

Adventure

On Cold Mountains



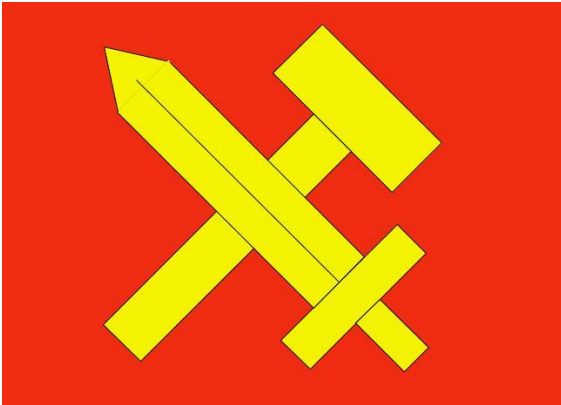
Many Isles 



On Cold Mountains

The Ochebana Empire is growing quickly. In a single century, it has expanded from its small village on the shore of Fork Lake to span all the way from the Snakewoods in the north to Quirthdale in the south.

However, this expansion came at a cost. The imperial military is heavily involved in wars against humans to the north and goblinoid armies in the east. The defense of smaller settlements has to be assured by roaming civilian warriors - adventurers.



Stat Blocks

Monsters are presented in **bold**. Refer to the end of this document for their stats, or look in the Monster Manual.

Characters

This adventure is designed to take a session and is adapted for about 2-4 characters of level 1.

You can use standard 5e races and classes, if you wish. Or you can use Many Isle [races](#) and [classes](#). Make sure you read the Background first, however.

Appendix

The appendix contains multiple useful things for the running of this adventure. Here's a short index of what's in there, find it at the bottom of this document.

Appendix A - Random Tables

5eS

This module uses the 5eS system. For more information, see the [Adventurer's Guide to Combat](#) or explore our website (see at the end of this adventure).

Background

This adventure plays in 524 b. OW, in the Rathgaunt mountains, a large mountain chain in central Balebu. There is a small military base, Fort Pruthworth, five days' march southeast of Lesper. The soldiers there are having difficulties with unknown monsters and are in distress. To that effect, an officer in Lesper, informed via a messenger, has asked an adventuring party to go investigate and, if possible, secure Fort Pruthworth again. If the mountains were to fall to monsters, it would be nearly impossible to conquer them back.

The Characters

In these difficult times for the simple commoners, the party is an adventuring group. They make a living out of traveling the roads, helping villagers for a price (usually food and lodgings), and looting forgotten places whenever possible. Remains of the long-gone Elvish Empire, ruins with powerful magic and - hopefully - great loot are any adventurer's dream, but hardly any ever found such a place.

The Ochebana Empire doesn't have any racial or gender laws as of yet, but imperial control is slowly growing and the army is becoming more structured and powerful. As cities grow and fortify, a universal law is emerging. The big cities such as Lesper, have developed into a quite puritan place: only white humans walk the streets alone. Women, as well as gnomes or elves, are sneered down upon. Other races are frontally attacked.

Humans of Eastern ethnicity absolutely dominate, elves and gnomes are somewhat common, and other races are a rarity and often looked upon with contempt or disgust. Similarly, the cult of Auril or Tempus dominates, and other gods are hardly if at all represented.

Due to their open nature, the adventurers could be of any class. However, magic is quite rare in the empire: not much arcane knowledge is around, and any potent spellcaster would be safely sitting in a city with immense riches. Impulsive and irregular casters might be present in the party, but in general, magic is a rarity.

Plug-In Background

If you want to use this adventure flexibly as a side quest in a running campaign, you can easily fit it in by altering these points.

Background. There is a military outpost somewhere in the high mountains of which not much news has been heard. The local military, or a merchants' guild who is worried about their route, hires the adventurers to go and check on it.



Fort Pruthworth

Setting the Stage

The party arrives in Fort Pruthworth without too much difficulty but after a tiring voyage. The trek through rough mountain trails from Lesper to the fort was partly covered in snow, and storms in the night made sleeping difficult.

Pruthworth is a rough construction built with rubble and slightly kept together with mortar. A rotten wood palisade surrounds it, but it's quite useless. The main fort is a single-story construction with thick outer walls. There is a central room with firepit, in which foot soldiers rest, and four round outcrops, one on each corner. They are separated from the main room by a plank wall. A ladder in the main room leads down to a small cellar, in which enough food and firewood is kept to survive the winter.

The fort is a stone's throw off of a rickety trail that leads from Lesper to the Thwarted Lake, which is used in warmer weather for trade and patrolling.

In winter, soldiers occasionally go out to patrol the area, making sure the road under their protection is still usable in case of need. However, recently, a patrol of six was attacked during a heavy snowstorm, with three men dying or going lost. A week after that, a soldier standing guard during the night vanished. Since then, the fort has been on its heels and didn't send any more patrols out. They are certain that if they went out, they would be attacked and killed by invisible monsters. That's why the adventurers are here: to hunt down those things.

Inhabitants of Fort Pruthworth

Soldiers

The soldiers are the "ruling class" in the fort, and they make sure everyone understands this. However, since four of them died in the last month, they're scared of going outside. They will gladly send the adventurers on this mission, but don't dare going beyond the wooden palisade.

Frederick Snowfall is the commander of Fort Pruthworth. He states his title as Chief. He was an officer in Quirthdale before being moved to the fort for sexual abuse. He is a ruthless and cold man, and will not agree to anything going against his will. Frederick believes that any people that disobey his orders, including the adventurers, should be tortured and, possibly, killed. He keeps a tight watch on the fort's people, especially over the women. He has ordered those fully loyal to him (all persons under the "Soldiers" part) to keep any inhabitants of the fort from leaving. Frederick lives in the northern room. It contains a brazer for warmth, a straw bed, and a closet for his clothes. This closet is huge, and behind it (its back can be opened) are chains, whips, and branding iron. He

threatens to lock anyone disobeying him in there, and also forbids anyone to tell outsiders - such as the characters - of this place.

John Harrold. John is an Eastern human and was born in Londerhome, the capital of the empire. He had led a happy life with his family until he was 16 years old, when he joined the army and started campaigning against the goblinoids in the east. A midnight assault on his division left him mentally shocked, so he was taken off the front and made a guard of Pruthworth. He's been here for four years now.

John is loyal to Frederick Snowfall and will do as he is told. He doesn't have a personal agenda of his own. However, he might start babbling incoherently and shaking uncontrollably if shocked, as memories of the past overcome him.

John sleeps in the central room, regularly keeps night watch on the fort's roof, and was often part of patrols when they went out.

Silas Hallonel is a 40 year old half-elf. He is the son of a mountain trapper and exacted this profession himself before savage dwarves burned his hut down, ten years ago. He then joined the ochebanian military and has since served in the fort. He was part of the patrol that got attacked.

He is completely loyal to Frederick, and despises the dwarven party in the fort. He will gladly push the blame for anything upon the dwarves, and kill them if need be. However, Silas is in love with Mallana Salluun. He is constantly torn between her and his commander, and keeps his love a secret. He occasionally visits her at night, but otherwise ignores her completely. If Frederick were to order him to kill her, he would do it. If he was offered to flee alone with her, he would also do it. This is his weakness in his loyalty to Snowfall.

Hans Whitetree is a Denise human in his late 20's who was part of the patrol that got attacked. He is engaged with Janna Whitetree, and has had a child with her. However, he has only little love for her, and therefore insists on sleeping in the main hall with the other two soldiers instead of in her room.

Hans would side with Janna if a dispute were to erupt, and he despises the dwarves. If he had to choose between Janna and Frederick, he would choose his commander, even if it meant her death. He will follow Snowfall's orders, but has no love for him, either: if a better opportunity presents itself, he will kill the commander. Hans is a ruthless person.

Civilians

Some companions serve the soldiers, doing chores while they do military things. The civilians are heavily abused by the soldiers, but are too scared to tell this to the characters.

Janna Whitetree. Janna, a nineteen-year old Eastern woman, was born in a rustic village in central Balebu.



One day, a group of soldiers came to her village, and she went along with them, taking over Hans Whitetree's name. She had a son with him in the fort and has since lived here, in the western chamber. He is two years old. She is scared of Frederick, who has repeatedly insulted and beaten her for not being serviable enough: she does almost all chores of the fort, and receives nothing in exchange. Once, she tried fleeing during the night, but Snowfall and his three soldiers caught her and Snowfall threatened to torture her and kill the baby if she tried it again. Since then, she's done whatever she's been told to the best of her ability, and doesn't believe she'll ever get away.

Janna is scared of talking to the adventurers, and will avoid them as much as possible. However, she will try to contact them secretly and warn them of Snowfall's behavior. She wants to get away with her baby.

Mallana Salluun is a 200-year old sun elf who was captured during a trading voyage to Quirthdale for no apparent reason, and was assaulted by Frederick Snowfall in an imperial prison. Snowfall was exiled to the fort for this crime, but he did bribe some soldiers to bring Mallana with him.

The poor sun elf is absolutely desperate to get away. Occasionally, she is asked to help Janna doing some chores or is forced to dance for the soldier's amusement, but most of the time stays chained in the southern room of the fort. The door is locked and Snowfall forbids the characters from entering. Silas loves her and occasionally visits her in the night, but she does not appreciate his presence. She doesn't tell him that, since he's her only hope to get away, and instead tries convincing him to take her away with him through the mountains. She hasn't managed convincing him yet, and will tell the party of Snowfall's evil intentions if she can.

Dwarves

Long before the Ochebana Empire, dwarven enclaves lived in the mountains. Since then, they've fallen, and some dwarves enlisted into the imperial army to survive. These dwarves serve as guides, explorers, and hunters for the full-time soldiers, and are seen as servants by them.

Hobart and Emeraldalda Fighthold. These 300-year old mountain dwarves were there long before the ochebanians came, and only recently enlisted into the army.

They didn't do this for the sake of helping the humans, however- they're here to get rid of them. Hobart and Emeraldalda joined in the hope of somehow making the humans leave Fort Pruthworth, getting back some of the mountain for themselves. A month ago, one of their old companions - Durin Fighthold - told them about a plan to wipe out the humans. Of course, both dwarves happily agreed, and are now part of this scheme against the

humans. They know they are disliked by the soldiers and therefore keep to themselves most of the time, but they have gotten hold of a key to Mallana's room for the time of escape.

The two sleep in the eastern room, on a few furs. They don't have much furniture, and two heavy crossbows and daggers are all the weapons they need.

They won't trust the adventurers from the start, but will come to the regular meals and talk to the most trustworthy ones, seeing if they can be rallied to the cause. They might arrange a meeting between the characters and Janna, or even show them Mallana in the middle of the night. The two dwarves know the general area where the friends are staying, but don't know where exactly. They aren't allowed to go outside now by the commander, so they might ask the characters to contact the friends.

The Dwarves' Plan

A month ago, Durin Fighthold told the dwarves of Fort Pruthworth that two of friends and him wanted to get rid of the soldiers in the fort and free the captured ones. Emeraldalda and Hobart agreed because this fitted their motives.

The plan is to get rid of a soldier after another while winter lasted, keeping reinforcements away. First, the dwarves convinced the soldiers that no storm was brewing and got them out of the fort - resulting in three deaths. Then, they informed the friends of a night's two watcher's positions, enabling the friends to kill one of them. Things were to continue in this way, but Snowfall got scared and locked the castle down, sending out a messenger under the cover of a storm to bring help. The dwarves in the fort couldn't contact those outside anymore, so the friends have been waiting - but they are getting desperate, and are preparing an all-out attack on the fort.

The Timeline

This timeline serves as a guide as to what happens when, and how the adventure goes forward. The characters can interrupt this outline at any time; they can and should alter the sequence of events.

Day 1. The characters arrive at the fort in late afternoon, and are warmly welcomed by the soldiers in the main hall. The civilians and dwarves are hidden, to make sure the party's point of reference are the soldiers, and not any others. During this evening's meal, Janna cooks, but she doesn't talk to the party. Snowfall explains his problem.

Day 2. The dwarves start talking to the party, seeing if something can be done. Janna might slip one of them a note.

Day 3. Snowfall becomes impatient and asks that the party go out and find the monsters. As long as the party



hasn't been given instructions by the dwarves yet, they won't find the friends, but will have some random encounters.

That night, Silas Hallonel discreetly enters Mallana's room and spends a few hours with her. She tries convincing him to ask the party to help them get away.

Day 4. Snowfall demands the party go out and search again. He might allow a dwarf to go with them, or a dwarf secretly tells them to meet the friends. If they do, plans can be forged: this timeline will not work anymore. Skip to "The Friends".

Day 5. If the friends haven't been contacted yet, they attempt attacking the fort. A loud explosion sounds on the outer wall to the south around noon. As the soldiers and/or adventurers come out, a few bolts are shot at them, but combat isn't joined. It's clear why: the explosive didn't go through the wall. With a DC 18 Perception check, two or three white silhouettes can be seen disappearing in the white expanse.

Around midnight, Silas enters Mallana's room again. They whisper a bit, then he slaps her and she falls unconscious. He carries her to Snowfall's room, where he questions her about the monsters. She's returned to her room in the early morning.

Day 6. That night, three hoots sound, then nothing. An hour after that, the dwarves sneak out of their room and try getting rid of as many soldiers as possible, killing the adventurers too if they've sided with the soldiers (the watchers are on the roof). As soon as combat breaks out, or the dwarves hoot back, the three friends enter, trying to kill the soldiers.

The Friends

This is a group of three: two dwarves and an elf. Their goal is to get rid of the soldiers to free the mountains and to liberate Mallana.

Durin Fighthold is an old clanmate of the fort's dwarves, and they knew him well. Since the Fighthold enclave's fall, he'd been working in a tavern until two travelers talked to him. He accepted helping them in their vendetta, because he wanted the humans off his mountain just as much as Emeralda and Hobbart.

Björriek Coldstove comes from further south, from a fallen enclave in the Wyrms mountains. He had been a hunter travelling the Quirthwood when he met Urillonos. He accepted to help the elf because he hated the humans and got good coin in exchange. He doesn't care how this operation goes, and will flee if his allies falter.

Urillonos Salluun is a sun elf and was voyaging with his to-be wife in Quirthdale when they were attacked. He had learned that his wife had been taken into the Rathgaunt mountains after bribing some soldiers, and was making his way north when he met Björriek, who accepted to help him in his enterprise. Urillonos' goal is to free his wife and leave the filthy human continent.

Hideout

The friends have built an igloo hidden in a small valley, an hour's march to the south of Fort Pruthworth. They are all armed with projectile weapons, and Urillonos is a master of the blade - he carries two elven scimitars. All three are dressed in heavy fur and leather (hAC 13) with white cloaks. They will see the party coming and either ambush them, go out of their way, or approach them if the party seems friendly. They will remain suspicious but gladly take any news from the fort, and organize an overthrow with the help of the party.

The Adventure

This is a dynamic scenario. The environment given above, along with the timeline serving as a framework, represent the "puzzle" unfolding around the party as they strive to understand the world. Things aren't as they seem, and as the party discovers horrible secrets, they will have to make a full inversion of their original plans.

Play this adventure as it unfolds. Let the party talk with whom they want, build ties here and there, and see how the adventure unfolds. This isn't streamlined whatsoever.

Thanks to You!!

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Thank you for all you've done for the Many Isles, even if it's just reading this and you have no idea of what the Many Isles is.

It's a whole setting and worldbuilding community, one where you can find any support you need or any gaming material you might wish, such as this very guide.

Find us on the subreddit [r/ManyIsles](https://www.reddit.com/r/ManyIsles), or for great RPG content on the [Many Isles](https://www.manyisles.com) website, or even for worldbuilding on [Karte-Caedras](https://www.karte-caedras.com)!



Appendix A

When travelling the mountain in search of the "invisible monsters", they might encounter people or creatures. Roll whenever you feel an encounter is needed.

In the Mountains

d8

1. Howls pierce through the air. Three wolves appear. They attack if they outnumber the party or if the characters seem weak. They trail along out of range of the party, ready to attack anyone falling behind. They give up after an hour or two.
2. Two harpies with resistance to cold damage come down from the skies, going for any single targets. Otherwise, they remain in the air and circle away.
3. A peryton screeches and attacks.
4. The party spots a yeti in the distance. By hiding, it can be avoided.
5. A steep rubble slope blocks the path. Getting up top requires two successful DC 14 Acrobatics or Athletics checks: on a fail, the character falls and takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage.
6. Vultures follow the party's trail, then veer off seeing them.
7. The characters spot an odd mountain shaped like a bison head.
8. A white shadow flickers in the distance. It's one of the friends. If tracked down, the party might find their hideout.