


THE ICE KING OF KISLED



Article for Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay
by Sami Uusitalo

The Ice King of Kislev

I assure you, my good lord, that no party in Altdorf today can be considered adequate without fresh ice to cool the drinks of your prestigious guests or a fabulous griffon made entirely of ice, captivating their attention as the center piece of your dinner table. My ice comes from the very bosom of Mother Kislev, frozen by the harsh winds of the tundra and harvested from the clearest lakes. It is as exquisite as a kiss from the Ice Queen herself. This I can guarantee, my lord, for I have had the pleasure of savoring both. I trust I can put you up for an order then?

- Vladimir Tyudor, the Ice King of Kislev, in a sales pitch to Graf Reichenbach

Vladimir Tyudor, a Kislevite merchant, charlatan, and the self-proclaimed Ice King of Kislev has recently come up with a plan to harvest ice from the frozen lakes up in Northern Kislev for the purposes of exporting it to Altdorf where he will sell it as a luxury good to the capital's crème de la crème.

Being a shrewd marketer, the King has convinced Altdorf's nobility that nothing says wealth and influence quite like offering ice-cold refreshments during the hot summer months. Bewitched by the King's boisterous charm the nobles are fiercely competing over his services and business is good. However, he knows from experience that his current fame and fortune can wane in an instant and, at worst, turn

into a pitchfork-wielding mob, so he is bent on squeezing every crown out of their purses before the window of opportunity closes.

This article presents the Ice King's venture and details how you can use him in your games. Firstly, the Ice King himself and his trade are introduced. Then, some of his accomplices and associates are examined, and, finally, different ways how to use him in your games ranging from short encounters to a whole campaign are presented. The article places Tyudor's ice business in Altdorf, but it could just as well be located in Nuln or Marienburg if that is more convenient for the Gamemaster.

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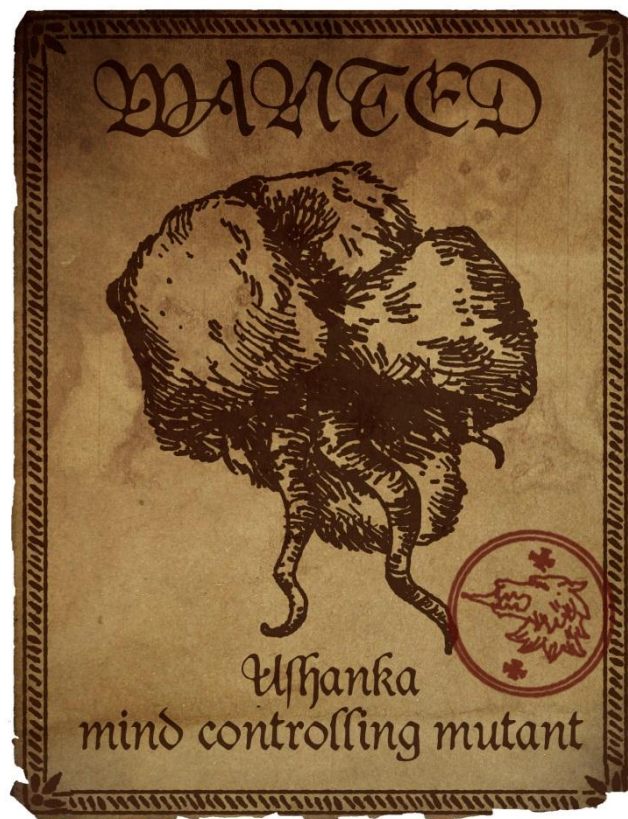
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It's Good to be the King!

The Ice King of Kislev is truly a larger than life figure. The histrionic man has an aura of confidence about him that people are naturally drawn to. His natural charm is further emphasized by his witty way with words as well as a never-ending barrage of amusing anecdotes, and people say his boisterous laughter easily carries from one side of Altdorf's Little Kislev to the other.

Vladimir Tyudor is in his early forties and has typical Kislevite looks: he is tall with clear blue eyes and thick, black, neatly trimmed beard. He is always seen dressed in traditional Kislevite clothing to highlight and emphasize his heritage. The many years spent travelling from one corner of the Empire to the other have honed his Reikspiel to the extent that Vladimir sometimes feels the need to overemphasize his Kislevite accent.

The first thing people notice about Tyudor is his beloved fur hat. Vladimir often talks to his hat, addressing it *Ushanka*, and stories where he got it are among his favorite topics with the story changing every time he tells it: *"It was a gift from Tzarina Katarin herself... It's made of a bear I killed with my bare hands.... I won it in a game of Kislevite roulette..."* Some find this habit quite disturbing however, like that one time in Middenheim when an exasperated witch hunter Neuhauser went so far as to declare the fur hat a wanted mutant that is



actually controlling the Kislevite's mind. All in all, Ushanka has become an inseparable part of the King's persona and to many people it defines him (*"You mean that foreigner who calls himself a king and talks to his hat?"*).

As befits the King's persona, there are numerous rumors, the next more outrageous than the last, about his past. His name is known in many places, often in a less flattering context, as he is claimed to have numerous scams and failed business ventures to his name. In the past he has left Middenheim, Nuln, and, most recently, Marienburg in a haste to avoid flogging in the hands of outraged clergy, angry competitors, or fooled customers. Tyudor just dismisses such rumors with a wave of his bearlike arms and a disarming laughter or joke.

Now, after several years of exile, Tyudor has returned to Altdorf, and this time he intends to stay for keeps. This is because of his unshakable

faith in latest idea – harvesting ice and selling it as a luxury good to the nobility. For two months now he has been marketing his wares to Altdorf's high society and to his delight they cannot get enough of it. As a result, any party worth its salt will serve Kislevite ice to cool the guests' drinks or feature an exquisite ice carving as a center piece at the table. Tyudor is enjoying his fame and fortune, but from previous experience he knows his streak of good luck

can come to an all too familiar abrupt end any day. Therefore, being a superstitious man, he

brings in a Kislevite wise woman to say prayers of good luck each week.

The King's Court

Vladimir Tyudor has many people in his employ, mostly large Kislevite laborers to do all the heavy lifting. Some of the more important NPCs are introduced below.

Thuram Stoneback (Dwarf male, Engineer)

Not now, I'm busy!

Thuram Stoneback is a Dwarf engineer whose job is to take care of the ice house and the conveyer belt contraption. He is a member of the Dwarven Engineers' Guild and, unlike most of Tyudor's other employees, does not sleep in the premises.

Thuram is first and foremost a professional engineer. Usually, he can be found walking around the property, his goggles on, his long beard tucked under his belt, and his tools jingling as he hurries to fix another sudden problem of some sort. Busy and gruff, Thuram rarely bothers with idle chit-chat. He does, however, make time to talk with anyone who shows proper respect for him and his line of work. Recently, Thuram has been working on Tyudor's new vision: a Wondrous Freezing Apparatus and Cooling Container, or what Thuram calls "an icebox".

Holger Nilson (Halfling male, Scribe)

Do you have any idea how much that would cost us?

This Halfling accountant can be found in Tyudor's offices. He spends most of his time in his candle lit room, buried under mountains of paper: bills of sale, purchase orders, writs of payment, forecasts and inventory calculations. He thinks himself second-in-command in this operation, although no-one but Anna actually shares this vision with him.

Dark rings around Holger's spectacled eyes speak of too many sleepless nights and his explosive temper tantrums are a clear sign of stress (although he never loses his temper in front of Tyudor). To fight the growing stress levels and to calm his nerves Holger has picked up a nasty drug habit. He gets Black Lotus from his cousin who works at one of the many inns on the Street of a Thousand Taverns. He is well on his way to being seriously addicted and that might spell all kinds of trouble for the Halfling.

Agusto Rodinello (Human male (Tilean), Artisan)

Well, definitely not my best work, but I guess it'll have to do...

The Tilean Agusto Rodinello sees himself as a true artist. His work is certainly on the nobility's lips at the moment being the man behind Tyudor's ice sculptures that are all the rage now. The moody and haunted looking Rodinello is the quintessential artist: he scorns all art, especially his own, but his quest for that perfect masterpiece always draws him back to his work. He constantly complains about the dreadful state of the arts in the Empire and moans the nobility's lack of vision when choosing whom to patron. His inspirations come and go, so he sculpts for days at a time only to do nothing for the next several days. Agusto has had a heated exchange with Tyudor several times because of this.

Anna Korikova (Human female (Kislevite), Servant)

More vodka, Sir?

Anna is the Ice King's personal assistant. She takes care of all kinds of little errands for Tyudor, but her most important task is to make sure that when Tyudor entertains customers in his offices all their needs are taken care of and their cups are always filled to the brim with premium Kislevite vodka.

Anna is a pretty, young Kislevite woman barely out of her teens. Her long blond hair is tied back with traditional headwear and while in Tyudor's employ she wears colorful Kislevite dresses cut to reveal just enough of her long legs. Her brother opposes this strongly and believes Anna has brought shame to their family by working for Tyudor and letting herself be seen like this. When in his cups, he has threatened to do something about the matter several times. Anna's brother does not know that she is hopelessly smitten with Rodinello and dreams of eloping with him.

The Ice Business

The ice that is eventually sold in the heart of Reikland begins its journey in Kislev. The ice is harvested with specially made saws from a clear water lake by Tyudor's crew. Horses then drag the heavy chunks of ice to a tributary of river Urskoy where they are packed aboard a large riverboat and insulated against the heat with saw dust.

The riverboat starts its travel down River Urskoy and then continues down River Talabec all the way down to Altdorf. By then maybe 15 to 25 per cent of the ice has been lost, leaving still plenty to meet Tyudor's demand. The ice is taken to Tyudor's property in Little Kislev and stored in an ice-house, where the ice is again insulated with saw dust.

From the ice-house, big blocks of ice are guided up a rudimentary, horse powered, conveyor system. Kislevite workers then smash the ice into more manageable sizes with huge mallets. Finally, the heavy blocks are loaded onto carts and sturdy Kislevite icemen take them to customers' homes.

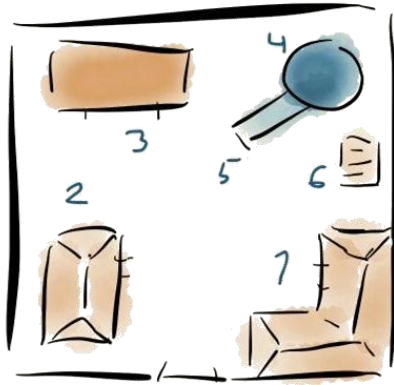
The ice-business is a multifaceted endeavor and Tyudor faces unforeseen challenges on a daily basis. Here are some challenges he might face. The GM can use these to involve the PCs with the

Ice King and his business as well as a springboard for further adventures like the ones presented in *Using the Ice King in Your Games* below.

- Local guilds don't look too kindly on a foreign business doing so well. They can cause all kinds of trouble from extra guild fees to new regulations (having a certain number of Imperial laborers in the workforce etc.).
- A notorious Kislevite racketeer Oleg Sadistinov has all the Kislevite laborers too scared to work for the Ice King. He demands protection money from Tyudor – and a very considerable sum at that. He must be dealt with and the laborers convinced to return.
- Anna Korikova's brother tries to incite the workers to boycott the Ice King.
- The PCs have to find and convince the absent Rodinello to return to work, possibly saving his Tilean behind from some angry debtors in the process.
- Holger Nilson's drug addiction lands him in hot water. A cult of Slaanesh provides him with Black Lotus, but in return they want him to convince Rodinello to sculpt a Daemonette from ice and lace the sculpture with a special potion they have given him before the statue is taken to its noble recipient.
- A group of smugglers tries to blackmail Tyudor. They want to hide something inside the ice. To give a little extra weight to their demands the smugglers kidnap Anna or Holger (or both).
- A competitor tries to hire/coerce one of the PCs to sabotage the ice-house.

The King's Castle

Tyudor's property in Altdorf's Little Kislev consists of several buildings:



- 1) A two-storey office building has offices for Tyudor and Holger Nilson as well meeting rooms for entertaining (and bribing) clients and city officials. All the rooms are tastefully decorated with tapestries, pelts and a stuffed bear nicknamed Boris (the Bear) stands by the front door, its paws raised menacingly.
- 2) Workers' quarters with modest and cramped housing for the Kislevite workers.
- 3) Stables with four horses and two carts.
- 4) The ice-house where all the ice is stored and insulated with saw dust.
- 5) Horse-powered conveyor contraption designed by Thuram.
- 6) A shed for storing tools and other equipment.

The Rumor Mill

It is the latest craze amongst the nobles to cool their drinks with some Kislevite ice.

It is rumored the Ice King was Tsarina Katarin's lover.

They say the Ice King's fur hat is actually a wanted mutant.

There is no way that much ice would stay frozen without some dark sorcery.

The Ice King is not Kislevite at all, but an Averlander con-artist.

When the Mannslieb is full, the Ice King turns into a bear and stalks the streets of Altdorf.

The Ice King's Halfling accountant is a frequent visitor on the street of Hundred Taverns.

This is all an Ulrican plot to make us think of winter even during the summer months.

Using the Ice King in your Games

Tyudor's ice business can be used either as an antagonist and an alternative to the usual mutants and cultists, or as an ally or a patron who employs the PCs. Some possible options are discussed next, ranging from a short scenario to a longer campaign.

The Life of the Party

The Ice King's Role: Depends on the GM's needs

Type: A short encounter or a red herring

Any time the PCs attend a party, a noble mansion, or a theater, restaurant etc. the Ice King can be there (for example, he could be attending the party in *The Edge of Night* or the menagerie at *Enemy Within*). He is introduced to the characters and the GM can use him as a colorful NPC who either amuses or annoys the PCs. He can also serve as a valuable source of information as he is widely travelled. He could be an obstacle to the PCs in a social encounter, a "gatekeeper" who they have to get past without causing a scene or alerting him to their intentions in order to approach their actual "target".

From Kislev with Love

The Ice King's Role: Antagonist

Type: A short scenario

The PCs are contacted by one of the Chancellor of Reikland Count Siegfried von Walfen's spies. Von Walfen is the Imperial spymaster and heads a clandestine intelligence network answerable only to the Emperor himself. For some time, the Chancellor has suspected Vladimir Tyudor is a spy or an assassin trying to worm his way into the Emperor's favor. Von Walfen assigns one of his most trusted men to hire some "independent contractors" to infiltrate the Ice King's organization and learn the truth about the man. Von Walfen's man is by no means opposed to

using very heavy handed means to secure the PCs' co-operation and loyalty.

Is Vladimir Tyudor a spy then? Or an assassin? Perhaps. Just as well, he could be a former spy, or just an innocent merchant. For an interesting twist, one of his staff could be the assassin without his knowledge. If the spy/assassin is Anna and she develops a love affair with one of the PCs, things could get very interesting indeed.

Options:

- Entering Little Kislev is like entering a foreign country. People stare at them, no one will offer them any assistance, and the old wise woman lays a curse on them.
- The PCs are harassed by the Kislevite thugs during their investigations. First, they notice that they are being followed. Then, a group of thugs comes to warn them not to "stick their noses where they don't belong".

The Icy Touch of Death

The Ice King's Role: Antagonist

Type: From a short scenario to an adventure of several sessions

Nobles are not the only ones who have a need for ice. A coven of Necromancers is using the Ice King's company to get ice to better store the many cadavers they need in their research. A river boat full of ice is also a great way to smuggle highly illegal equipment, artifacts, and tomes into the capital.

Hannelore Kroetz, a Grey Wizard, has been investigating the coven for months now and she suspects that the ice business is somehow connected to these blasphemers. To avoid drawing attention to herself and ruining her cover, she hires the characters to infiltrate the Ice

King's company and find out if something devious is going on.

The PCs have to either sneak into the company premises to search for clues, or they have to seek out Tyudor, get hired and try to find out what is going on while in his employ. The PCs have to earn the Ice King's trust doing menial jobs before he will let them in on his illegal operations. Finally, they have to use their cover to get close to the coven and confront them with Hannelore.

Options:

- The Necromancers are called the Hourglass Men. The name comes from rites of dark maleficium where they store the ashes of the deceased into special hourglasses. But for what dark purpose?
- Tyudor is blackmailed by the Hourglass Men. Once the PCs find this out, Tyudor can become an ally instead of an antagonist, depending on how the PCs want to approach the issue.
- Hannelore Kroetz is not a Grey Wizard. She is in fact a former member of the Hourglass Men who was exiled by the other Necromancers because of her dangerously reckless experiments. She seeks revenge and plans to use the PCs to discover the coven's hideout.
- To get employed by the Ice King, the PCs have to get creative in order to create a sudden need for extra workforce. Maybe a sudden accident, labor dispute, or a thug attack leaves most of the Kislevite laborers unable to work. Or they could learn of Holger Nilson's drug addiction and blackmail him.
- Anna Korikova's brother can be an ally to the PCs.

To See **Kislev** in a Shard of Ice

The Ice King's Role: Employer

Type: An adventure of several sessions

The Ice King hires the players to travel to Kislev, help his crew harvest ice there and then escort the ice-laden river boat down River Talabec all the way to Altdorf. Or, if this seems like a too long and time consuming trek, he could hire them to board the river boat in Talabheim and escort it to Altdorf. Naturally, the journey is eventful.

The main antagonist is Josef Raab, an elderly Priest of Manann. He is considered narrow-minded and his beliefs archaic even by more conservative Mananites. Raab believes using ice the way Tyudor does is unnatural and blasphemy against the natural order of things as well as Manann himself.

To make matters worse, he is a member of the Order of the Albatross, a Mananite order of priest-navigators who wield considerable respect and power. However, Raab has been, in actuality, unleashed on the Ice King's business by some Marienburger merchants who crave revenge. These men have convinced Raab that the Ice King is a blasphemer.

Raab will haunt them all the way to Altdorf. He will use any means at his disposal to sink their boat and destroy the ice. In a desperate last effort, he turns to ancient and forbidden folk songs known only to the most senior members of the Order of the Albatross. The songs (spells) are dedicated to Stromfels and summon an old river monster that Raab then unleashes on the PCs.

Other potential encounters and complications:

- A spy infiltrates the crew, pretending to be one of the boatmen. He is fleeing from Kislev and somebody is after him. The spy seeks to leave messages for his fellows at every larger settlement. Alternately, he could be a fleeing (ex-) cultist.

- The captain of the river boat has, unbeknownst to Tyudor, cut a deal with some Kislevite criminals and uses the boat to smuggle illegal cargo for them. Once the PCs get aboard, the criminals are convinced that they are after their cargo and want to get rid of them.
- Every river-lock presents trouble as lock-keepers have no idea how to tax the ice. Many of them demand bribes.
- The river boat arrives at a larger settlement. Suddenly, two groups of armed men approach the boat, their armor displaying different crests. The men are militia from two local noble families who are locked in a months-long dispute bordering on open conflict. One group confiscates the PCs' boat while the other group confiscates their cargo. One family intends to use the ice as a cover to infiltrate the other family's castle and launch a surprise attack, while the other family intends to mount a cannon on the river boat and use it to attack the other family's mansion. The PCs have to settle this dispute before they can continue on. And they have to do it before the ice melts.

The Wicked Witch of the East

The Ice King's Role: Patron/employer

Type: A longer adventure or a campaign

Ever since starting his ice business, Tyudor has been on a feverish quest to garner enough prestige and influence to attract the Emperor's attention. Were the Emperor to order Kislevite ice to one of his parties Tyudor would be set for life.

Tyudor enlists the PCs to help him on his quest. They should all be given tasks suitable to their

professions to contribute to the success of the ice business and the King's goal. Tyudor could even go so far as have the PCs help him blackmail some nobles and Imperial officials to further his goals. In any case, the characters should be very involved in the day-to-day operations of the ice trade at the beginning of the campaign (see *The Ice Business*).

Besides Tyudor's quest to attract the Emperor's attention, the campaign has another overarching theme – the ice itself. During the aftermath of the Incursion of Chaos in 2304 a regiment of Imperial knights came across a small village in Northern Kislev. The villagers were in league with a powerful Ice-Witch. The knights mistook her for a Chaos sorcerer and captured her. The knight commander sentenced the witch to death and had an accompanying wizard prepare an enchanted stake. The commander ran the witch through and had his men throw her body into a nearby frozen lake.

The knights waited for the hole in the ice to freeze over before returning to the Empire satisfied with having rid the world of yet another evil creature. Little did they know that a water-spirit kept the Ice-Witch's spirit alive, feeding her spirit with its own energy. Centuries later her captivity is finally about to end as someone has started harvesting ice from the very lake where the Ice-Witch is imprisoned.

Vladimir Tyudor is blissfully ignorant of this dark history or the fact that the body of the ancient witch is right now frozen within the ice in his ice-house. As the ice is both harvested and slowly keeps melting the Ice-Witch's consciousness becomes more and more aware of its surroundings. And she thirsts for vengeance...

Here are some ideas how the Ice-Witch's spirit affects the campaign:

- The Kislevite wise woman starts to see strange visions and dreams. Eventually, she is convinced the Ice King's property is

a source of some ancient evil. She refuses to enter the premises, which makes the superstitious Tyudor very nervous.

- Anna's brother is one of the most vehement believers in the wise woman's words and does everything in his power to persuade Anna to leave the King.
- Rodinello starts to obsessively make ice sculptures of a beautiful and mysterious woman. Rumors abound who this mysterious woman is and several noble ladies seek to claim the title.
- A young Kislevite woman appears at the Kislev embassy. This noble lady sweeps into Altdorf's social scene like a refreshing northern breeze. Everybody is talking about the beautiful and mysterious woman and rumors abound, but all that is really known is her name: Stefaniya Kiriakovna.
- Who is Stefania then? She is an Ice-Maiden who has heard the ancient witch's call. She is here to help her escape imprisonment, only to steal her powers for herself. Or, alternatively, she could be there to stop the ancient witch. The PCs run into her in several occasions, and she could try to hire/bribe some of them to get her information on the King and his premises.

Meanwhile, the Knight Commander who ordered the Ice-Witch's death has a scion in Altdorf who is haunted by strange dreams. These dreams lead him to the Ice King, but just as he comes to meet Tyudor and the PCs during a party (or other suitably dramatic moment) he is attacked by possessed Kislevites or evil spirits summoned by the witch.

The scion has his forefather's diaries at the family mansion. There the PCs can learn of the witch's past and the existence of an important item – the enchanted stake. The bad news is that the stake was within the ice harvested by Tyudor, and has now been delivered to a customer inside an ice sculpture.

The PCs must hurry through several noble parties and dinners to find the correct piece of ice and secure the stake, all the while harassed by possessed servants of the Ice-Witch, or Stefaniya Kiriakovna and her henchmen.

The campaign reaches its climax when the Emperor finally decides to make an order to Tyudor and invites him to his grand ball. During the party the Ice-Witch returns, and the PCs, hopefully, save the day. □