

'TIS THE EVE OF
WINTERFEAST



A SWORD & BACKPACK
YULETIDE
POEM AND ADVENTURE

courtesy of:

ROTHBARD & GAZPUS

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'TIS THE EVE OF
WINTERFEAST

'Tis the Eve of Winterfeast, in Lanternport town
You're in the Resting Sword, an inn of some renown.
Outside, all is quiet as the streets fill with snow
Inside, you warm yourself 'fore the fire's crackling glow.
Tonight's fare is hearty (the Sword's known for its food)
And mulled wine flows freely, to set the festive mood.
Some patrons are throwing ancient holiday runes,
While a tipsy bard warbles olde Winterfeast tunes.

All is joyful and jolly and peaceful within
But then, the door opens and a chill wind blows in.
At first, all is silent in the night's gathered gloom.
Then a figure approaches and steps in the room.
"Greetings," murmurs the stranger, "Well met, gentlefolk."
His profession revealed as he sheds trav'ler's cloak:
He's a wizard, wearing robes a bright shade of red
Which match the peaked hat upon his white-bearded head.

"Hail, fellow," says the innkeep, shutting the door tight.
"Come drink and be merry with us this holy night."
"My thanks," says the wizard, "But I've come not to rest,"
"Instead, I seek champions to go on a quest."
Looking 'round the room, his twinkling eyes rest on you
And smiling, he cries, "Hold! Bring me ale, bring me stew!"
He approaches your party and draws up a chair,
And as he sits you feel...deep magic in the air.

Not magic of power, or sorcery one fears,
But the magic of hope, of kindness, and good cheer.
Bringing forth a pipe, he fills its bowl with pipeweed
And as he puffs fragrant smoke, he bids you pay heed.
"Sorcerer and warrior and rogue - so you be
Attend now to my words, ye adventurers three:
Far off in the wilds of the north is where I dwell
And all year there I study and practice my spells.

For my work is the crafting of magical toys
Which 'pon Winterfeast Eve I gift to girls and boys.
Singing wooden swords, fighting mechanical knights...
I make great wonders in my workshop of delights.
I meant for all children, be they high or low-born,
To awake to a present on Winterfeast morn.
But a fortnight ago, my plans met a fell pause
In the form of a greedy drake called "Cinderclaws."

His raid came at dawn and a great battle did start
My craft 'gainst his might, his ice and fire 'gainst my art.
The contest was fierce, but alas - a distraction!
For as we fought, his true plan was in action.
Some dragons want gold and bright gems for their treasure
But magical playthings are this monster's pleasure.
And during our duel, burgled were all of my things
Snatched by Noëlven, his cold-hearted underlings.

When their work was finished, the villain broke and fled
Leaving me grievously harmed - in truth, almost dead.
But once my wounds were healed, journeyed I here from there
Seeking daring souls to enter the dragon's lair.
The deed's perilous, but the reward isn't small
For if you succeed, you'll save Winterfeast for all."
His tale at an end, the wizard gazes at you.
It's a yuletide adventure, so...

WHAT DO YOU DO?



THE DRAGON WHO LOOTED WINTERFEAST

NOTE: This adventure seed can be used with the Sword & Backpack RPG or any other games system, but it should be read **ONLY** by the person who is serving as the game master. Otherwise, the surprise would be ruined, and who wants to know what their Winterfeast gifts are before Winterfeast Morn?

PLOT: It's a cold and snowy Winterfeast Eve, and the adventurers are enjoying the festivities in the warmth of the Resting Sword tavern when the Wizard of Winterfeast, the legendarily reclusive, toy-making wizard, comes in from the storm and recruits them to magically travel with him to his workshop in the frozen Northlands, where they must help him take back his home from the clutches of Cinderclaws, a powerful dragon who hoards magical toys. If they fail, children everywhere will wake up on Winterfeast Morn without new toys, which will in turn curse the land to years of gloom and darkness. If they can defeat the dragon before midnight, Winterfeast will be saved!

CHARACTERS: The tavernkeeper of the Resting Sword; the Wizard of Winterfeast; Cinderclaws

MONSTERS: The Noëlven; Rein-dires

TWIST: Cinderclaws was actually created by the Wizard of Winterfeast centuries previous as part of an experiment in magical alchemy, and the key to defeating the creature is exactly that - an enchanted wind-up key that when placed in the right spot on the dragon's body and wound backwards, will cause the beast to go dormant. Unfortunately, the Wizard of Winterfeast doesn't know where in the maze of his wonderful workshop he left the key!

WIN CONDITIONS: The adventurers must defeat the Noëlven guards who patrol the woods around the Wizard of Winterfeast's workshop, gain access to the workshop without alerting Cinderclaws, find the Key, and aid the Wizard of Winterfeast in a battle against the dragon. If Cinderclaws is defeated before midnight, the Wizard of Winterfeast is able to perform the ritual that sends the magical toys he makes to children across the land.

REWARD: Each adventurer receives a unique gift from the Wizard of Winterfeast: a low-powered **magical toy** to be created in collaboration by the game master and player that should somehow be related to the character's backstory. They also each receive a bottle of **spellengrøggën**, a very rare and highly-prized elixir made from mulled wine with enchanted spices. A spell on the bottle keeps the spellengrøggën fresh and warm indefinitely, and each time a character drinks some of the potion (there are five good pulls contained within), they can either be healed from an injury, blessed with a fine singing voice, restored to full vigor from exhaustion, or granted temporary good luck (all rolls subject to the game master's discretion).

CINDERCLAWS

This strange and unique wyrm was created long ago by the experiments of a tinkerer and sorcerer specializing in the art of chimeromancy (magic dedicated to the fusion of beasts with other creatures and, sometimes, other materials) who sought to combine leftover mechanical toyworks with a fire dragon and an ice dragon in one form (hence its unique crimson and ivory coloring). As with many of its ilk, Cinderclaws is a hoarder of treasure, but one with a peculiar quirk: instead of typical displays of wealth, Cinderclaws prefers to collect trinkets and treats both mundane and magical, venturing out from its lair once a year during the Winterfeast celebrations to acquire new amusements. Obtaining relics from Cinderclaws' lair is difficult at best and fatal at worst, but the magical playthings that can be acquired from therein are wondrous enough to tempt adventurers of all stripes to make a run at the dragon's fabled toy box.



THE NOËLVEN

Also known as ice elves and frost drow, Noëlvén are the remnants of small sect of fanatical high elves who bound themselves into the service of Cinderclaws centuries ago in exchange for dark powers. They are stealthy, yet melancholy; as Winterfeast approaches, the spirit of the season sometimes overcomes them and compels them to break out in sad carols. If one is lost in the forest on a snowy night and hears eerie voices in the distance singing minor key Winterfeast laments, then know that the Noëlvén approach, and beware. They can sometimes be seen riding in sleighs pulled by their familiars, the wickedly horned beasts called Rein-Dires, and they always carry at least one wickedly cold and sharp weapon “forged” from enchanted ice. They also hold Sacks of Mystery, magical bags that can hold much more on the inside than it appears on the outside, which they use to store loot from their midnight raids.



THE WIZARD OF WINTERFEAST

A figure of legend from the coastal metropolis of Lanternport to the mountain villages of the Eastern Frontier, the Wizard of Winterfeast is an ancient mage who, after reaching the highest levels of the study of his art centuries ago, decided to put the life of a selfish, treasure-acquiring adventurer behind him and focus on doing good works, which take the form of the alchemical crafting and magical distribution of playthings and delectable treats to children across the land during the Festival of Winterfeast. He spends his time in his hermit's castle in the Northreach, having discovered there, during his former career, an enchanted, hidden hot spring that grants him seeming eternal life. Though he appears to be a simple, jolly old soul, the Wizard of Winterfeast is not to be trifled with - powerful eldritch sorceries are at his command and his memory is long, so those who would interfere with his mission of charity should beware lest their names be written in his Tome of the Naughty.

