

## While You Were Sleeping

While the rest of the party slept at the inn away from the snow and howling wind, Curthro and Agon, along with Sora investigated the disappearance of people in town, particularly children. They learned that a creature called the Krampus had been taking people on Winter Solstice the past few years. A local Red Wizard, Smedric had tried to stop the Krampus along with the town guard unsuccessfully.

Upon learning what they could about Krampus from Soras contact at the Library Tower, they went to the Orphanage to attempt to waylay the creature as it was a prime target from years past. A trio of city guards and the dwarven caretaker stood watch with them. Curthro had a perhaps not so brilliant idea of arming the children with pots and pans to distract the creature if it came.

Much later that night when all good little ones should be safely asleep, it came. At first Krampus was content to torment them by moving about outside while leaving sign of its passage. Eventually though, it grew tired of that game, and as we later learned, entered the building down the chimney as a cloud of shadow. One of the poor guards being yanked back into the cold fireplace was the first warning the party got that Krampus was here.

Thinking quickly, Agon and the dwarf gathered the children into a corner and interposed themselves between the children and the fireplace. Darkness fell within the room as all light was magically snuffed out.

It taunted the group as it took children, one by one. A gleam of black teeth was all that marked the disappearance of a child. Sora began trying to blast it with eldritch power, but could not find her mark, blowing holes in the ceiling instead which snow slowly fell through.

Having been uselessly standing before the hearth in case the Krampus tried to Curthro hurled himself at the monstrous shape revealed by the swirling snowflakes striking a mighty blow.

Angered, the creature dropped its cloak of invisibility, showing itself to be some manner of blue ogre that stood over eight feet tall if it was an inch. It had wicked black claws, knife-like teeth, and wielded a great cleaver that looked as if it were made of ice. Malice gleamed in its eyes as it looked for an outlet to unleash its rage for being struck.

A ghoulish smile parted Krampus' thick lips and it raised a single black claw to point at the tight cluster of children. Frost burst forth upon the pots and pans they were holding, their fearful gasps of breath became visible, and the roar of an Arctic gale filled the air.

At that moment, before the full force of the spell could fall, Agon stood forth before the monster. Raising both hands before him, Agon snared the freezing energy, visible as ribbons of roiling white, and directed it into the already frozen ground with the crack of a frozen lake shattering.

The Krampus, momentarily distracted by the destruction of its spell was quickly brought back into the fight when Curthro buried his greataxe into its back with a hearty thunk.

No longer certain of victory, the wounded creature once more became invisible. This time, however, the group could see drops of blue blood marking its path when it fled. Without hesitation, Curthro followed it into the fireplace and directly up the chimney while Sora and Agon rushed out the door.

Agon was able to pick up the creatures trail and along with Sora and Curthro pursued it across the city. Arriving at the Library Tower where they had originally met with Smedric, they found the blood trail continue inside to a room in turmoil. Books were scattered about and even a shelf or two were knocked over with crashes and thumps from the floor above indicating they had nearly caught up.

Racing up the spiraling stairs, Agon, Curthro, and Sora were able to catch up to the creature before it could escape yet again. Not bothering to stay invisible, Krampus turned to them, dropping a lumpy sack on the ground and shifted forms to Smedric, the very person who had been trying to 'rid' the city of the creature for years.

The next few minutes are best not described as only madness lies before those who have seen into the void and remember.

In the end, the body of Smedric the Red, Krampus no longer existed, leaving behind only his robe, cleaver, and the sack. While Curthro had the best of intentions, people and children in particular who have been snatched by Krampus are not exactly receptive to a goblin smeared with blue ogre blood sticking his head into the pocket dimension they are trapped in.

Hearing the fresh screams which drowned out Curthros protestations, Agon quickly pushed him out of sight and helped the people who had been taken that Winter Solstice out of the bag.