

# GLACIER IN THE DESERT



A BIZARRE MYSTERY? OR A DASTARDLY PLOT?





# GLACIER IN THE DESERT

*Glacier in the desert* is a 5th Edition adventure for **4-6 characters of 5th-level** and is **optimized for a party of four characters with an average party level (APL) of 5**. The party finds themselves deep within the desert, in a wretched hive of scum and villainy, where they must uncover a most dastardly plot.

## BACKSTORY

Two More Weeks is a bustling trading post in the middle of the Yellow Ocean desert. Named for the length of time it would take anyone to reach either the Red Coast in the north or the Thornwoods in the south, it offers travelers crossing the desert safety and the last chance to replenish supplies. Its isolation has also led to residents who seek to be away from prying eyes and the town is favored by ne'er-do-wells and those looking to make their fortune.

Weeks ago the white dragon, Tundras, was captured and smuggled into the black market of Two More Weeks by Or Medesk, who planned to sell the monster on to the highest bidder. Before he got the chance, however, Darnoc Harshwind, a white half-dragon, and Tundras' half-brother rescued the dragon, killing Or to taking the smugglers body as a frozen trophy.

The two dragonkin, unable to brave the scorching heat without first collecting the necessary supplies, have hidden themselves nearby. Tundras has made an underground lake her lair. Injured and weakened by the oppressive heat, Tundras is being cared for by Darnoc's kobold followers, who snatch people and food that they drop down the town's well into the waiting maw of the white dragon. Caught in the act, Darnoc was forced to murder Alexander Pike, the captain of the Town Guard.

Using magic Darnoc took Pike's place, and ensures the Guard is blind to the actions of his kobold followers, as they steal the provisions necessary to create a teleportation circle. Once Tundras is healed, she will take her murderous revenge on the town, before leaving through the portal.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

When the party arrives in town, read or paraphrase the following:

After two full weeks in the desert, the shaded eaves of the adobe buildings and fresh water of the oasis are a welcome sight, but as a cool breeze prickles your skin, a bizarre visage fills your vision.

On the outskirts of town stands a wagon, at least, that's what you think it is, for the entire vehicles is encased in ice!

If the party stops to investigate they are approached by the local sheriff, Aryass Sand (LG human male **veteran**). If the party moves on without investigating, Aryass will search them out and ask the party to investigate the strange occurrence. A drunkard, he commands little respect from the locals. Nonetheless, he provides the following details:

- The wagon belongs to a traveling magic items salesman, Dicky Bogwin (CG halfling male **commoner**).
- It was discovered five days ago and, despite the intense heat, the ice has melted very little.
- Hands are all that remains of Dicky, frozen to the reins.
- Nothing appears to be taken from the cart, although the camels that pulled it are also missing.
- If they can find an answer to these strange events Aryass will pay the party 100 gp each.
- He will explain that disappearances and murders are, sadly, all-too-common, given the type of ne'er-do-well that calls Two More Weeks home. In fact, rumors abound of other people having gone missing. Aryass will caution the characters, however, explaining that the locals do not take kindly to people nosing into their business.



## Two More Weeks

OASIS

MARKET

OR MESK'S  
STOREROOM

CLOAK  
AND  
DAGGER

ABANDONED  
STABLES

TOWN  
GUARDHOUSE

WELL

DICKY'S  
CART

## AN ICY INVESTIGATION

Aryass will offer whatever aid he can and can be found in the tavern, the Cloak and Dagger, where he has arranged for rooms for the adventurers to stay.

Give the players the player map of Two More Weeks (see appendices) and encourage them to discuss their next moves. Use the following guidance to help you run the investigation.

### FROZEN CART

A short walk out of the town will bring the party to the icy cart. The carriage is an extravagant and gaudy two-storey shop on wheels. Two members of the town guard (use the **thug** stat block) watch over the carriage day and night to avoid anyone tampering with the scene. The doors of the carriage have been frozen shut and a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check can force the door open. Alternatively, the use of fire can be used to melt the ice.

**Inside the Cart.** No check is required to reveal that everything appears out of place inside. This includes a number of magical items, frozen into place.

A character can attempt to take an item from the carriage, however, they must free it from the ice and do so without the notice of the guards. If caught attempting to steal anything, the guards quickly become hostile, sounding the alarm. Two more **thugs** arrive one round later (the DC for all such checks is a 15).

**Outside the Cart.** A DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check on the outside of the cart reveals a hidden compartment under the carriage, which appears to have been forced open and emptied of its contents. The same check will reveal tracks in the sand leading away from the scene and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check allows the tracks to be followed the oasis north of town. Additionally, a DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check reveals the tracks to be those made by kobolds.

**Treasure.** The caravan contains three *potions of healing*, two *potions of diminution* and a *potion of fire breath*. If a check to remove a potion from the ice fails by more than five the vial is shattered and the potion lost.



## THE OASIS

An oasis, roughly 25 feet in radius, can be found a mile from the town. A rime of frost surrounds the water and the water is covered in a thin layer of ice. Around the water's edge there are signs of various tracks in the sand, but it is impossible to determine anything from these due to the large amount of traffic hereabouts. One of the larger palm trees at the water's edge has been uprooted, a feat of strength that would be impossible for most humanoids.

The water in the oasis is extremely cold and, for each minute spent in the water requires a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffering one level of exhaustion. Any creature that has resistance to cold damage makes this check with advantage.

The water gradually increases in depth, before a sharp drop off in the very center. Although impossible to see without entering the water, this drop off is, in fact, a subterranean tunnel that leads to the cave Tundras currently inhabits. The tunnel is a mile long, all of it completely underwater. If the party come to the oasis at night, Tundrus will appear and attack. Without the ability to breath underwater and without resistance to the subzero temperatures, this journey is a death sentence.



## TOWN'S GUARD

The Town's Guard headquarters is a large, cube-shaped building to the north of town. Two guards (use the **thug** stat block) who will question the party on their business, sniggering sardonically if the characters mention Aryass. The guards are more of a local militia, bought and paid for by Or Mesk, and for the right price they will turn a blind eye to any "suspicious goings on".



Aryass' role of sheriff is a feature left over from Two's time as a frontier town. These days the residents pay little heed to the drunkard and his name carries little weight.

Nonetheless, the guards cannot ignore a murder and if the party persists, they will send them inside to speak with "the boss", Guard Captain Alexander Pike (who is now actually Darnoc Harshwind in disguise). As the party enters, one of the guards will offer a cynical warning of "Better watch out, reckon the boss' been drunk most o' the week now, and he's in no mood to talk."

Alexander/Darnoc (NE male **half-white dragon veteran** see appendices) is in the captain's office, where he is looking at the lists of expected caravans due to be coming through Two and making a list of likely marks. He'll act drunk and belligerent, mostly to try and scare people off. "Alexander" is constantly drinking from his hip flask. This is not, however, alcohol but a *potion of alter self* (see appendices), keeping Darnoc disguised the guard captain. Darnoc keeps a shield within easy reach, raising his AC to 20. A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check will reveal that the captain is only pretending to be drunk. Alternatively a similar Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal that there is no smell of alcohol in the air.

Any mention of the frozen cart will result in him offering false information about "strange movements at night in the sand dunes to the east of the town, by the abandoned stables". If the party chooses to investigate this, a Darnoc alerts the kobolds there. If the party are asking too many questions or start to become suspicious, he demands they leave and, if they refuse will call for the guards to remove them from his office.

If the party come at night, the office is locked, with a guard standing watch. They can, however, hear the captain whispering in draconic with one of his **kobold** servants. If Darnoc hears anything outside the door, or the guard alerts Darnoc to the party's presence, he and the kobold will flee out the office window, heading for the stables.



**Treasure.** If the party search the captain's desk, they can find an iron key (used to unlock Or Medesk's storeroom), as well as the shredded instructions on how to create a *potion of alter self*, a *sending stone* and a note that says "sandking" (this is the password to Or Medesk's storeroom).

## ABANDONED STABLES

Darnoc's kobold servants have been hiding in the stables.

**Encounter.** If the five **white kobold scale sorcerers** have been warned, they will have concealed themselves and gain advantage on their Dexterity (Stealth) check to ambush the party. To keep their master's secrets, they will fight to kill the characters. If they are caught off-guard, the kobolds flee, heading for the well in the center of town, using their magic to create chaos.

**Treasure.** If searched, the characters can find a *sending stone* (linked to the one carried by Darnoc) and a small leather bag, with Dicky Bogwins insignia upon it. The bag is full of stones with draconic runes. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that these could be used in teleportation magic. They will also find a note that says "password = sandking".

## THE CLOAK AND DAGGER

The Cloak and Dagger is the main tavern in town and a favorite of the Town Guard. Speaking with off duty town guards and succeeding in a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check reveals that Alexander Pike's change in attitude seemed to happen over night. Furthermore, a lot of the guard are worried about him. He's been overheard "talking gibberish" at night. This is Durnoc speaking draconic with his kobold servants. With a successful DC 20 check, or for 20 gp, they can also learn that Or Medesk's disappearance, however, as he was such a big name in the town's black market, they are happy that he is gone.

## THE MARKET

The market is a bustling hive of activity, with stalls sell exotic food, herbs and spices and drink. Street urchins weave in and out of people's legs. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 10 or lower be pickpocketed, losing 10% of their coin. If the party asks around for any rumors, they can learn the following:

- "Quite a few shopkeepers have been going missing, mainly, those who deal in magical items."
- "Livestock as big as fully grown oxen have vanished in the middle of the night."
- "Alexander Pike, the captain of the guard, has been acting strangely of late."
- "No one's seen Or Medesk in a few days, can't say I miss the bastard mind."

If the party thinks to question the street urchins, they will demand payment of 5 gp. They can, however, reveal:

- "I seen strange footprints and bright blue eyes in the darkness at night". These are the kobolds on their nightly raids.



## OR MEDESK'S STOREROOM

Or Medesk keeps his smuggled goods in a large warehouse in the edge of the market. Even a brief inspection reveals it to be very secure. The large iron door is locked and requires a DC 20 Dexterity check made with proficiency with thief's tools to open. Alternatively climbing to the roof requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Once on the roof, a skylight into the storeroom can be found.

**Trapped Entrance.** As soon as a creature enters the warehouse, a disembodied voice fills the room asking for the password. If the creature fails to answer with "Sandking", two **mummies** rise out of the sandy floor and attack.

Within, the storeroom is a mess, with wrecked boxes, smashed goods and rotting food all over. In the middle of the room is a large wooden crate with scratch marks on the inside. Fragments of fine robes, viscera and blood covers the floor. Finally, ice hangs from the ceiling and walls of the storeroom.

**Treasure.** Investigating the storeroom reveals a torn-up scroll. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that this is a *spell scroll* of *alter self*. There is also a chest containing 10 gems, each worth 10 gp.



## THE WELL

In the center of town is the primary well, used by most of the locals. It is also an entrance into the lair of Tundras.

**Encounter.** If the characters are near the well after dark there is a 50% chance of them encountering 1d6+2 **kobolds** exiting the well. If they realise they have been noticed they will flee, making for the abandoned stables or into the well, whichever's closest.

**The Well.** The well is large enough for a medium or smaller creature to enter, one at a time. A 100 ft drops down to the water. Lower a medium or smaller creature up or down on the bucket requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics check). Alternatively, climbing down the rope requires the same check, while climbing up requires a DC 15 check. The water in the well is freezing and for each 10 minutes spent in the water requires a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffering one level of exhaustion. Any creature that has resistance to cold damage makes this check will advantage. A tunnel at the base of the well heads northwest, although it narrows to a size that is cramped for medium sized creatures, with water at knee height.

## TUNDRAS' LAIR

Buried deep beneath the desert sands is the water table and a vast cavern containing a massive underground lake. The presence of the dragon has quickly cooled the area, freezing the surface of the lake water and providing Tundras from some solace from the overbearing heat of the surface.

### GENERAL FEATURES

Unless stated otherwise, the following features are common to Tundras' Lair.

**Chilling.** The dragon's lair is freezing for each 10 minutes spent here requires a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffering one level of exhaustion. Any creature that has resistance to cold damage or wearing suitable clothing makes this check will advantage.

**Light.** Areas in the lair area dark, and any read aloud text assumes the characters have darkvision or a source of light.

**Walls and Floors.** The rough-hewn tunneled passages are 6 feet tall. The walls and floor is slick with ice.

### 1- TROPHY ROOM

The tunnel from the well into a canver, roughly 50 ft. square. This room is full of frozen trophies Tundras has taken. Camels and oxen taken for food, with the frozen corpse of Alexander Pike, Or Medesk, Dicky Bogwin and a few other unlucky travelers as well.

**Teleportation Circle.** Near the north-western wall is a incomplete teleportation circle. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that completing the circle is impossible without more components (the runic stones found in the abandoned stables are some of these, but not all). To the south the chamber opens into a much larger chamber (area 2).

## TUNDRAS' LAIR



### 2 - THE FROZEN LAKE

The larger chamber and the underwater tunnel from the oasis leads into a gigantic cavern, 200 feet by 100 feet, with a curved ceiling that peaks at 60 feet. A small shore abuts a massive frozen lake.

Investigating the ice reveals it to be at least 5 feet deep. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveal claw marks (made when the dragon pulls itself from beneath the ice).

**Encounter.** Surprising the dragon in her lair is impossible and Tundras (CE **young white dragon**) is hiding under the ice. If a character comes close to the edge of the lake, Tundras strikes. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or less is surprised as the dragon crashes through the ice and immediately uses her breath weapon. If Tundras is reduced to 65 hp or less, she will dive back into the icy waters and attempt to swim to the oasis, and then attack the town.

### RETURNING TO TOWN

**Encounter.** If he hasn't already been dealt with Darnoc (NE male **half-white dragon veteran** see appendices) is here with ten **kobolds**. He has ordered the townsfolk into the central square, where he is now holding them hostage. When the party arrives he will explain to the party that he cannot allow them to attack his "sister" and that unless they leave he will execute one hostage each minute, starting Aryass. If Tundras is already dead and he learns of this, he will order the kobolds to "Kill them, kill them all!" and will then attack

If Tundras is still alive and the party return to town, she will swoop down over the square attacks.

**Overwhelming Challenge.** Both the dragon and half-dragon are a tough fight for a 5th level party, so consider having the kobolds focus on the townsfolk and having Aryass help the party.







# APPENDICES

## DARNOC

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

**Armor Class** 20 (plate and shield)  
**Hit Points** 65 (10d8 + 20)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2  
**Damage Resistances** cold  
**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12  
**Languages** Common, Draconic  
**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

**Cold Breath (Recharge 5–6).** The veteran exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## POTION OF ALTER SELF

Potion, rare

When you drink this potion, you gain the effects of the *alter self* spell for 1d4 hours (no concentration required). The the potion's liquid continuously changes color, consistency and mass. Shaking the bottle fails to interrupt this process.

## WHITE KOBOLD SCALE SORCERER

Small humanoid (kobold), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)  
**Hit Points** 27 (5d6 + 10)  
**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (–2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	9 (–1)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Arcana +2, Medicine +1  
**Damage Resistances** cold  
**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9  
**Languages** Common, Draconic  
**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The kobold is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *frostbite*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile*

2nd level (2 slots): *snilloc's snowball swarm*

**Sorcery Points.** The kobold has 3 sorcery points. It can spend 1 or more sorcery points as a bonus action to gain one of the following benefits:

**Heightened Spell:** When it casts a spell that forces a creature to make a saving throw to resist the spell's effects, the kobold can spend 3 sorcery points to give one target of the spell disadvantage on its first saving throw against the spell.

**Quickened Spell:** When the kobold casts a spell that has a casting time of 1 action, it can spend 2 sorcery points to change the Casting Time to 1 bonus action for this casting.

**Pack Tactics.** The kobold has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the kobold's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the kobold has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

## ACTIONS

**Dagger.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.



# Two More Weeks

