



Gingerbread & Dragons

by Andrea Back

GINGERBREAD AND DRAGONS

A HOLIDAY THEMED ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE

Welcome travelers, and let me tell you the story that goes by the name of "*Gingerbread and Dragons*", a one shot adventure meant to be played during the Winter holidays for a night of thematic holiday fun!

Suitable for characters of any level: This adventure is light-hearted and every encounter can be solved without fighting. However, tips and variants for higher or lower level groups are provided.

Suitable for children: This adventure contains virtually no violence unless the players decide to pursue it, and it includes tips for making it as kid friendly as possible. There are no adult themes.

Suitable for any setting: This adventure is generic enough to be dropped into most settings, be they official ones or homebrew ones. You just need to place Pinefall somewhere on the sides of a mountain range that has quite a few little villages in the valleys beneath.

SIDEBARS

Green Sidebars like this one will be used to provide tips, advice and indications on how to run a scene or a monster according to the characteristics of your group, in order to provide them with the best experience.

OVERVIEW

The adventure takes place in the heart of winter, when the winter festivities are about to begin.

Every year from the remote village of Pinefall, hidden in the forests up on a mountainside, a big cart makes its way down the twisting trails and the rough terrain just to bring the delicious holiday sweets baked by beloved Grandma Pynar to all the kids and families of the nearby villages.

However, this year... the cargo seems to be already 2 days late! This has never happened, word around the villages has it that something may have happened to Grandma Pynar... or maybe she has lost track of the calendar?

Whatever the case might be, someone has to brave the path up to Pinefall before it's too late and the kids of the valley will have to go this winter without any sweets!



BEHIND THE CURTAINS

PINEFALL

Pinefall is a little village, with no more than 70 people living in it, all devoted to the Holy Bakery of Nonna Pynar, which everyone just lovingly calls "Nonna" (*Grandma in Italian*). Half of the working population provides firewood and materials for the bakery, the other half assists Nonna Pynar in her pursuit of the perfect sweets, of the most delicious gingerbread, of the tastiest candied fruits. Some say she has a magic touch, others that her cuisine is divine... All she knows is she is as good with a rolling pin or a ladle, as other dwarves are good with the hammer and the anvil.

GORDOLIN

Gordolin is a young Copper Dragon with a sweet tooth, from lands far to the South, who happened to one day try one of the sweets from Nonna Pynar's bakery. He was tormenting an unlucky adventurer who was so scared and grasping at straws to escape the dragon's den where he found himself, that he ended up offering whatever he had in his backpack to be spared. Gordolin saw the gingerbread cookie and intrigued ate it in a single bite: he loved it and after getting directions from the adventurer, he left his lair to fly all the way to this place called Pinefall. It took him several months to find Pinefall, as the information the babbling adventurer gave were confused and incomplete.

Finally, one month ago, Gordolin found Pinefall, and as he landed in the main square he roared "Ooooh I am SO hungry after flying all these miles!". Everyone in the square was terrified but they soon discovered Gordolin was after the products of the bakery. So they indulged his every desire and request for more, since of course, you don't want to incur the wrath of a dragon, not even a friendly one.

THE BAKERY

Gordolin ate and ate, Nonna Pynar kept producing more and more sweets and cookies, until one day they realized the dragon had grown so big that he was stuck inside the bakery. Nonna Pynar and her assistants were stuck in there with him, as his massive body blocked the only entrance.

Furthermore, Gordolin became ever more obsessed with all the food, especially the gingerbread cookies in the shape of a holiday tree that Nonna Pynar made specifically for him in a 1:1 scale. Gordolin became paranoid, and fearing the bakers would smuggle some of the food out of the bakery instead of giving it to him, he forbid any contact and exchange with the outside of the bakery. Only the firewood to fuel the ovens was allowed to be dropped down a broken chimney.

The villagers complied, fearing that the dragon would get angry and destroy the bakery, maybe hurt Nonna Pynar and the other people inside. They hoped someone would notice the shipment was late and would send someone to investigate.

CHAPTER 0 - INTRODUCTION

Read aloud or paraphrase the following text:

You have been traveling these lands for a few months now, and you've heard so much talk about the Winter Festivities that take place in most rural places, that you decided to stop your adventures for a week or so, to relax and enjoy the little pleasures of life.

From what you have heard, this is a time of joy and conviviality, during which towns organize fairs and festivals, merchants sell all manners of sweets, toys and colorful winter garments, and everyone exchanges gifts and tokens of friendship and affection.

You have decided to rent a room at the Frozen Duck Inn in the little village of Lastwater, one of many in the last valley before the snowy peaks and the glaciers up North, because you had heard that a cart full of seasonal delicacies that are said to have magical properties was supposed to arrive from a place called Pinefall and make a round of the valley.

However, two days have passed, and it's nowhere to be seen. You are not worried, but apparently the people of Lastwater are: they say word from the other villages is that the cart is nowhere to be seen and this has never happened in 50 years.

Something may be wrong in Pinefall, up the trail that goes into the forest, and if nobody does anything, the kids of the valley may be left without their holiday gifts and sweets this year.

The people of Lastwater cannot venture in the forest in the middle of Winter, especially with the frequent blizzards that ravage the mountainside. The barkeep implores the PCs to go and check on Pinefall. If the idea of making a good deed is not enough, he offers to pay them 50 gp (total) for the trouble, and give them enough food and wine for the one day trip.

The PCs can take any precaution they want, like buying heavy clothes, climber's kits and so on. The DM should take everything into account should it become relevant.

CHAPTER 1 - THE FOREST



Credit: @WhisperOfSilence

Read aloud or paraphrase the following text:

The trail that leaves the outskirts of Lastwaters and heads up towards the mountains is rough and difficult to follow: the path twists and winds between the trees, partially covered in rocks, grass and snow. Clearly people do not venture this way very often.

Survival DC 12 : *You don't find tracks of sorts, except the random wild animal, like a rabbit, a deer or maybe a wolf.*

You keep going, and the path becomes more and more steep as you go deeper inside the forest. A cold wind blows through the canopy of conifers, and a pungent odor of resin and lavender arrives at your nostrils.

Survival DC 15 : *You notice grey clouds rolling over the peaks towards North-East, and you realize a blizzard is about to hit the mountainside. Luckily you are not caught unprepared.*

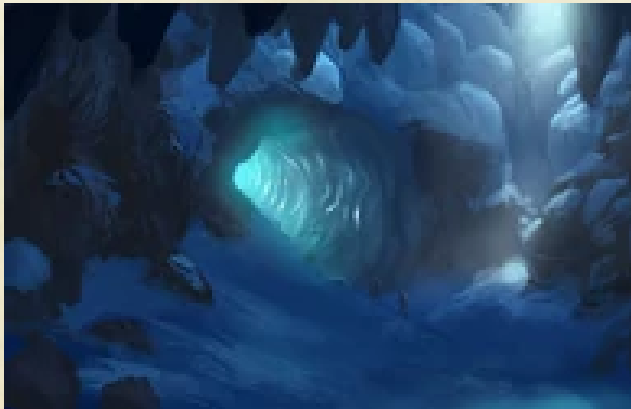
The blizzard will strike suddenly, with icy winds, blinding snow and very low temperatures. It is going to be very dangerous if the characters do not see it coming.

The party can make a Group Check (everyone rolls, success if at least half the party rounding up succeeds.) **Survival DC 15** to find a suitable refuge. Every check represents 1 hour of searching during which the PCs will have to face the elements: everyone has to make a **Constitution Saving Throw DC 10**, obtaining one level of Exhaustion on a failure.

If the PCs did spot the blizzard before it would happen and were not caught by surprise, they can make one extra **Survival DC 10** check before the blizzard strikes. If they succeed they find a refuge and you can just move to the next Chapter.

Characters who wear winter clothes and heavy fur cloaks have Advantage on their Saving Throws to resist the blizzard.

CHAPTER 2 – A WARM REFUGE



Credit: SimonWeaner

If the characters were lucky enough to find refuge before the blizzard begun, they will find the entrance to a cavern on the side of the mountain. They can set up camp, light a fire and start resting until the weather stops behaving.

However, after 1 hour, a small group of **5 orcs** will enter the cave, also seeking respite from the wind and the cold outside.

The orcs react aggressively when they first see the characters, but they are very cold and tired. They will eagerly share the cave with the PCs if they offer to share the camp. The orcs have caught a deer and will share it in exchange for being allowed inside the cave and around the fire.

If instead the characters didn't find refuge at first, but only after having wandered through the forest, braving the icy winds and the snow, when they succeed on their Survival check (see previous Chapter) they will spot a warm flickering light inside a cave.

Inside, they will find a group of orcs huddled around a fire. They react aggressively at first, but they are very hungry and will gladly share the cave if the PCs share their food with them.

DEALING WITH THE ORCS

Some groups may decide to simply fight the orcs. That is a perfectly acceptable solution. If you are running the adventure for a group that enjoys a more hardcore and violent game, you may tilt the encounter in that direction by having the hungry orcs intent on eating the PCs.

If instead you are running the Adventure for a younger group, this is the perfect chance to show that not all orcs are evil and that problems can have peaceful solutions. You can also make the scene funnier by having the orcs' bellies gurgle because they are hungry, or having them sneeze and rattle their teeth because they've got a cold.

Is your group 1st level? Make the orcs be goblins instead.

For higher level groups, you can replace the orcs with ogres.

If the PCs try to have a conversation with the orcs, they only speak orc and broken common. They will explain they have been wandering the forest ever since their shaman once more threatened to summon a dragon should they not stop harassing him, and a winged shadow crossed the sky. They left their village without looking back.

The orcs don't have much on them, besides their weapons and dirty armor, and a handful (2d6) golden pieces in total.

CHAPTER 3 – WELCOME TO PINEFALL

Finally the blizzard subsides, and the party can resume their trip up the mountain. Read or paraphrase the following text:

The world outside the cave is covered in a soft blanket of snow, so white as to blind you for a moment, as it glistens under the cold winter sunlight. After the blizzard, the quiet now reigns and you are free to resume your mission.

You struggle a bit to orient yourselves and to find the path hidden under the snow. Walking is even harder now than before, as your boots sink in the snow.

After a couple of hours, you can see some smoke rising up ahead, and you hear sounds as if someone was chopping wood not far away.

Pinefall is close, and there are a couple of villagers (stats as **Guards**) cutting firewood on the outskirts of the forest.

If they spot the PCs or hear them coming, they try to hide among the trees. They only have handaxes with them, and don't pose much of a threat. If the PCs spot them and approach them peacefully, they will come out and ask their help. They will explain that a dragon, by the name of Gordolin, is basically holding their village and their leader, Nonna Pynar, hostage inside the village bakery.

The woodcutters implore the PCs to help them. It is the only way to get Nonna Pynar to bake the cookies and the sweets for the children of the valley.



THE BAKERY

The bakery is the biggest building of the village, and the only one made of stone bricks (all the others are made of wood). On the steep tiled roof there are 3 large chimneys, two of which churn out thick white smoke.

The front door is wide open, and a large orange metallic tail is coming out in the street. It moves like that of a cat every now and then, and it is connected to a massive, scaly backside that completely blocks the entrance.

The only ways in are the front door and the one chimney that doesn't let out any smoke.

The villagers are scared of the dragon, and explain that he has forbidden any exchange from the inside to the outside and viceversa.

THE DRAGON

Gordolin is a **young copper dragon** that has grown to Huge size because of all the magical, highly energetic food he ate. He is stuck inside the bakery, and he cannot get out without destroying the building. He knows that without the bakery (and the people working in it), he wouldn't get any more sweets and gingerbread cookies.

If he spots the characters scouting the area around the bakery, he will spy them from one of the windows and address them with a paranoic warning "Hey you! Come to steal my sweets, have you?! I will eat you too, and digest you like a candy cane! I swear I will! I'm a dragon and I can do whatever I want! Go away! There is nothing for you here!"

If Gordolin gets agitated, maybe because the characters hit him or taunt him, he will move inside the bakery: cracks appear on the walls, windows shatter and the ground shakes.

When that happens, all the nearby villagers will run to the PCs trying to dissuade them: if the dragon get angry he might destroy the bakery and Nonna Pynar and the other assistants trapped inside might get hurt!

THE PERFECT GORDOLIN

Aside from the fact that he is a formidable foe (boasting a CR of 7 against a level 3 party), Gordolin is a *copper* dragon, not a chromatic one, which means he can be reasoned with and combat should not be the first option that comes to mind. Gordolin is meant to be petty but not mean, capricious and greedy but not violent and aggressive. However, should your group be more inclined to play a darker and more adult "holiday one-shot", the DM can roleplay a Gordolin that is much more mean-spirited and does not stop at empty threats: he may actually devour some villagers (or PCs!) should they make him angry.

Conversely, if the DM wants to make the game more kid friendly and light-hearted, Gordolin could be described as a spoiled kid, who wants ALL the candies and will not budge.

Is your group 1st level? Make Gordolin a Wyrmling, but Large sized.

For higher level groups, you can make Gordolin an Adult dragon.

Gordolin periodically falls asleep, dozing off every 1d4 hours if only for 30 minutes or so.

That is the best moment to sneak into the bakery without him noticing. The PCs can either squeeze through the front door, and past Gordolin's backside, with a **Stealth DC 10** Group check; or they can enter by climbing up on the roof and descending down the chimney, with an **Atheltic DC 10** Group check.

Failure in either check will not result in failure to enter, but simply in taking 3d6 damage: either from being crushed by the tail that makes a sudden movement, disturbed by the failed Stealth attempt; or from the fall down the chimney.

NONNA PYNAR

Inside the bakery the PCs will get to meet Nonna Pynar (Nonna means Grandma in italian!), a dwarven old lady that has left the forges of her clan for the ovens of her bakery. She is a hearty woman, strong and passionate, and treats everyone like they were her grandkids.

She enjoys cooking and baking for others, and loves it when people eat with pleasure her delicacies, but now she feels that Gordolin the dragon has overstayed his welcome.

She needs help in getting rid of him, without destroying the bakery.

Let the players try to figure out a plan of their own to solve this problem. If they are stuck, Nonna Pynar will suggest magically shrinking down the dragon with a Potion of Diminution. However she forgot the exact formula, so she needs help: an **Arcana DC 10** check will be enough.

CHAPTER 4 – CONFRONTING THE DRAGON

The PCs can confront Gordolin in a variety of ways:

- they can fight him, but **be warned** that it will be a deadly fight.
- they can talk him into taking a look at himself and realizing that his scales are losing their shine, his teeth are falling out and his nails are all sticky from all the eating.
- They can convince him to become a working partner of Nonna Pynar, making him understand that he has been straining her resources too much and they will all be out of delicacies soon.

THE POTION OF DIMINUTION

If the PCs have crafted a Potion of Diminution with Nonna Pynar, they can make Gordolin exit the bakery safely. This is also useful to fight him if that is the idea of the group, as he will shrink down in size and be much easier to defeat (He inflicts half damage with all his attacks and has only half the original hitpoints).

If the PCs managed to convince Gordolin to leave, Nonna Pynar will conveniently provide a freshly brewed Potion of Diminution to help him get out.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

Once the problem has been solved, the PCs can help out Nonna Pynar with the shipment of sweets and cookies that everyone is waiting, and getting it to make the round of the villages of the valley before it's too late.

If Gordolin is friendly towards the PCs and Nonna Pynar, as a result of how the players have dealt with him, he may offer to carry the cart flying around the valley. The PCs may hitch a ride down to Lastwater.

Everyone can sigh with relief, and the worried parents can buy all the cookies and candies they want from Nonna Pynar's cart.

The Winter Holidays are safe!



As a parting gift, the characters are awarded a Candy Cane +1 (treat as a Mace +1), a Red Hat with a White Pon-pon (Hat of Disguise that can only change the user into Santa Claus), and a golden egg that when activated produces the effects of Heroes' Feast (single use).