

The Nights Before Christmas

a Victorious holiday adventure for 4-6 players levels 4-6 by Mike Stewart



Art by Victor Vasentsov

The situation was dire, and becoming more so by the minute. Motivator was on her knees, her face blank with open staring eyes, eyes gazing into nothing

With a snarl of rage, Thunderbolt threw himself in his lightning form at the creature standing above his fiancé. The hulking ogress was ready for him. With a grin that showed far too many fanged teeth for her mouth, she raised a tiny copper rod and brandished it before her. With a buzzing gasp of surprise, Thunderbolt found himself drawn irresistibly into the copper rod. He disappeared, and a roaring laugh echoed, a laugh that reminded its listeners of a bear trap dragged across an infinity of chalkboards.

Yet still the Minutemen came on. American Eagle tried to wrap Baba Yaga in his olive-branch rope, reinforced by steel cable from the Hunter & Hunter laboratories. The ogress simply slashed her talons and the rope parted with a sickening screech of failing metal. “Ah, a little birdie for me!” She cackled and threw a bag at the flying hero, and with a snap he too vanished, as if the bag simply devoured him.

That left the Monitor and John Henry. The muscled black man, nearly as large as the Russian monster, threw his hammer

into her chest. It ricocheted, but Mjolnir’s power knocked her backwards. With a screech of gears and pneumatics, Monitor tried to follow up Henry’s attack and double-punched the staggering ogress, driving her onto her back. With a hiss of triumphant gyros, the armored lady rose her fists into the air for the coup de grace.

...and stopped in place. Baba Yaga threw a handful of dust at the armored titan, and it froze in mid-strike, as if turned to stone. In fact that was what apparently had happened to Monitor. Her once dull steel armor now appeared to be brown stone.

John Henry retrieved his hammer, and looked around himself. Only he was left, and the horror of the steppes, somehow translocated from her homeland to New York City, grinned maliciously at him.

“You cannot slay me, son of Odin,” she cackled in glee. She rose from the cobblestones and strode ponderously towards him. “You try, and you will face the fate of your companions.”

“I don’t know who Odin is, ma’am.” Despite the terror of the situation, John kept his manners. “I’m just planning to beat your head down between your shoulders.”

They clashed, and only one strode away.



Art by Roman Papsuev

Player Introduction:

The Minutemen have fallen. Everyone in New York knows this, but none wish to speak it openly. That insane Russian monster is loose on the city streets. She strikes only at night, and flies in her cauldron to steal children away from their parents. Once her mad quota is reached, she takes them to her malevolent hut in Central Park. There, the building, dancing with massive chicken legs to an insane tune only it can hear, sets down before its mistress and allow her entry with her terrified hostages. What happens to them in the hut? How could divine providence allow such a thing, and on Christmas no less?

Only you and your heroes can save New York's children, and perhaps Christmas itself!

For the Genteel Magistrate:

This short adventure reveals the evil that is Baba Yaga. She has journeyed to the New World to fulfill an ancient prophecy, that of Russian magicks older even than she. She travel to the "city that scrapes the heavens, sacrifice seven of seven, and bathe in their blood." With this, Baba Yaga believes she will gain immortality. She has deduced that the 'seven of seven' means the sacrifice of seven children for seven days. As such, she only takes seven children a night, for seven days. Once this is complete, her ritual will begin.

Unfortunately for the Russian ogress, the Minutemen interrupted her capture of seven children the second night. Forced to restart her kidnappings, she met them again on the first night, but she had her magicks ready for them and the results were as note din the prologue. Now she has six more days to collect the seven in each.

The main crux of this adventure is to defeat the goals of Baba Yaga. This is important, as it does not necessarily mean the defeat of Baba Yaga herself in combat. Any magician in the group of heroes who tries to use magick to determine Baba Yaga's goals (Challenge Level of 3) will discover the prophecy and some judicious deduction by the heroes should reveal the 7 by 7 pattern. Furthermore, the heroes have an unknown ally. With John Henry's fall, Odin one-eye has felt the call for aid of Mjolnir, the hammer once wielded by Thor. Though John Henry is not his blood son, Odin vows that anyone worthy of wielding his son's hammer is his blood kin and will arrive by day 5 to search out the hammer's wielder. This intervention can be of help if the players are determined to throw down with Baba Yaga, as Odin can help tip the scales convincingly...though not necessarily guaranteeing victory. Odin's character sheet may be found as a separate download on either the [Victorious website](#) or on the [Victorious Facebook page](#).

Encounters among the city:

As normal in a Victorious adventure, tables are given for heroes to encounter either Baba Yaga herself or other crimes



Art by L. F. Perkins

The Nights Before Christmas, © Mike Stewart 2016

in the great metropolis. The GM is free to extrapolate the below encounters in any way they see fit (die roll or just choose).

Eventually, the heroes will foil at least 1 of the seven by seven and bring Yaga's full wrath upon them. Yet time is short, she must complete the ritual by Yule (December 25th) or the rite will not work. Furthermore, the stars will not be right again for this event for at least another century, so she will be wroth if foiled and give the heroes a new recurring enemy!

Table 1: Encounters above the streets:

For each table, there is a 1 in 12 chance (1d12) per daylight of an encounter, a 3 in 12 (1-3 on D12) chance during the evenings.

D12 roll	Event
1	Odin is spotted flying on his sled, see statistics for Odin All-Father if attacked.
2-3	Woman hanging wet clothes on a clothes line. Roof is under construction. If jumping or leaping the heroine must make a Dexterity saving throw or she will take 1d6 damage from lumber and nails. Even if the save is made she will lose 1d4 rounds of movement.
4	This roof has a fragile rooftop surface (d6; 1-3 tar paper over beams, 4-5 rotten shingles, 6 trapdoor requiring a Dexterity saving throw to avoid. The d6 roll to determine source of the check is also the challenge class; so tar paper is between 1-3, rotten shingles are either a 4 or 5 and a trapdoor is 6.
5	A clutch of birds (d6; 1-3 chickens, 4-5 pigeons, 6 rooks) are kept by someone up here. If started they will leap into the hero's path, delaying the hero for 1-4 (1d4) rounds.
6	Burglary in progress with 1d4 burglars as follows. Burglars (The burglars are Neutral mortals whose vital statistics are: Level 2; Hit Points 5, 6, 5, 8; Armor Class 11. Their prime attributes are: Dexterity. Their significant skills are: Roguery, Melee. Each carries a jack knife that inflicts 1D4 damage and wears a leather coat; +1 to AC.
7	The hero(es) catch sight of Baba Yaga (1-3 flying in her cauldron, 4-6 climbing in a window) on her way to kidnap children!
8	Electrical wires crisscross the air between buildings! Heroines must make a Wisdom saving throw or hit the wires, taking 2d6 hit points of damage from the voltage
9	Skeletal remains of a burned out building. This will take a Dexterity saving throw at Challenge Level 2 to successfully circumvent. Failure means the hero falls 1d3 floors and suffers concurrent 1-3d6 of falling damage.
10	Large skylight set into roof, with a chance the hero inadvertently lands on it.
11	Cloud of coal soot engulfs character. Hero must make a Wisdom check at Challenge Level 2 to avoid falling or running into a building. If failed character will take 1d6 hit points of damage for every 10 feet he falls or speed of light when crashing.
12	Heroes encounter a supervillain taking advantage of the Mintuemen's departure. The Genteel Magistrate can choose a suitable villain from either the <i>Victorious</i> rulebook or the <i>Phantasmagoria</i> supplement.

Table 2: Ground encounters:

1D12 Roll	Event
1	The hero(es) catch sight of Baba Yaga (1-3 flying in her cauldron, 4-6 climbing in a window) on her way to kidnap children!
2	Jail Break, use burglar stats for escaping criminals though they have no arms or armor.
3	Burglary (see entry in table 1)
4-5	Public Brawl, with a successful Charisma check a heroine can disperse the crowd in 1-3 rounds (1d6/2) Failure means it takes 2d4 rounds to disperse.
6	Soliciting
7-8	Mugging, 2 criminals mugging a third man; see burglar stats for muggers.
9	Shoot-out (D6 1-3: Gang versus Police, 4-6: Gang versus Gang)
10	Vandalism, see burglars for 1-4 vandal stats.
11	Odin is striding down the street in full regalia, causing traffic snarls, terrified pedestrians, and spooked horses. See Odin statistics if he is attacked.
12	Heroes encounter a supervillain taking advantage of the Mintuemen's departure. The Genteel Magistrate can choose a suitable villain from either the <i>Victorious</i> rulebook or the <i>Phantasmagoria</i> supplement.

Baba Yaga's Hut:

The below is a brief description of the hut's exterior. If the heroes find themselves entering the hut, then it is quite possible for them to become lost. The interior is a tesseract, with a near-infinity of rooms and passages. However, if time is of the essence then the Genteel Magistrate can simply have the doors leading away from the first room of the hut locked and impossible to open. Only the trapdoor on the ceiling will be ajar, and the heroes can go directly to the Bloodbath ritual section below.

The exterior 'yard' of the hut is a wooden picket fence, the timbers appearing gray and rotting. On each post is a human skull. Anyone attempting to climb over the fence to enter the yard will find themselves translocated to the opposite side of the fence, and they are in fact climbing out of the yard onto the park grass. This teleporting will happen regardless of where the heroes try to enter the hut's yard, with one exception. Entry through the wooden fence will allow normal ingress. Flying heroes will suffer the effect on the yard as noted below once they land; if they land anywhere but the picketed fence gate.

So long as the heroes remain on the path, the hut will stop dancing and settle to the ground so that the group can step onto the porch and open the front door. If heroes approach the hut from anywhere but the stone path, the hut will continue dancing and the skulls on the fence will let out howling shrieks (Charisma save at CL4) and their howls will drive anyone failing a save out of the yard trembling with fear.

If the heroes try to fight the hut, they will be hit as if from a 10 HD opponent (+10 BTH) and suffer 2-20 (2d10) hit points of damage per strike. The hut can attack twice per round as if having Lightning Speed rank 2. The hut cannot be harmed, so damage need not be tallied by the GM.

The Hut proper:

The first room the heroes enter will be the hearth room. It appears much as one would expect a Russian peasant's hut to look like. Packed dirt floor, herbs drying from ceiling beams, a rough stone fireplace in the corner, a table with 4 chairs, and a door on each wall. There are also two trapdoors, one in the floor and one in the ceiling. It is notable that the exterior of the hut shows no chimney, and the hearth room is bigger than the exterior dimensions of the hut itself.

Next to the front door is a massive stone statue (about 7 feet tall) with its arms raised as if to strike anyone entering the room. The statue appears as the Monitor, a armored member of the Minutemen. The statue is heavy (STR 22 to even budge) and if broken will cause bad results for the armored crimefighter if the spell is ever reversed. Like the

other Minutemen in the Bloodbath ritual room, if the statue is moved outside the hut then the steel titan will return to normal. Monitor will be confused at the change of location (having no knowledge of what happened, but will aid the heroes in rescuing the children and other Minutemen. See the adventure "Clockwork Crimes" or the *Phantasmagoria* supplement for Monitor's statistics.

Curiously, the room is stable and unmoving, no matter the prancing dance of the hut's outside form. This should give the heroes the clue that the interior of the hut is not what it seems.

For quick play, it is recommended that all doors be locked except the front door and the ceiling trapdoor. If the Genteel Magistrate wishes a longer adventure, she can invent all sorts of things to encounter behind each door! The ceiling trapdoor leads to the bloodbath room, and it is there the denouement of the adventure is enacted.

Bloodbath & Beyond

This is a large (50 x 80) room of rough brick and flagstone floors. The trapdoor in the floor leads to the ceiling of the hearth room, and as soon as more than 25% of a character is through the door then gravity will reverse and they will climb into this room. Genteel Magistrates should note that entry into this room is only a delay of 1 round, while leaving this room requires a Dexterity save at CL 3 to avoid falling downward onto the packed dirt floor of the hearth room.

Within the room proper is a huge cauldron with a large fire crackling beneath it. The fire makes no smoke so the lack of ventilation is not a factor. There is also a stone altar, and upon it is a dull wool bag and a thin copper rod. An odd voodoo doll is there as well, and upon close inspecting this appears to be made to look like a small black man holding a tiny hammer. This is in fact John Henry and three of his comrades. Thunderbolt is trapped in the copper rod, and breaking it will free him only if the rod (or its pieces) is taken outside the hut. This is the same with the voodoo doll of John Henry. However, opening the bag will show that it is empty. If the heroes turn it inside out the bag will disappear but release American Eagle and Motivator. Both will be unconscious, and will remain so until they are taken outside the dancing hut.

On the far side of the room (away from the trapdoor) is a wooden cage with at least 14 and possibly 49 children within it; depending on how successful the heroes have been. They are scared, and will scream and cry at the first unexpected shock they have, most notably heroes coming into the room. They've become accustomed to (if not happy about) the presence of the Night Hags, and will not scream loudly at their actions.

Speaking of the Night Hags, there are a number of hags

equal to ½ the number of heroes (rounded up) stoking the fire, throwing food scraps and waterskins at the children, and otherwise tending to things. They will attack at first opportunity, and will use the gravity shift at the trap door to pull the first hero out of the doorway and try to rip him to shreds. They are all followers of Baba Yaga and will fight to the death. Statistics for these creatures are:

Night Hag: (This is a Evil humanoid whose vital stats are: HD 8d8, HP 40 each, AC 22. Its prime attributes are: Mental. Its significant abilities are: Bite for 2d6 damage). It has spell-like abilities as follows: Blast 2d8 3 times a day, Blast 2d6 vs. Strength 3/day, Climate Resistance rank 3, Etherealness rank 1 and Shapeshift rank 1.

Baba Yaga has a scrying spell upon this room and will arrive within 2-8 rounds (2d4) rounds and join in the fight. None of the monsters will harm the children, as Yaga needs them for the ritual.

If Odin is with the heroes, he will be outraged at the plan for the children's fate and will concentrate his attacks on Baba Yaga as soon as she appears. This is a good way to allow some respite to outnumbered and outpowered heroes.

The Ritual:

The exact means of Baba Yaga's ritual will be dependent on the alignment of the chronicle. For a Grand/Lawful or Gilded/Neutral chronicle, the sacrifice is only ceremonial, as a shot glass of blood will be taken from each child and put into the cauldron. Not pleasant, but not life threatening to the children. The GM is encouraged to come up with alternatives that might better fit their milieu if this does not suit.

Aftermath:

Assuming the heroes (and possibly Odin) defeat Baba Yaga's plans, then the witch will stalk away in her hut vowing revenge on these meddling kids. If not, and Baba Yaga completes the ritual, she will gain an additional +3 to Attribute and Healing (self only) at rank 1.

Odin will fight to the end to rescue John Henry, the children and to defeat Baba Yaga; in that order. He will be aware of the nature of the voodoo doll and the other items, as well as the method of reversing them. If all ends well, he will wish the heroes a Merry Christmas and depart on his sled with eight reindeer (!). As a parting gift, the most heroic of the player characters will rise in level, and the others will gain enough experience points to bring them within 200 points of their next level of experience.

Plot Twists:

This adventure is made to be played in one sitting (3-5

hours), but the Genteel Magistrate is not limited to this. She can use the hut to open many different adventures for the heroes assuming they have the nerve to explore Baba Yaga's dancing hut. Perhaps one of the children is from the rich and powerful of new York; such as a Vanderbilt or Astor. This could lead to either a grateful patron or a mortal foe, depending on the success of the heroes.

The Minutemen will be grateful as well, assuming they are rescued. With their standing in New York City, these could be useful allies to have. They will intercede on the behalf of the heroes if any of them have outstanding issues (or warrants) among the city or national authorities, assuming they aren't for felonies such as murder or similar crimes.



Baba Yaga (Level 10, Evil)

STR: 21 +4
 INT: 23 +6 (Prime)
 WIS: 20 +4
 CON: 20 +4 (Prime)
 DEX: 18 +3
 CHA: 0 -4

Init: +3 (only when in Cauldron)
 Actions: 3/2 rounds (Only when in Cauldron)
 AC: 23
 Defensive: +8 Temporal, +7 Mystical
 Hit Points: 80

Skills

- History/Legend: Russian folklore rank 4
- Medicine: Herbalism rank 4
- Melee (claws)
- Occult rank 6
- Primes: INT, CON

Supernatural Powers

Gadget: Cauldron (anyone can use -rank 1)

1. Super-Movement (Flight) 30 feet
2. Lightning Speed rank 1; 3/2 rounds

Theme: Ogress rank 4 (cost 7)

1. Might 1d8 rank 2
2. Might +2d6 (claws; only can be used with Might) rank 2
3. Healing +6 hp/scene rank 2
4. Invulnerability +8 Temporal, +7 Mystical
5. Keen Senses (+5 smell, Tracking) rank 2

Attributes X4

Magick: rank 5

1. Mesmerism
2. Blast
3. Force Screen
4. Phantasms
5. Probability Manipulation

** rank 2; somatic and material components removed.

Shortcomings

Handicap: Must eat 10x normal

Odd Appearance

Inhuman

Enemy: Spellbinder Red

2X damage blessed weapons

Phobia: Will randomly spare young “innocent” girl children and aid them

Watched: Chromatic Circle

Sidekick: Vladimir (cat familiar)

Background

Baba Yaga is known in the Asian steppeland as the evil witch of fairy tales. An eight-foot ogress, she and her chicken-legged dancing hut that defies description play a prominent role in Slavic tales. She is frequently portrayed as an opponent of heroes and little children as well as occasionally (rarely) an ally. She is the embodiment of chaos and is frequently unpredictable in her destructions of lives and lands. Oddly preferring to be called a “little grandmother”, the ogress is a source of great occult knowledge and even has been the “fairy godmother” of the rare little girl her appetite for food spares.

But of course, this is only a fairy tale figure. Men of Science of the Victorian era don't believe in the superstitions of unlettered peasant folk, now do they? With the emergence of SuperMankind, such beliefs are being put to the test. Baba Yaga, or a creature calling herself after this monster of mythology, has been seen in Europe and America, randomly attacking mortals and SuperMankind alike to further unknowable ends. This monster is not interested in robbery, riches, or such things. Even power does not seem a proper goal, as many of her acts are inexplicable at best and downright bizarre at worst. One thing is certain however, the night is no longer safe!