

THE FROSTBOUND HEART



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title: The Frostbound Heart

Theme/Genre: Fantasy with elements of Mystery and Tragic Romance

Tone: Heroic with a melancholic undertone

Target Level for Players: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 hours

Player Focus Preferences:

- Combat: Medium
- Roleplay: High
- Exploration: Medium

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

WORLD/SETTING OVERVIEW

Welcome to the land of Icedar Hollow, a realm where harsh winters dominate over brief summers. The landscape is perpetually covered with towering glaciers, frostbitten forests, and icy lakes. This land is suffused with ancient magic, evident in the ruins that echo with the vestiges of once-great kingdoms that mastered elemental sorcery. Now, only whispers of their grandeur remain, carried by the chill winds.

LOCAL AREA

Nestled at the base of Icereach Peak lies the isolated mountain village of Aetherfrost. It is a small, tightly-knit community that ekes out an existence in the cold wilderness. Known for its annual Aurora Festival—a celebration of the magical lights that dance across the night sky during the longest winter night—the festival has taken a somber turn this year as the village guardian, Lady Elvindra, has mysteriously vanished.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lady Elvindra, an ancient elven sorceress, has long served as the guardian of Aetherfrost, her power anchored to the Frostbound Heart, a powerful crystalline artifact housed within a ruined temple atop Icereach Peak. While it grants immense magical power, the artifact is a double-edged sword: its guardian is cursed with isolation, bound eternally to the mountain.

Days before this year's Aurora Festival, a violent storm descended from Icereach Peak, devastating the lands. Villagers cite ghostly apparitions in the storm, leading to fears that Lady Elvindra has abandoned her vow out of despair, or worse, that the artifact has been seized by a malicious force.

IMPORTANT NPCs

- **Mayor Eirik Thorne:** Human, mid-50s, pragmatic and determined to safeguard Aetherfrost. Believes the Frostbound Heart should be relocated for safety.
- **Amara Fentharis:** Young elven bard, passionate protector of Elvindra's legacy, who implores the party to save her revered lady.
- **Gaerdan Steeljaw:** A rugged dwarf hunter with deep knowledge of the mountain. Entices the party with the promise of guidance in exchange for fortune or recognition.

PLOT HOOK

OPENING SCENE

The story unfolds in Aetherfrost's frostbitten town square amid somber preparations for the Aurora Festival. Musicians play haunting, melancholic tunes as villagers repair the damage caused by recent storms. Snow blankets the village, heightening the tension that pervades the air.

Mayor Eirik assembles the adventurers around the roaring hearth of the Glacial Codex Tavern. With urgency, he describes the disappearance of Lady Elvindra and the worsening mountain storm. A shattered scrying mirror found in her sanctuary exposes shadowy figures standing over the Frostbound Heart.

INCITING EVENT

Suddenly, a villager stumbles inside, frostbitten and trembling. He recounts a harrowing encounter with ghostly spirits near the mountain, claiming he was watched by a shadowy figure cloaked in ice. As night approaches, the adventurers are urged to act swiftly.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Ascend Icereach Peak, unravel the mystery behind Lady Elvindra's fate, and secure the Frostbound Heart before the storm incapacitates the region beyond recovery.

KEY LOCATIONS

1. AETHERFROST VILLAGE (STARTING AREA)

Atmosphere: A cold, somber community blending rustic charm with impending danger. Villagers draw close to fires, exchanging whispered tales of the recent events.

- **NPC Encounters:**

- *Amara:* Pleads fervently for the adventurers to safeguard Elvindra.
- *Gaerdan:* Provides pragmatic advice and a rough map of the mountain.
- *Town Gossip:* A tipsy farmer mutters about cursed spirits haunting Icereach Peak.

- **Possible Encounters:**

Suspicious villagers eye the newcomers with mistrust or a brief snowstorm reduces visibility, creating a sense of isolation.

2. ICEREACH CAVERNS (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

Atmosphere: Dark, twisting caves beneath Icereach Peak where the air is biting cold. Whispers echo through crystalline ice formations that glow faintly, suggesting dormant magical power.

- **Challenge:**

- **Puzzle:** A magical, frost-locked gate adorned with ancient runes that poses a riddle. (*Hint: The answer pertains to the heart's dual nature: life and solitude.*)

- **Riddle:**

- *A vessel of warmth yet bound by frost,
An eternal keeper whose freedom is lost.
Speak my nature to gain entry.*

- **Answer:** "A heart"

- **Combat Encounter:** A pack of **Frost Wraiths** emerges, drawn by the heart's power. Their spectral forms obscure vision and spread a chilling fear.
- **Roleplay Opportunity:** The ghost of a former guardian might appear, either issuing cryptic warnings or tempting the party with forbidden knowledge.

3. THE BROKEN SANCTUM (FINAL AREA)

Atmosphere: At the mountain's summit, the sanctuary stands in ruin, shrouded by an endless froststorm. Crystals of ice grow unnaturally, pulsating with arcane energy. The Frostbound Heart glows centrally within, encased in an icy spire.

- **Final Encounter:**

- Confront Lady Elvindra, corrupted by her despair into an ice specter. She guards the heart against a masked intruder—**Kael Frostspire**, a power-hungry mage intent on claiming the artifact. Players are faced with a choice: destroy the heart to free Elvindra or preserve it and attempt to restore her sanity while fending off Kael.

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT ENCOUNTER: FROST WRAITHS

- **AC:** 13
- **HP:** 30
- **Speed:** 50 ft
- **Vulnerability:** Fire
- **Immune:** Cold

Tactics: The wraiths utilize their spectral forms to move rapidly between foes, targeting spellcasters with Paralyzing Touch and employing Snow Veil to create obscuring clouds.

PUZZLE MECHANICS

Riddle:

"A vessel of warmth yet bound by frost,
An eternal keeper whose freedom is lost.
Speak my nature to gain entry."

Answer: "A heart"

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

FINAL CHALLENGE

The players must either subdue or destroy the corrupted Lady Elvindra or combat Kael while protecting Amara's fragile attempt at a restoration ritual. Success ensures Aetherfrost's safety and either restores Elvindra's sanity or grants her a peaceful end. Failure allows Kael to enslave the Frostbound Heart, dooming the village.

NARRATIVE STAKES

- **Success:** Preserves Aetherfrost's protection, offering honor or peace to Elvindra.
- **Failure:** Hands the powerful artifact to Kael, with disastrous consequences for the land.

REWARDS

- **Loot:**
 - *Frostbite Amulet:* Provides resistance to cold damage.
 - *Icicle Blade (Longsword):* A +1 weapon capable of unleashing Cone of Cold once per day.
- **Story Rewards:** Earn Aetherfrost's favor, and Amara promises to immortalize the party in song.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

Stat Blocks:

- **Frost Wraiths:** As detailed above.
- **Kael Frostspire:** Level 7 Sorcerer with abilities focusing on cold and control magics.

Maps: Include layout plans for Aetherfrost village, Icereach Caverns' branching paths, and the floor plan of the Broken Sanctum.

Handouts: An incomplete ancient map, fragments from Elvindra's journal detailing her struggles and an inscribed rune from the Frostbound Heart.

Atmospheric Music: Haunting violin scores paired with chilling wind effects to enhance immersion.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

Encourage players to explore creative solutions such as negotiating with Kael or preemptively destroying the artifact, allowing for drastically different narrative conclusions.

Consider adding unique reactions from the Frost Wraiths attuned to the presence of the Frostbound Heart or introducing sudden environmental hazards like avalanches.

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

Debrief Questions:

- What was your favorite part of the adventure?
- How connected did you feel to the story and its stakes?
- Would you like to further explore this world or its characters?

Epilogue:

If the artifact is secured but Elvindra perishes, her spirit remains a guiding presence within the sanctum. If destroyed, a new entity may rise, hinting at future adventures.

Ready this document for play in your next session for an adventure filled with intrigue, danger, and heart. Enjoy the journey into Icedar Hollow, where every decision echoes through the frozen halls of time.