

DAUGHTERS OF THE WITCH



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AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 3RD TO 5TH LEVEL

DAUGHTERS OF THE WITCH IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for three to six characters of 3rd to 5th level, optimized for a party of four 4th-level characters. Nestled within a frozen gorge, the lair of an ice hag named Vivette awaits unwary travelers. Once a grieving mother transformed by trauma and supernatural forces, Vivette now kidnaps young women who remind her of her lost daughter, keeping them in an enchanted stupor while she tries to mold them into perfect replicas of her child. This adventure takes place in the world of Cartosia, but can easily be placed in any frigid wilderness across a variety of campaign settings.

BACKGROUND

For ages, local settlements have warned travelers of the treacherous gorge known as the Widow's Pass. The few bridges spanning its depths are unreliable at best, with strange accidents befalling those who cross during winter months. The truth behind these tales is far more tragic than superstition.

Vivette was once an ordinary woman traveling with her husband, her son, and her young daughter, fleeing the harsh northern winters for warmer southern lands. Betrayed by their guide at a narrow bridge across the gorge, Vivette watched helplessly as her daughter's throat was cut, her small body cast into the churning waters below. In desperation and fury, Vivette severed the bridge's supports, plunging herself, her husband, and the treacherous guide into the icy river.

She should have died that day. Instead, Vivette awoke transformed, her grief and rage having attracted the attention of dark, ancient, wintry forces. These entities infused her with unnatural power, warping her into something no longer human. Her family and the guide were long gone, but Vivette remained, bound to the gorge by magic and obsession.

Centuries passed. Vivette's lair grew more elaborate as her powers developed, the ice responding to her will like a living thing. In her twisted state, she brews potions from rare herbs and the enchanted waters of the river, using them to keep her victims in a trance-like state as she attempts to mold them into perfect replicas of her lost child. When they inevitably fail to meet her impossible standards, she freezes their bodies into statues of ice, building a macabre gallery of her failures.

The pattern has remained consistent for generations. Every few years, a young woman with dark hair and pale features vanishes—always from different villages, always during the coldest months. The locals whisper of the Ice Witch, a phantom that haunts the gorge, but few dare to venture near her domain. Those who have attempted to confront Vivette in the past never returned.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are numerous reasons the party might be compelled to confront Vivette within her lair. A few of these reasons are outlined below:

The Missing Sister. A local trader's daughter vanished while traveling through the mountains three days ago. When the trader inquired about her disappearance, villagers whispered about the Ice Witch who dwells in the gorge. Now desperate, the trader offers the party 300 gp to find his daughter and bring her home safely. He can provide a small portrait showing a young woman with pale skin and raven-black hair.

Unfinished Business. An aging monster hunter named Korvan seeks the party's help to settle a decades-old score. Years ago, Vivette killed his hunting companions when they attempted to end her predations. Korvan escaped, but the memory has haunted him ever since. Too old to face her alone, he offers to guide the party to Vivette's lair and share what he knows of her abilities. As payment, he offers a magic item from his collection—a ring of cold resistance.

The Hag's Heart. A mysterious collector of occult artifacts believes that Vivette's physical transformation has created something unique—a heart that never truly dies, preserved in a state between life and death by the ancient winter spirits. Such an item would be invaluable for certain forbidden rituals. The collector offers 800 gp for the heart, removed from Vivette's body.

KORVAN THE MONSTER HUNTER

If the GM is using the Unfinished Business adventure hook, this section details the information necessary to run Korvan while he accompanies the party.

Korvan (LN he/him elderly human **veteran** with 30 hit points and a speed of 20 ft.) is a weathered, granite-skinned man in his late seventies with one milky eye and a network of frostbite scars across his face. He walks with a pronounced limp from an old injury that never properly healed. Despite his age, his hands remain steady and his mind sharp.

Appearance. Korvan wears layers of fur-lined leather armor beneath a heavy cloak made from a winter wolf pelt. A collection of odd charms and trophies from past hunts hang from his belt. His white beard is meticulously trimmed, contrasting with his wild, gray hair.

Personality. Blunt and methodical, Korvan speaks with practiced economy. He has little patience for boasting or speculation, preferring to deal in facts and observations. When discussing Vivette, a rare flicker of emotion—both fear and determination—breaks through his stoic demeanor.

Knowledge. Korvan can share crucial information about Vivette's lair:

- The bridge above the gorge is rigged to collapse
- Vivette can project her image through reflective ice surfaces
- The caverns themselves seem to respond to her emotions
- Her victims are kept in a trance-like state before being frozen
- It has long been rumored that the axe used to kill her daughter remains lost in the riverbed at the bottom of the gorge

Korvan carries two *potions of healing* and a climber's kit. If accompanying the party, he insists on guarding their exit route rather than entering the deepest parts of the lair, claiming his leg would slow them down (though fear plays an equal part in this decision).

GENERAL FEATURES

Vivette's lair is an ice-rimed cavern system set into the rocky walls of a frozen gorge. Its passages are naturally formed but magically reshaped by Vivette's presence and emotions. Unless otherwise stated, the lair's features are described as follows:

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The cavern walls and ceilings are solid rock coated in thick layers of translucent ice, creating reflective surfaces throughout. Ceilings range between 10 to 15 feet in height. Floors are slick with frost and occasionally uneven, but not enough to be difficult terrain unless specifically noted.

Light. Natural daylight faintly penetrates the outer chambers through cracks in the ice, creating dim light during daytime hours. Deeper chambers remain in darkness, illuminated only by occasional clusters of softly glowing, enchanted icicles.

Temperature. The air inside the lair is bitterly cold. Characters without proper winter clothing or resistance to cold must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw each hour or gain one level of exhaustion.

Reflections of Vivette. Vivette can phase into the Spectral Plane, which she often does when her lair is approached, quietly observing intruders and deciding how to react. From this spectral vantage point, she can project her voice and image into reflective ice surfaces throughout her lair. As the party explores, Vivette will subtly engage them, appearing as distorted reflections or disembodied echoes. She maintains her distance until the adventurers pose a significant threat to her thralls, cause substantial destruction to her lair, or until some other dramatic moment at GM discretion—at which point she manifests physically to confront them.

APPROACHING THE LAIR

Widow's Bridge serves as a landmark for Vivette's domain, but it is not an entrance to her lair. The lair can only be accessed via the bottom of the gorge, within the icy walls overlooking the frozen river. Locals know this, which

is why few have attempted to confront her—reaching the entrance requires a perilous descent down the sheer gorge walls, a challenge that has deterred all but the most determined hunters.

The Descent. The gorge walls drop approximately 120 feet from the bridge to the icy riverbank below. These walls are nearly vertical in most places, with occasional ledges and outcroppings offering potential resting points. The rock face is slick with ice and exposed to bitter winds that whip through the chasm. A character using a climber's kit can make the descent with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. The climber's kit provides advantage on this check. Characters attempting the climb without proper equipment must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check and do so with disadvantage due to the icy conditions. Spells such as *spider climb*, *levitate*, *fly*, *feather fall*, or similar magic can bypass the physical challenge entirely.

Each failed climbing check results in a fall. Characters who fall can attempt to catch themselves on a ledge with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, halting their descent after 1d6 × 10 feet. Those who fail this save plummet to the bottom of the gorge, taking appropriate falling damage (potentially 12d6).

The Approach from Below. Some foolhardy adventurers have attempted to approach the lair by following the river from downstream. This route is nearly impossible due to the river's treacherous currents and the increasingly narrow walls of the gorge, which eventually become impassable without specialized equipment or magic.

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of Vivette's lair:

I. WIDOW'S BRIDGE

A narrow wooden bridge sags across the gorge before you, swaying gently as frigid winds whistle through the chasm below. Ancient timbers creak and groan, slick with frost. Below, the icy river churns ominously, its dark surface flecked with drifting snow and ice. A weather-worn wooden sign, its surface covered in a layer of frost, stands at the close end of the bridge.

This weathered bridge spans the approximate 45-foot width of the gorge, suspended 120 feet above the frozen river. Brushing away the ice covering the sign reveals a warning carved in several languages: "Cross not the Widow's Span when winter holds the land. The Witch below claims those who mourn what cannot be returned."

Characters who linger near the bridge for more than a few minutes begin to hear faint, spectral whispers carried on the wind—a child's laughter, a woman's desperate pleading, and the sounds of splintering wood. These are psychic echoes of Vivette's tragedy, imprinted on the location.

Trap: Severing Supports. If any creature weighing more than 50 pounds steps onto the bridge, roll a d20. On a 1-15, the

bridge's supports begin to crack and strain and after a few moments (Initiative count 15) snap entirely, sending the bridge and anyone on it plummeting toward the river below. Characters on the bridge when it collapses must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to grab onto a piece of the falling structure. Those who succeed can attempt to climb to safety with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check as the bridge fragments crash into the gorge walls. The bridge magically repairs itself at the next dawn.

2. VIVETTE'S SANCTUM

Gleaming surfaces of polished ice reflect your presence a dozen times over in this cavernous space. Ice-rimed furniture, including tables and bookshelves, is arranged throughout the room. A massive pipe organ stands curiously against the far wall, its keys yellowed with age. Near the chamber's edge overlooking the river sits a high-backed chair, beside which rests a small table bearing a skull, polished to an unnatural gleam. To the right, a stone basin filled with shimmering blue liquid emits tendrils of frigid mist.

This is Vivette's inner sanctum, where she spends most of her time when not hunting for new "daughters" or tending to her current captives. The books throughout the room concern topics such as alchemy and preservation, while scattered across the tables are journals documenting centuries of failed attempts to recreate her perfect daughter. The skull on the table belongs to Vivette's daughter, recovered from the river centuries ago. It's the only part of the child Vivette managed to find. The skull has been preserved through a combination of Vivette's magic and obsessive care; if the skull is disturbed, Vivette immediately manifests in a rage.

Enchanted Basin. The basin contains the base potion used to enthrall Vivette's captives. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check can identify the mixture as a powerful enchantment fluid derived in part from the water of the gorge and rare mountain herbs. The liquid has the consistency of mercury and is so cold to the touch that it almost feels hot. A creature that drinks the potion suffers the effects of the *confusion* and the *charm person* spells as if cast by Vivette for eight hours.

Treasure: The Frozen Organ. Vivette hauled this pipe organ out of the river; it is one of the main prizes of her collection. Characters who make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check find hidden beneath its bench, in a secret compartment, a collection of personal effects taken from Vivette's victims over the centuries: jewelry totalling 550 gp, locks of hair, and small trinkets. Also among these items is a *potion of cold resistance*.

Reflections of Vivette. The many reflective surfaces in this chamber might show Vivette sitting at the organ, playing a haunting melody though no sound emerges, or standing over the basin, stirring its contents with unnaturally long fingers. If characters disturb any of her possessions, all

reflective surfaces might suddenly show her face—eyes narrowed in suspicion, mouth twisted in a snarl—before returning to normal.

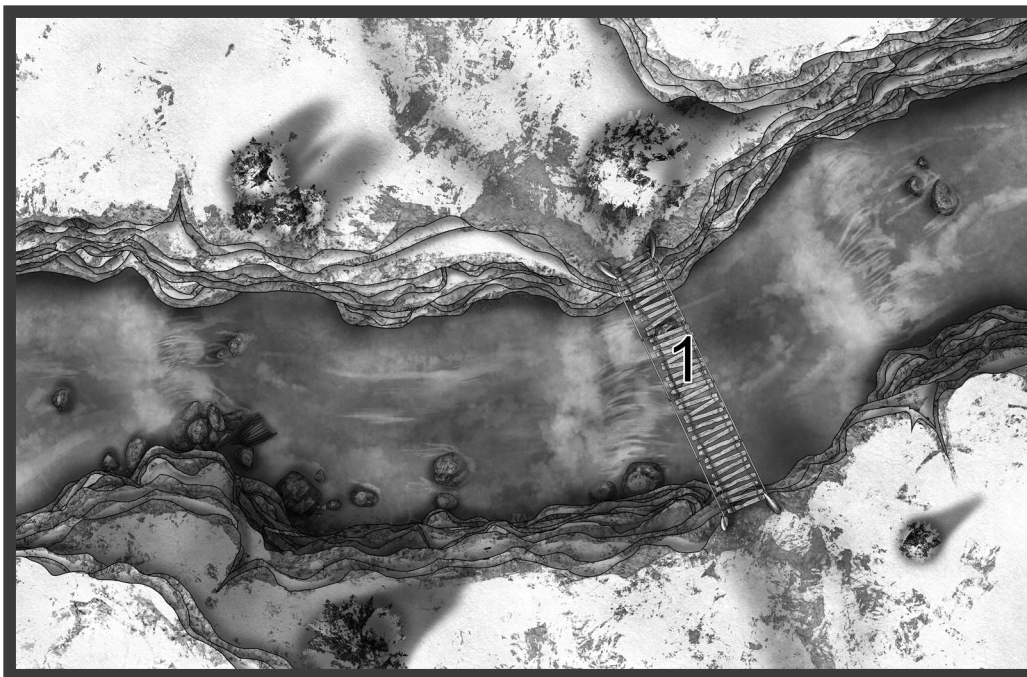
3. THRALL CHAMBER

When viewed from another area of the lair, this chamber presents a disturbing tableau: three young women with dark hair and pale complexions standing at its edge, watching silently with glassy, unfocused eyes. They remain perfectly still except for occasional, synchronized tilts of their heads, as if listening to instructions only they can hear.

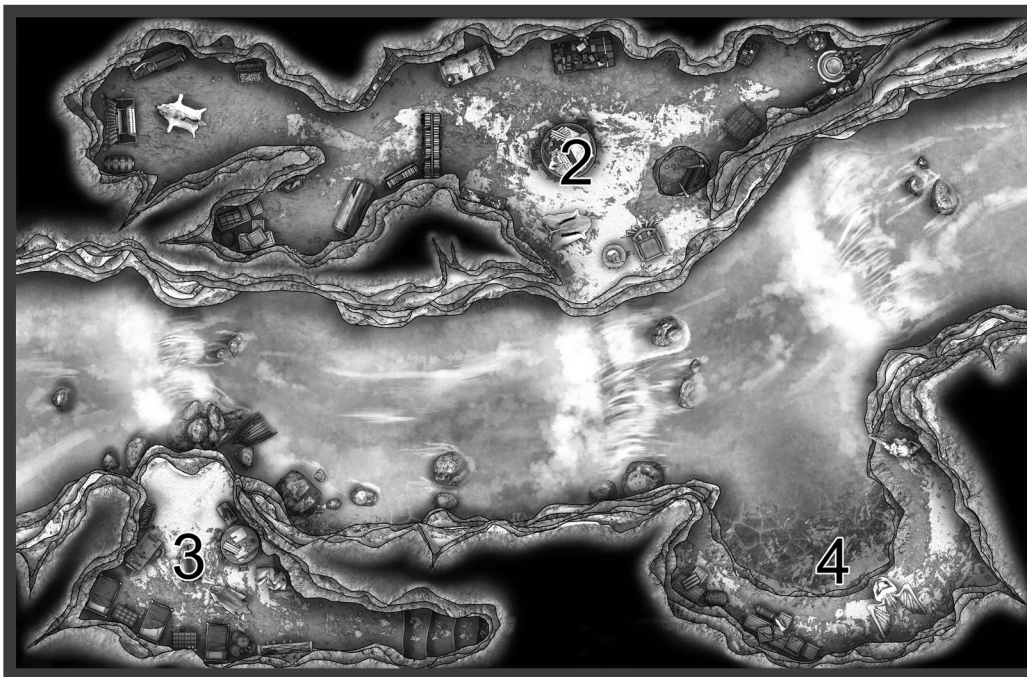
This chamber appears to be living quarters, though pervaded by an unsettling stillness. Three small beds with ice-crusting frames line one wall, each neatly made with worn furs. A wooden table holds simple grooming implements—combs, scissors, and a tarnished mirror. Three young women stand in the center of the room, their faces eerily similar despite being different people. They wear identical plain white dresses, and their expressions are vacant, eyes clouded as if lost in a dream.

This is where Vivette keeps her current "daughters"—young women abducted from nearby settlements who bear a resemblance to her lost child. Under the influence of her potion, they exist in a dreamlike state where they obey her commands while their minds remain trapped in a haze. The three young women (they use **commoner** statistics) here are Mirena, Eliska, and Tania. They will not respond to the party's presence unless directly approached, at which point they move in unison toward intruders, attempting to grasp them with cold hands. They are not attacking but rather seeking to "welcome" anyone as their "sister." If touched, each thrall's skin is unnaturally cold, and they speak in whispered, childlike voices, repeating phrases like "Mother will be so pleased" and "Stay with us forever." The thralls will

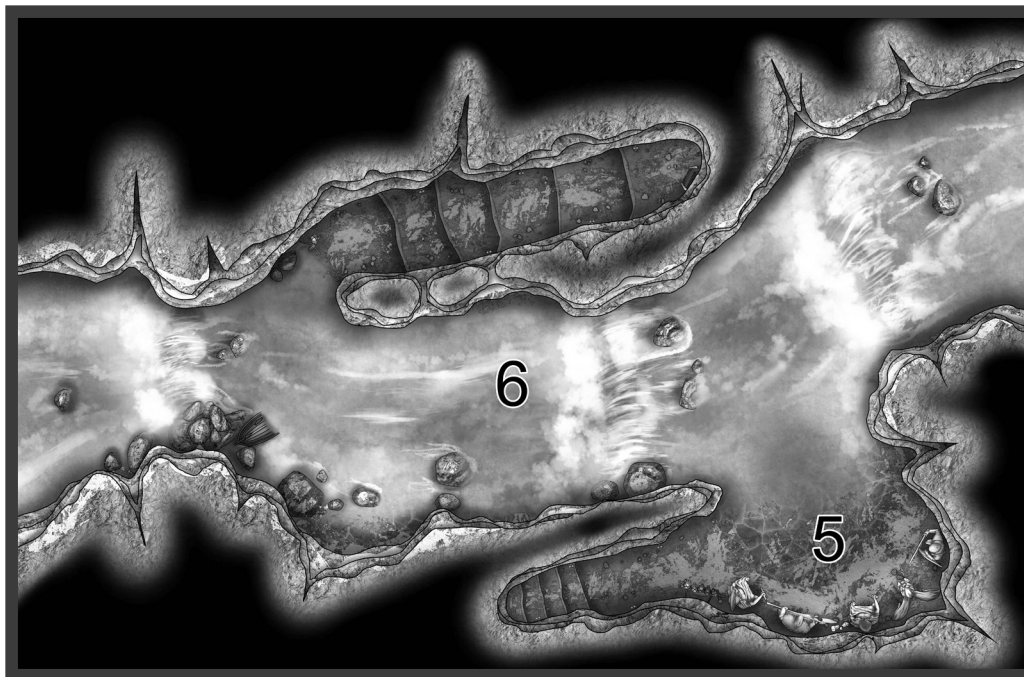
BRIDGE



LAIR



RIVER



not attack unless Vivette commands them to, at which point they fight clumsily but without fear or self-preservation.

Reflections of Vivette. The ice on the walls occasionally shows not the viewer's reflection but Vivette tenderly brushing the hair of a young girl whose face is always just out of view. If characters observe this vision for more than a few moments, Vivette's reflection might turn toward them, her expression momentarily hopeful before darkening with suspicion. "Have you come to take them from me?" she might ask, her voice emanating from the mirror's surface. "They are not ready yet. None of them are ever ready..."

Mirena Vachek. The most recently captured of the three women, taken just a month ago while traveling to visit relatives in a neighboring settlement. The 19-year-old daughter of a blacksmith, she has a fiancé desperately searching for her. If freed, she is initially disoriented but quickly recovers her faculties. She recalls Vivette weeping while brushing her hair, speaking to her as "my precious Ilyana."

Eliska Dravin. Disappeared one year ago from a village fifteen miles away. The 22-year-old midwife's apprentice has been subjected to more of Vivette's "conditioning" than Mirena. If freed, she experiences tremors and nightmares for several days. She remembers Vivette forcing her to play a child's game involving a wooden doll, punishing her when she "played wrong."

Tania Stuv. Has been Vivette's captive for nearly three years. The 20-year-old miller's daughter was initially believed

to have drowned in a river accident. The longest-held captive, Tania's psyche has been deeply affected by Vivette's influence. If freed, she experiences periods of catatonia interspersed with childlike behavior. She recalls little of her ordeal but speaks of "Mother's special water" and how "the others in the ice watch us always."

Breaking the Enchantment. The enchantment can be broken temporarily for a few minutes with a successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 15) or permanently with *greater restoration*. Additionally, the effects of the potion naturally wear off after 24 hours without a new dose. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check can determine that feeding the thralls hot broth mixed with certain common herbs will hasten the recovery process, reducing the time to 1d4 hours.

4. UPPER LEDGE

This cramped alcove perches above the river, offering a commanding view of the churning waters below. Rough-hewn wooden crates and small barrels are stacked against the wall, their surfaces rimed with frost.

This natural outcropping serves as Vivette's storage area for components needed for her potions and other supplies gathered from unfortunate travelers. The crates contain various herbs, dried fungi, and mineral components used in Vivette's brewing process. A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check can identify several rare mountain herbs that are key ingredients in her enchantment

potions. These herbs could be worth 75 gp to an alchemist or herbalist in a nearby settlement.

5. RIVER

The frigid river cuts through the cavern, its surface partially frozen with patches of clear ice revealing the dark water below. Chunks break free and drift in the current, occasionally colliding with an echoing crack that reverberates throughout the chamber. The sheer rock walls that frame the river bear marks of countless seasons of ice and thaw.

This section of the river flows directly beneath Vivette's main lair. Over the centuries, countless items have been lost to its depths—from the possessions of Vivette's victims to remnants of her former life washed downstream from the site of the original tragedy.

Hazard: Frigid Waters. Any creature that enters the water must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of its turns or take 2d6 cold damage from the bone-chilling temperature. Additionally, the current is deceptively strong—a creature must succeed on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check each round to move against the current or remain in place, otherwise being carried 10 feet downstream.

Reflections of Vivette. When characters peer into the partially frozen river, they might see scenes from the past—bodies crashing into the water, an axe embedding itself into the riverbed, or Vivette desperately searching the waters, her human form evident though already beginning to change. Her scream of grief appears as a ripple across the water's surface, distorting the image before it fades. If characters remain watching, Vivette's present form might appear in the reflection instead, staring up at them from beneath the ice with calculating eyes.

The Guide's Axe. A character who studies the river and makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a glint of metal in the riverbed—a corroded axe wedged between rocks. This is the weapon the treacherous guide used to kill Vivette's daughter centuries ago. If recovered (requiring a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check to retrieve while withstanding the current), characters familiar with Vivette's story or travelling with Korvan might correctly guess its significance. Though mundane in nature, if used against Vivette, she recoils from it in horror, granting advantage on all attack rolls against her while the blade is within her line of sight.

6. ICE STATUES

A chill beyond mere cold permeates this chamber, emanating from five ice sculptures arranged in a semi-circle along the wall of the cavern. Each sculpture perfectly captures a young woman, their expressions ranging from peaceful slumber to wide-eyed terror. Unlike conventional ice statues, these bear an unnerving translucency that reveals shadowy forms within—frozen

bodies preserved in perfect detail. Their shared features are striking: all have similar builds, pale complexions, and dark hair.

This macabre gallery represents Vivette's failed attempts at recreating her daughter. Each statue contains the actual body of a former captive, perfectly preserved in supernatural ice that never melts. Some statues date back decades, their subjects forever young within their frozen prisons.

Hazard: Whispers of the Frozen. Any character who touches a statue must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or experience a brief flash of the victim's final moments, becoming frightened for 1 minute. A frightened character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

CONFRONTING VIVETTE

When Vivette first physically manifests, the living ice of the cavern reacts dramatically—icicles stretch from the ceiling, frost patterns race across surfaces, and the temperature plummets. She appears as a tall, gaunt woman with skin like blue-tinged porcelain, cracked in places to reveal pulsing darkness beneath. Her hair flows like frozen waterfalls down her back, and her eyes shift between motherly warmth and predatory coldness.

"You are trespassers in my home," she might, her voice echoing unnaturally. "Yet you have come this far... what do you seek from Vivette? My daughters? My memories? Or perhaps... my life?" As she speaks, the ice around her shifts subtly, revealing ghostly reflections of the countless faces she has claimed over the centuries.

Throughout any interaction with Vivette, the ice of her lair responds to her emotional state. When she speaks calmly, frost forms intricate, beautiful patterns along nearby surfaces. During moments of nostalgia, the ice takes on a bluish glow and tiny flakes of snow drift through the air. If she grows suspicious, icicles extend from the ceiling, their points directed toward the party. When angered, the ice darkens to near-black and sharp shards protrude from walls, while frost rapidly encrusts any nearby objects.

Despite her monstrous nature, Vivette primarily wants to be understood. She wishes to explain her quest to recreate her daughter, to justify her centuries of abduction and murder as necessary steps toward reuniting her broken family. She will engage in conversation if approached diplomatically, eager to share her tragic story with those who might appreciate its depth. Vivette uses night hag statistics, with the following modifications:

- She has immunity to cold damage.
- Her claw attack deals an additional 1d6 cold damage.
- She can cast *ray of frost* and *hold person* at will.
- **New Ability: Living Architecture (Recharge 5-6):** As a bonus action, Vivette can cause the ice in a 15-foot cube within her lair to animate and attack her enemies. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving

throw or take 10 (3d6) piercing damage from ice shards and become restrained by rapidly forming ice. A restrained creature can use its action to make a DC 15 Strength check to break free.

The confrontation with Vivette may play out non-violently in several ways. Two possibilities are detailed here.

The Daughter's Memory. Through careful conversation and emotional insight, the party might reach the grieving mother still trapped within the monstrous hag. This approach requires three successful checks and thoughtful roleplay. If accompanied by Korvan, any checks are made with disadvantage when he is in Vivette's presence, for she can sense his obvious hatred.

- DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion): Initially, the party must demonstrate understanding of Vivette's loss. Success causes her to pause, the ice around her momentarily stilling. "You know nothing of my pain," she might whisper, but her aggressive stance softens slightly.
- DC 15 Wisdom (Insight): Once Vivette begins to listen, characters must identify specific aspects of her humanity to reconnect her with. Mentioning her daughter's name (Ilyana) or recalling details about her family's journey before the tragedy earns advantage on this check. Success causes the ice to take on a warm blue glow as Vivette's eyes briefly return to their human appearance. "I remember when she was small... her laughter..." she might murmur.
- DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion): The most difficult step requires characters to gently but firmly help Vivette face the truth: her daughter is gone, and her centuries of "replacements" are a perversion of motherly love. Success on this check causes the ice throughout the lair to begin slowly melting, as Vivette falls to her knees in genuine grief. "What have I become?" she asks, as her supernatural form begins to fade.

If the party succeeds in all three checks, Vivette experiences a moment of clarity. The ice throughout her lair begins to recede, and her form gradually dissolves into mist and snowflakes. Her thralls awaken from their enchantment, and the ice preserving her statue collection melts, allowing those souls to finally find peace. Vivette herself might leave behind a single, perfect ice tear—a small magical gem worth 500 gp that grants resistance to cold damage for 24 hours when held. These checks can be repeated, but a total of three failures causes Vivette to grow angry enough to attack.

The Guide's Axe. If recovered from the river, the guide's axe offers a powerful psychological weapon against Vivette, especially if the party is willing to use intimidation tactics or be deceptive. This approach requires two successful checks, with flexibility in approach.

- DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Deception): Threaten Vivette with the weapon that took her daughter, forcing her to confront the source of her trauma. Success causes her to become momentarily paralyzed with fear, the

ice around her cracking as her concentration falters.

Alternatively, claim to be agents of cosmic justice, sent to complete what began centuries ago. Success causes Vivette to believe her time of reckoning has arrived, and she may offer to release her captives in exchange for mercy.

- DC 17 Charisma (Deception or Intimidation): Regardless of approach, this final check determines whether the party can convince Vivette that surrendering to her fate is the only way to end her suffering.

If successful, Vivette kneels before the party, allowing them to touch the axe to her forehead. Rather than harming her, this contact breaks the curse that has held her for centuries. Her form dissolves into mist, and the axe crumbles to rust. These checks can be repeated, but a total of three failures causes Vivette to grow angry enough to attack.

AFTERMATH

If Vivette is killed outright, her death triggers a dramatic collapse of her magical influence. The ice throughout her lair begins to crack and melt, giving the party only minutes to rescue any surviving thralls and escape before the caverns flood. The supernatural preservation of her ice statues ends, the bodies within decaying rapidly. The local villages no longer fear the Ice Witch, but whispers persist that her spirit remains bound to the gorge, waiting for a new vessel.

If Vivette finds peace through one of the non-combat resolutions, the transformation is more gradual. Her form slowly dissolves into mist and snowflakes, and her thralls awaken from their enchantment. The ice in her lair remains but loses its malevolent quality. Local villagers report that during winter nights, they sometimes hear a woman's gentle lullaby carried on the wind—no longer a threat, but a bittersweet reminder of a mother's eternal love.

If Vivette escapes, she retreats deeper into the wilderness to rebuild her strength, harboring a special hatred for the party. She may resurface months later, targeting those dear to the adventurers in her quest for revenge.

REFERENCES

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 (“SRD 5.1”) by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

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