

TREASURES FROM BENEATH THE SNOW

THE WANDERERS THROUGH THE Snow. The Ice People. Children of the Frost. There are many legends about strange travelers who seem to appear from nowhere and seek sanctuary or company for a short while before moving on. These wanderers appear to be elves, but they call no known land home, nor do they share the secret of how to reach their homeland somewhere beyond or beneath the icy horizon. All that is known is that if you treat them well they usually leave a gift in thanks. Sometimes these gifts are magical.



WRITING WALT CIECHANOWSKI
COLOR ART YIHYOUNG LI
EDITING JAMES J. HAECK
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

FROSTY OASES

Somewhere deep within the arctic and uppermost subarctic regions of the world there exist special mounds of ice and snow. To the casual observer they are little more than piled drifts of snow, perhaps covering a small hill, but in truth they mark something far greater—the remnants of a long-forgotten world. Locals call these mounds “snow barrows” because they resemble above ground graves.

The entrances to these snow barrows are usually hidden and accessible only through magic or sheer luck. Once inside, the lucky explorer is presented with an entirely new world. Unlike the frozen waste outside, the explorer now stands in a tropical paradise with flora and fauna that hasn’t been seen for millennia. It is here that the Preservers, the “ice people” of local legend, make their homes.

This tropical paradise is preserved through the power of the Memory Tree, a glittering silver tree that sits in the center of the mound. Its leaves are reflective, and it is said that every living thing within the barrow, flora and fauna, has a leaf on the memory tree. When that thing dies, the tree sheds the leaf. The size of the tree reflects the size of the pocket world; an average Memory Tree is about 50 feet tall and its barrow about 10 miles in diameter. The inside dome surrounding the barrow looks like the sky of the world before. A glowing “sun” crosses the dome during the day and the night “sky” is filled with “stars” that resemble the night sky of the prehistoric world.

The flora and fauna inside a snow barrow should reflect the state of your game world in a prehistoric era. By default, snow barrows reflect a world between the time of the dinosaurs and the modern

Stone Age Elves

By default, the Preservers are high elves, but their Elf Weapon Training trait should be modified to better represent their prehistoric culture. Instead of proficiency with the longsword, shortsword, shortbow, and longbow, Preservers gain proficiency with blowguns, javelins, quarterstaves, and spears.

era at a time when the lands of the arctic were lush and tropical. If your game world is static or only recently created, then these snow oases could be the result of a demiplane crossing into the world or the mad experiment of the first Preservers.

A FORGOTTEN CULTURE

As with the paradise within the barrow, the Preservers are the descendants of a long-forgotten culture. By default, they are elves, albeit elves from a tropical stone age culture. “Stone age” doesn’t mean “primitive,” however, and the Preservers built a culture every bit as advanced as any in the modern era by using the materials they had at hand, primarily stone and wood, and using their potent magic to reshape them. Physically, these elves better resemble those from the tropical regions of the game world than those in the arctic, which only adds to their exotic nature when they encounter local travelers and communities on the ice.

By default, the Preservers live under a monarch, uphold ancient traditions, and are slightly xenophobic as any outside influence may threaten their paradise. This need not be the case, however. They may live under a direct democracy, a communist regime, a theocracy, or any other form of government that the GM wishes. They may be fearful of outsiders, overly friendly, or concerned with acquiring new technologies and magic.

If your arctic is large enough, then there may be several different snow barrows, each isolated from the other and preserving their ancient world in very different ways. This can be problematic for lone wandering Preservers who find that they must answer for the harsh ways of others like them who passed the same way.

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WANDERING GIFT-GIVERS

While we've given a bit of attention to the snow barrows and their inhabitants, in truth most contact with these barrows are with lone Preservers that are travelling the frozen wastes for any number of reasons. While they tend to be guarded when encountered, wandering Preservers are called by tradition to offer gifts in exchange for aid or friendship. While most of these gifts are curiosities, such as ornately carved cups or well-spun mittens, occasionally a wandering Preserver bestows a very special gift. Some of these magical gifts are described here.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

ANORAK OF THE ICE PEOPLE

Armor, rare (requires attunement)

This garment is both familiar and unusual to polar peoples, as it imitates local fashion but has many unusual differences. Though this coat is made from animal skin, close inspection reveals that the skin belongs to an animal not native to polar climates (the GM should choose an appropriate one from the snow barrows). The inside of this coat is lined with ebon chain links made from enchanted wood, like chainmail.

While wearing this coat, you gain the benefit of wearing a suit of +1 *chainmail*, and you are proficient with this armor even if you lack proficiency with medium armor. Additionally, while you wear this coat with its hood up, Wisdom (Perception) checks made to see you have disadvantage, and you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide, as the cloak's color shifts to camouflage you. Pulling the hood up or down requires an action.

BARROW BREAD

Wondrous item, common

Barrow bread is made from mashing together plantains and starches that are grown in the tropical barrows. While this viscous, starchy paste is not actually a bread, it perfectly preserves and

maintains the temperature of any food tucked inside it for up to a week. The magic is contained in the plantain leaves that are wrapped around the *barrow bread*. Once unwrapped, the *barrow bread* must be consumed within 15 minutes before the outside elements affect it. Thus, *barrow bread* is often formed into bite-sized balls stuffed with a mince or vegetables.

EBON BLADE

Weapon (longsword), uncommon

Given the lack of available iron, elvish wood sculptors created blades made of ebony hardwood. This wooden longsword is magically reinforced to be as hard as steel and never lose its edge. This blade is lighter than its metallic counterpart and has the light and finesse properties. Being made of wood, they are unaffected by spells or weather conditions that would affect a metal weapon.

More magically potent *ebon blades* are known to exist and are always of a rarity one step higher than a regular longsword of its type. Thus, a *vicious ebon blade* would be very rare instead of rare.

GUIDING HARPOON

Weapon (harpoon), rare (requires attunement)

Originally a javelin developed to increase hunting effectiveness in the dense rainforests, this harpoon has been modified to be more useful in arctic conditions. This magic weapon comes in two parts, the harpoon itself and an amulet in the shape of a harpoon tip that must be worn on the throwing hand (usually as part of a bracer or bracelet). The enchantment exists within the harpoon tip itself, so if the harpoon is broken, the tip can be affixed to a new harpoon shaft.

When a creature is struck by this weapon, all attacks you make against that creature have advantage until the harpoon tip is removed from the creature, or you take off the bracelet. The creature struck or a creature adjacent to it can remove the harpoon tip by making a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check as an action. (See the sidebar on the next page.)



New Weapon

Harpoon

Harpoons are specialized javelins designed specifically for fishing. Once the harpoon lodges into a creature, the specialized head makes it difficult to remove without causing more damage. The wielder can then use the attached rope to restrain its prey.

Simple Melee Weapon

Harpoon Cost 1 gp; Weight 2 lbs.

Damage 1d6 piercing

Properties Special, thrown
(range 30/120*)

** A harpoon can only be thrown as far as the length of rope that is attached to it unless the rope is not secured at the thrower's end. Then the harpoon may be thrown to its full range, but its special property is negated if the creature hit is further away than the rope is long.*

Due to the shape of a harpoon tip, a creature hit by a harpoon is anchored. This means that, until the harpoon is removed or the rope attached to it severed, the creature cannot move farther away from the thrower than the length of the rope.

In addition to being anchored, the creature may also be pulled in the direction of a creature or creatures that is holding the other end of the rope. This is resolved as an opposed Strength (Athletics) check, with the anchored creature being pulled 10 feet towards the puller if it fails its roll. Unless the anchored creature has at least one hand on the rope, it also takes 1d4 damage from the harpoon tip regardless of whether it wins or loses the contest.

Removing a harpoon tip requires the injured creature or a creature adjacent to it to make a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check as an action. A creature can also make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to remove the harpoon tip, but the creature takes 1d6 piercing damage whether the removal is successful or not. A harpoon tip is automatically removed if the injured creature receives at least 1 point of magical healing.

ICE RIDERS

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

These magical boots were originally sandals worn by Preservers to protect themselves from the dangers of mud and quicksand. The magic contained in these boots are actually limited to the soles, which enable you to traverse ice and snow as if it were solid, non-slippery ground. You ignore difficult terrain created by cold conditions.

When traveling over snow, you leave only ½-inch deep footprints, enabling you to walk over deep drifts without the dangers of falling in. Similarly, you can step onto a floating chunk of ice without fear of tipping it over, although jumping onto the ice will “push” it in the direction of the jump.

IRONWEED ROPE

Wondrous item, uncommon

Ironweed is a tough, fibrous plant found within the paradises of the snow barrows. When carefully woven into rope, it has an AC 17, 10 hp, and resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. This rope usually comes in coils of 50 feet.

MEMORY LEAVES

Wondrous Item, legendary (requires attunement)

Precious beyond reckoning, this silver leaf has fallen from a Memory Tree and contains a psychic imprint of the living creature it was once connected to. It can only be attuned when pressed against the

forehead; Preserver shamans often set a leaf into a woven headband.

While this leaf is pressed against your forehead, you can cast *legend lore* to ask the psychic imprint within the leaf one question about the ancient world. Once you have used this feature 3 times, you cannot use it again until next dawn.

Additionally, the personality within the leaf grants you one minor beneficial artifact property. There is a 50 percent chance that it has a minor detrimental property, as well. In some cases, this means that the wearer may acquire some of the traits of the former personality; in at least one case a human chieftain “became” a long-dead Preserver driven mad by her inability to cast spells.

SUMMER SIGHT GOGGLES

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing these goggles you have the ability to see through ice and snow up to a range of 60 feet. To your eyes everything you see within range is uncovered by ice or snow. These goggles are very useful for finding items lost in the snow, spotting dangerous snow-covered crevices, or finding doorways to the Snow Barrows. *Summer sight goggles* also remove precipitating sleet and snow from your sight, giving you clear vision ahead of you.

Additionally, as an action, you can cause all snow in a 60-foot cone in front of you to disappear, as the spell *create or destroy water*. Once you have used this feature, you cannot use it until next dawn. 