is extremely snooty and, therefore, often sticks his nose into things that are none of his business.
- He is basically concerned with himself first and accordingly only does something if there is something in it for him.

Rules for Living.

- "I don't do anything for others unless they do something for me."
- "My well-being comes before that of others."
- "A lot can be done with the right information."

Goal. Somehow get wealth with as little effort and expense as possible.

CHAPTER 2: THE FOREST

NODE 5: FOREST

Exploration

C13 → N6 (Emerald Glor): The tracks of several wolves.

C14 → N7 (Yak-Lemming Caves): The entrance to a small underground cave that leads to an elaborate system of tunnels.

C15 → N8 (Causterberry Bushes): A place with several causterberry shrubs.

Once the party heads into the Ice Forest, you can read this description to them:

Ice Forest

It is dark between the tall trees of the forest. The sun barely manages to send its rays through the thick canopy. Instead, the snow itself gives off a mysterious yellow glow. Protected by the thick trunks, the cold seems more bearable here. Probably it's because the icy wind is much lighter here. Every now and then, a load of snow unexpectedly falls to the ground. You hear the soft buzzing of a white-blue bee, which flies past you without noticing you and disappears between the branches of a bush with bright red berries that catch your attention.

GM Note. If the party spent some time researching ice beaks and learned about them favoring causterberries, they can recognize the berries as such.

Players with a passive Perception of 13 or more also learn the following:

Deeper into the forest, you can already make out some tracks that cross the trail from the right.

If the party decides to search for tracks, they will find the following clues that will lead them to the subsequent nodes:

- Some animal tracks. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) checks reveals the tracks to be Wolf tracks. On a 17 or more, the players notice the tracks to be unusually light for the size of wolf they had to be from.
- Slightly off the path a small cave leads underground. After a short distance, it turns into a widely branching system of tunnels.
- Occasional small bird tracks that seem to increase the closer they get to the bushes with red berries.

NODE 6: EMERALD GLOR

Combat/Exploration

This node has two different versions. Which one occurs depends on how much time has passed since the beginning of the adventure.

If you have less than 7 time marks, go to node 6a.

If you have 7 or more time marks, go to node 6b.

GM Note. Ultimately, it is your decision whether Emerald Glor should live or not. The time marks are only meant to give a rough orientation.

NODE 6A: EMERALD GLOR VS. SHADOW WOLVES

C16 → N8 (Causterberry Bushes): A small ice beak flies to a cluster of bushes with red berries.

C17 → N7 (Yak-Lemming Caves): The entrance to a tunnel system.

C18a → N9 (Ice Beak Nest): Emerald shows the party the way to the ice beak nest.

C18b → N9 (Ice Beak Nest): Emerald's tracks lead to the ice beak nest.

When the players follow the wolf tracks, they hear cries for help and the growling of wolves after a short time. As they move closer to the sounds of fighting, they see a man trying to run to safety from a group of 3 black wolves. The wolves are barely visible in the shadows and seem to be nothing more than shadows themselves.

GM Note. Two of the wolves are regular *shadow wolves*, one is a *shadow wolf alpha*.

The party can try to approach the combat sounds quietly. They must succeed on a *DC 14 group Dexterity (Stealth)* check to do so. In this case, they will not be noticed by the wolves or the researcher.

If they fail the check or do not approach the fight quietly, they will be noticed and attacked by the wolves as well.

The attacked man is visibly hurt, and without help, he will definitely be killed by the shadow wolves.

Emerald has 7 hit points left when the players arrive, and will reach 0 hit points after 1 round (dead after 2) unless the party interrupts the fight.

EMERALD GLOR

medium humanoid (human)

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Int +3, Cha +3

Skills Arcana +3, Deception +3, History +3, Nature +3, Persuasion +3

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages Common, one other language of your choice

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 1/2

Brave. Emerald has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage. Or *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

EMERALD GLOR

Appearance. Emerald Glor is a human in his late twenties. His gray hair stands out steeply on all sides and definitely attracts attention. It is also noticeable that the researcher is missing the little finger of his right hand.

Personality Traits.

- Emerald is a supportive person who is always there when you need him. That's why he went into research: discovering things that can solve problems.
- He likes to be around people, is talkative and always has a story to tell, whether it's something from his life of research or just something exciting that happened to him.
- He doesn't take life too seriously, is always up for a joke, and loves to laugh.

Rules for Living.

- "When I help others, I feel good."
- "You learn from your mistakes."
- "Together, everything is easier."

Goal. Eventually, when he's had enough of research, move back to a warmer place and start a family.

OUTCOME A: EMERALD GLOR STAYS ALIVE

If the researcher stays alive and the shadow wolves are defeated or driven away, the party will learn the following from the man:

- His name is Emerald Glor and he was kidnapped a few days ago by a giant ice beak right outside his front door.
- The bird carried him into the forest and dropped him off in a nest. There were also his four colleagues from the institute.
- The ice beak that kidnapped him could talk and wanted him to give it a potion to make the other ice beaks more intelligent too.
- Emerald didn't know what the bird was talking about, so the creature flew off in a huff. However, some other ice beaks stayed behind to guard them.
- Emerald subsequently learned from his colleague Ayan Hunt that he had developed a compound that could significantly increase the intelligence of creatures. Ayan wanted to test it on an animal in the forest and chose an ice beak.
- Ayan's goal was to talk to the ice beak.
- However, the ice beak did not behave as Ayan had expected. It wanted the researcher to give it more doses of the potion to make more of the ice beaks intelligent. When Ayan refused, the bird kidnapped him.

- As Ayan remained steadfast, the ice beak started to kidnap other institute researchers to get the potion through them, which he has not succeeded in doing to this day, as no one but Ayan knows anything about it.
- The researchers devised an escape plan a short time later. Gereon and Emerald were to flee and get help while the three remaining researchers distracted the birds.
- Gereon and Emerald managed to escape, splitting up to further increase their chances of escape.
- Some time later, Emerald was attacked by shadow wolves.

Emerald wants the party to free his colleagues from the clutches of the ice beaks. He remembers the path he took and can lead the party to the nest.

Additionally, the party finds the following information at the combat location, which should lead them to other nodes:

- A small ice beak flies over their heads without noticing them. If the party follows it, they will arrive at a cluster of several bushes with red berries. Emerald alerts them that this is not the direction to the nest.
- Nearby is the entrance to a small cave that opens to a vast system of tunnels.

Emerald Glor will join the party regardless of which clue they follow. He does not want to continue wandering the forest alone. However, he would prefer if the party frees his colleagues and then brings them all back to Baxburns.

OUTCOME B: EMERALD GLOR DIES

If the researcher dies in battle and the shadow wolves are defeated or driven away, the party learns the following from the battlefield investigation to move on to the next nodes:

- The researcher's tracks seem to lead quite clearly in one direction and deeper into the forest.
- A small ice beak flies over their heads without noticing them. When the party follows it, they come to a cluster of several bushes with red berries.
- Nearby is the entrance to a small cave that opens to a vast system of tunnels.

If the party searches the dead researcher's body, they can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check.

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)

Roll	Result
DC 7	You find a small notebook with the name Emerald Glor written in the front. The actual contents of the book consist of disconnected notes.
DC 12	You find a small vial containing a light blue liquid that radiates an icy coldness. It is a <i>potion of cold resistance</i> .

NODE 6B: A RESEARCHER'S REMAINS

C16 → N8 (Causterberry Bushes): A small ice beak flies to a cluster of bushes with red berries.

C17 → N7 (Yak-Lemming Caves): The entrance to a tunnel system.

C18b → N9 (Ice Beak Nest): Emerald's tracks lead to the ice beak nest.

Following the wolf tracks, the players soon find signs of battle and the remains of a man. Have the party make a DC 14 group Dexterity (Stealth) check. On a fail, the wolves come back and attack the party to defend their territory.

When the party investigates the site of the fight, they learn the following, which leads them to the next nodes:

- The researcher's tracks seem to lead quite clearly in one direction and deeper into the forest.
- A small ice beak flies over their heads without noticing them. When the party follows it, they come to a cluster of several bushes with red berries.
- Nearby is the entrance to a small cave that opens to a vast system of tunnels.

If the party searches the dead researcher's body, they can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check.

INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)

Roll	Result
DC 7	You find a small notebook with the name Emerald Glor written in the front. The actual contents of the book consist of disconnected notes.
DC 12	You find a small vial containing a light blue liquid that radiates an icy coldness. With an appropriate spell or check, the player finds out that it is a <i>potion of cold resistance</i> .

NODE 7: YAK-LEMMING CAVES

Exploration/Combat

C19 → N6 (Emerald Glor): Screams from the surface. / Several dead yak-lemmings with blood trails leading to an exit.

C21 → N8 (Causterberry Bushes): A few red berries leading to an exit.

C20a → N9 (Ice Beak Nest): The researcher shows the party the way to the ice beak nest.

C20b → N9 (Ice Beak Nest): The researcher's tracks lead to the ice beak nest.

GM Note. The clues at this node should be given to the party in the above order to prevent logical errors and to make the adventure more interesting.

When the party ventures into the hollow, they quickly find themselves in a maze of countless small tunnels. Occasionally they stumble across various bones of small and sometimes larger creatures. With an Intelligence (Nature) check, they can learn additional information.

INTELLIGENCE (NATURE)

Roll Result

DC 15 The party is apparently in the corridors of yak-lemmings. Yak-lemmings are small, four-legged creatures with long, black fur and horns.

DC 20 Yak-lemmings live together in groups. Their tunnel systems are so extensive that it is easy to get lost in them. If you disturb them or even damage their tunnels, the yak-lemmings quickly become aggressive.

Also, the party notices the following as they move through the tunnels, which leads them to the next nodes:

- A few red berries leading to an exit.
- *If you have less than 7 time marks and the party hasn't been to node 6:* The screams of help from a man behind an exit to the surface.
- The bodies of several dead yak-lemmings whose blood trails lead to an exit.

If the party continues to follow the tunnels without following either of the first two clues, the PCs can hear quick footsteps and the snorting of several creatures after some time. They will be spotted if the party does not hide with a successful *DC 11 Dexterity (Stealth)* check.

Shortly after, a man comes into view, pursued by 5 (2d4) *yak-lemmings*. If the party did not successfully hide, they will now be attacked by the *yak-lemmings* as well.

If the party does not intervene, the man will be killed by the *yak-lemmings*.

Gereon has 4 hit points left when the players arrive, and will reach 0 hit points after 2 rounds (dead after 3) unless the party interrupts the chase.

GEREON PUDDLEFOOT

small humanoid (halfling)

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Int +4, Wis +2

Skills Arcana +4, History +4, Investigation +4, Nature +4

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Halfling

Proficiency Bonus +2

Challenge 1/2

Lucky. When Gereon rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage. Or *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

OUTCOME A: THE MAN SURVIVES

If the man survives the fight with the yak-lemmings, the party learns the following from him:

- His name is Gereon Puddlefoot, and he was kidnapped a week ago by a gigantic ice beak.
- The bird carried him into the forest and dropped him off in a nest. There were also the two colleagues from the institute who had gone missing before.
- The ice beak that kidnapped him was able to talk and wanted to have a potion to make the other ice beaks more intelligent.
- Gereon did not know what the bird was talking about, so the creature flew away in a rage. However, some other ice beaks stayed behind to guard them.
- Afterward, Gereon learned from his colleague Ayan Hunt that he had developed a potion that could significantly increase the intelligence of creatures. He wanted to test it on a creature in the forest and chose an ice beak.
- Ayan's goal was to talk to the ice beak.
- The ice beak did not behave as Ayan had expected. It wanted the researcher to give it more doses to make more ice beaks intelligent. When Ayan refused, the bird kidnapped him.
- Because Ayan persisted, the ice beak began kidnapping other Institute researchers to obtain the potion through them, which he has not succeeded in doing since no one but Ayan knows anything about the potion.
- After even more of them were kidnapped, the researchers finally devised an escape plan. Gereon and Emerald were to escape and get help, while the remaining three researchers should distract the birds.
- Gereon and Emerald managed to escape, splitting up to further increase their chances.
- Gereon escaped through the tunnels of the yak-lemmings, unable to find another exit.

Gereon will ask the party to help his colleagues. He's worried about their well-being and is afraid the ice beaks might soon kill them. He's able to backtrack his path to the nest, which leads the party to the final node.

OUTCOME B: THE MAN DIES

The party can retrace the man's tracks and thus get to the next node.

GEREON PUDDLEFOOT

Appearance. Gereon is a halfling around fifty with tangled blond curls and a friendly smile. He wears a white smock under a thick coat. With every step he takes, you hear the soft clink of glass coming from his coat pockets.

Personality Traits.

- Gereon is quiet and likes to be by himself. However, he has no objection to a more profound conversation now and then.
- Gereon is not a friend of great adventures, excitement, or even danger. He loves the peace and routine of the institute.
- As soon as there are new findings in research, he gets very excited and has to tell everyone—whether the person wants to know or not.

Rules for Living.

- "In tranquility lies strength."
- "Habits provide security and structure and make life easier."
- "Sharing your knowledge makes you happy."

Goal. To use his knowledge and research to help people live happier lives.

NODE 8: CAUSTERBERRY BUSHES

Exploration

C22 → N7 (Yak-Lemming Caves): Entrance to caves hidden by the bushes.

C23 → N9 (Ice Beak Nest): Follow (the direction of) an ice beak.

C24 → N6 (Emerald Glor): Follow (the tracks of) shadow wolves.

The party can decide to take a closer look at the causterberries. They will have no problem finding the entrance to a tunnel hidden under one of the bushes, which leads to one of the next nodes.

After a short time, a white bird with a long beak comes flying and starts eating some of the berries.

GM Note. If the players researched ice beaks, or alternatively succeed on a *DC 15 Intelligence (Nature)* check, they will recognize the bird to be an ice beak.

The ice beak pays no mind to the players if they do not attack it and continues to eat berries until a shadow wolf approaches and chases the bird away to defend the shadow wolf pack's territory. These are two clues that lead to the following nodes.

GM Note. If the players were already at node 6, the shadow wolf does not appear, and the ice beak flies away on its own after some time.

GM Note. If the players have chosen a clue and do not follow the creatures, clues C22 and C24 will change from following the creatures to following the tracks of the creatures. This way, the clues are not lost, and the players can return to that node at a later point in the adventure and follow the clues.

CHAPTER 3: CONFRONTATION

NODE 9: ICE BEAK NEST

Combat

This node has two different versions. Which one occurs depends on which node the party comes from.

If the party is coming from node 6 or 8, go to node 9a.

If the party comes from node 7, no to node 9b.

NODE 9A: MUDLAKE AND ICE BEAKS

The party arrives (with or without researchers) at a large mudlake. You can read this description to the players:

Mudlake

You stand in front of a wide, open area that consists of nothing more than brown, muddy earth. Occasionally, a few stones or tree stumps protrude from the mud and paint a bizarre picture. What attracts your attention, however, is a small island in the distance, on which a huge tree grows towards the sky. Between its broad branches you can see nests, as well as the white plumage of birds. Every now and then one of them flies away into the forest or comes back to one of the nests. You observe the scene for some time, when you hear cries for help that seem to come directly from the large tree.

GM Note. With a *DC 23 Wisdom (Perception)* check, the PCs can see the entrance to an underground cave on the island. If the players decide to look for an entry to the caves on their side of the mudlake, to bypass the mudlake underground, they can either backtrack to one of the earlier entrances, or spend a non-significant amount of time searching for one at their current location. With a successful *DC 18 Wisdom (Survival)* check they are able to find one, though they still have to navigate the yak-lemming caves to the right exit.

As players move through the mudlake toward the tree, they encounter the *mudlake hazard* and a *mudcrawler*.

GM Note. If it's clear that the party will defeat the mudlake and mudcrawler encounter quite easily, or they cause a huge ruccus, some ice beaks can join the fight right now to defend their nest.

As soon as the party reaches the island, a giant ice beak (*Notched Beak*) lands in front of them, together with 2 (1d4) smaller ones.

NODE 9B: ICE BEAKS

The party reaches the surface (with or without researchers). They find themselves on a small island in the middle of a large mudlake. On the island is a gigantic tree with many bird nests in its branches. The party hears cries for help from the top of the tree.

If the party has approached the island quietly and managed a *DC 16 group Dexterity (Stealth)* check, they will not be noticed by the ice beaks. Otherwise, a giant ice beak (*Notched Beak*) will land in front of them, along with 2 (1d4) smaller ones.

SHOWDOWN

When the party decides to fight the ice beaks, they find themselves battling *Notched Beak* (*giant ice beak*) and 2 (1d4) *ice beaks*.

At initiative count 20, 2 (1d4) *ice beaks* will join the fight, until *Notched Beak* is defeated.

The party can also try to negotiate with the ice beaks. Use the character description of *Notched Beak* to decide what kind of proposals it will accept.

GM Note. Of course, there are other ways the adventure can end, depending on how the party behaves. The outcomes described here are only for orientation and are, in our opinion, the most probable endings.

Notched Beak knows the following:

- The ice beak was out in the forest picking causterberries when all of a sudden it felt different. It can't really put into words what happened to it, but it suddenly saw the world with different eyes.
- A man came up to it and started talking to it. He was very excited and told the bird that he had succeeded in his attempt and that this was a milestone in the history of research.
- The ice beak quickly realized what this intelligence-boosting agent could mean and told the researcher to feed it to his swarm mates as well. This would make survival much easier for the birds.
- When the researcher refused, the ice beak carried him to its nest and looked for other researchers who could get him the potion.
- But every researcher it took with it testified that they knew nothing about such a potion.

NOTCHED BEAK

Appearance. The ice beak is huge and towers over the PCs by several heads. Its eyes shine like small blue gems, and its plumage is brilliant white. Only its long, pointed beak is notched in one spot as if it had been in a nasty fight.

Personality Traits.

- The ice beak is very keen to protect its flock and ensure the survival of the birds.
- He is thoughtful and deliberate and does not reject offers lightly.
- He is power-hungry and wants as much influence and power as possible.

Rules for Living.

- "I protect my swarm at all costs and ensure its survival."
- "The more powerful and influential I am, the better I can provide protection."
- "Thoughtful action provides better results than rash action."

Goal. Make the other ice beaks intelligent and bring the forest under their control to make it safer.

THE END

Once the party has successfully interacted with the ice beaks, they can free the three explorers from the ice beaks' nests. They learn the following from Ayan Hunt, one of the explorers:

- He has developed a compound that can significantly increase the intelligence of creatures.
- He set out to test the completed compound on an ice beak two weeks ago. His goal was to be able to talk to the creature. However, the potion was more vital than Ayan expected, so the ice beak kidnapped him and wanted to extort more of the compound from him to make his fellow swarm members intelligent.
- Ayan refused to provide more of the potion for fear of the other ice beaks following suit in their behavior, and because he did not have more prepared. So the ice beak began to kidnap more researchers, hoping that one of them might bring it the potion it wanted.
- But this did not work because no one but Ayan knew anything about his research.
- After more and more of them were kidnapped, the researchers finally came up with an escape plan. Gereon and Emerald should escape and get help, while the remaining three researchers should distract the birds.

When the party returns to Baxburns with the researchers, they will receive the agreed reward from Adrea.

GM Note. If players return without Emerald and Gereon, the two are dead, and their remains can be found in the forest and in the yak-lemmings tunnels.

Frozen Research

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