

A PATHFINDER RPG ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 10

Curse of the Riven Sky



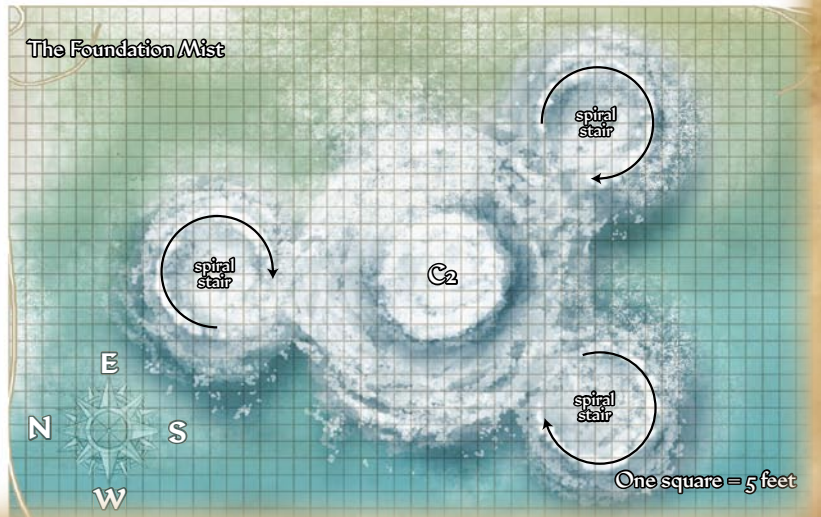
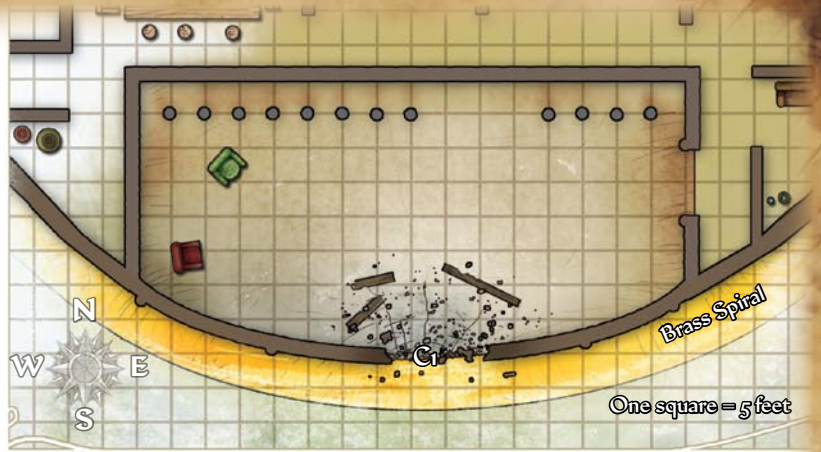
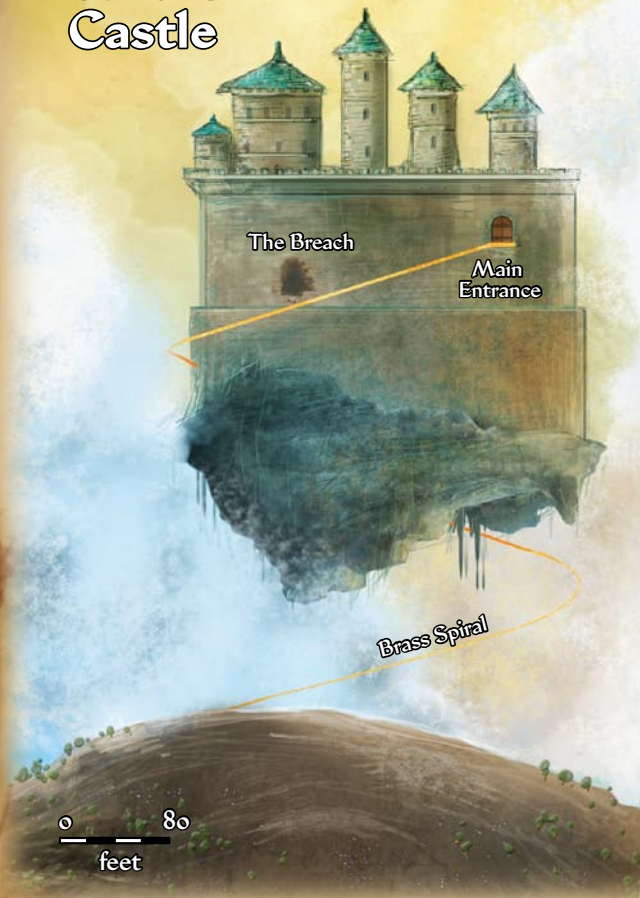
PATHFINDER[®]
MODULE[™]

BY MONTE COOK

Southern Lands of the Linnorm Kings



Zoarth's Castle



Curse of the Riven Sky

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Printed in China.



Paizo Publishing, LLC
7120 185th Ave NE, Ste 120
Redmond, WA 98052-0577
paizo.com



Curse of the Riven Sky

EVERY ARCANIST KNOWS THE POWER OF A THING'S NAME. BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A NAME IS FORGOTTEN? THE PALE ONES KNOW. THEIR LIVES WERE TAKEN IN FEAR AND ANGER, THEIR SPIRITS FILLED WITH THOUGHTS OF REVENGE, BUT THEIR NAMES FOUND THEIR WAY INTO NO BOOKS OR TALES. THEY ARE REMEMBERED BY NO ONE. THE MANIFESTATION OF THEIR UNFULFILLED DESIRES EVENTUALLY TOOK FORM AS A SEETHING SILVER GEM CALLED THE *ORB BEYOND*. THIS JEWEL SLIPS BETWEEN WORLDS UNTIL IT FINDS A SOUL CONSUMED WITH THOUGHTS OF VENGEANCE. WHISPERING SECRETS BY WHICH WRONGS CAN BE RIGHTED, ITS POWER LOOSES THE PALE ONES, GRANTING THEM ACCESS TO THE WORLD OF THE LIVING AND THE REMEMBERED. THOSE WHO SEEK VENGEANCE, HOWEVER, CARE NOT FOR THE REPERCUSSIONS. EVEN SHOULD IT MEAN TEARING APART THE SKY.



PROLOGUE: THE BOOK OF THE TITAN

The seed for this scenario is actually planted at the end of the previous adventure that the player characters completed. The PCs must, in the course of some prior activities, acquire a magical tome called the *Book of the Titan*. This means that in addition to whatever treasure they earn or find in the prior adventure, the GM should also insert this book. The tome is a *manual of gainful exercise +2*, but it has a catch. In order to invoke its magic, the user must perform a specific and complex ritual with the help of a wizard with giant blood.

In their search for such an individual, the PCs learn of a cloud giant named Zoarth. Unlike most of giantkind, Zoarth is not automatically hostile to the smaller races, although he does like his privacy. His castle lies at the top of a high peak in the Kodar Mountains. The PCs begin this new adventure with a trek to Zoarth's mountainous home.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Long ago, a pair of cloud giants had a torrid love affair. Zoarth was a young male giant interested in magic and spells. Verakas was a bird maven, a position of honor among cloud giants that signified her connection with avian creatures of all kinds. She developed an empathic relationship with them—she felt what they felt and vice versa. Because of her knack, she developed the most fabulous collection of birds any maven had ever possessed.

Zoarth and Verakas dwelled together for a time in a small home at the top of a mountain. While he studied wizardry in his small workroom, she spent her days in the nearby aviary with her birds. They were happy.

But then the fateful day came when Zoarth discovered an interesting new spell that he wanted to test. He sequestered himself in his workroom and tried the summoning, but the spell was beyond him. Things went awry, resulting in the conjuration of a multitude of cats from other worlds and times. Some of the cats were intelligent, and Zoarth found that he could even speak with them. He also learned that in exchange for keeping them with him in his own world, they demanded a sacrifice. Zoarth desperately wanted to please the cats and agreed to their terms. That night, while Verakas slept, Zoarth let his new friends into the aviary.

The next morning, Verakas awoke and found that all of her birds were gone. And more than just gone—despite the lie Zoarth concocted about a cage door being left open, she knew that they were dead. Devoured. As she stood looking at their empty nests, she felt each and every one of their deaths as if it were her own. The shock forced Verakas into a coma. Zoarth left her there, believing she would likely die and assuming there was nothing he could do about it. Not without some remorse,

he journeyed to a far off land to make a new home for himself and the cats.

But Verakas didn't die. Eventually, she awoke and wandered the region in a stupor of sadness and loss. Over the course of years, however, pain matured into anger and hatred, and she found that the only reason she had to go on was revenge. She needed Zoarth not only to die, but to suffer at least a fraction of the pain that she had suffered. It was in this time that Verakas found a magical item called the *orb beyond*.

Or rather, the orb found her. It whispered secrets to Verakas, advising her on how she could amass power to get her vengeance. First, she raided and stole from other giants to gain a great deal of wealth. Then she used this wealth to gather followers and allies, some of them exceedingly unsavory (to say the least). The next step was to create a floating platform high in the sky where, the orb told her, she could unleash magic that would grant her vast physical power with which she could wreak her vengeance not only upon Zoarth but upon all the world.

Above the floating platform, the Verakas's sorcery tore open a hole in the sky through which the Pale Ones could come forth. These forgotten, angry spirits have a barely coherent form, like ectoplasm, but through the giantess's actions they hope to gain access to the world at large.

Verakas sent some of her bribed allies—mainly hill giants—to attack Zoarth in his castle, in the hopes of destroying it and perhaps his horrible cats. She assumed, however, that the wizard himself would survive and come looking for the culprit who had so wronged him. From high on her platform in the clouds, she would slay him in a terrible, agonizing fashion.

Neither she nor the *orb beyond* ever planned on a group of adventurers getting involved.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs travel to the castle of Zoarth, the cloud giant wizard, to get his help performing the ritual needed to activate the *Book of the Titan*—and find that the castle is under attack by hill giants. Getting in to see Zoarth involves fighting their way through these invaders and helping to save the castle from complete destruction. After the attack, Zoarth agrees to help them, but only if the PCs find out why the hill giants attacked and prevent their return.

The PCs follow the trail of the hill giants to the camp of their chieftain. On their way, they meet both enemies and potential allies. Once among the hill giant tribe and their strange chieftain, the PCs learn, either by force or diplomacy, that the giants were paid by someone called the Storm Queen.

A suggestion by the chief leads the PCs to Jol, a small city besieged by nasty storms and weird weather. Folks

there prove particularly helpful after the PCs help them deal with the consequences of an unnatural rainstorm.

Investigation suggests that the Storm Queen is a cloud giant as well. In fact, she is Verakas, a former lover of Zoarth, whom he betrayed long ago. As the PCs learn where she is (and perhaps ponder whether they're actually on the right side), the Storm Queen sends servants to attack them. Verakas has been twisted by her anger and need for revenge, and she knows that the PCs are looking for her and helping Zoarth.

The PCs learn that Verakas dwells within and draws power from a sort of dimensional rift in the sky that is disrupting the natural weather patterns. They travel to it to confront Verakas, where they can use diplomacy to convince her that her quest for vengeance is literally tearing apart the sky—or they can crack some skulls and succeed that way.

All that remains is to go back to Zoarth and perform the ritual. But after all they've learned about him and his past actions, can they trust him? And do they want to work with him at all? These are questions they'll have to answer for themselves.

PART 1: CASTLE OF THE SKY MAGE

There is a road—more of a path, really—that ascends Mount Kallaris in the northwestern spur of the Kodar Mountains, allowing travelers to reach Zoarth's castle. The journey is long and arduous on foot. Many PCs choose to fly or get there by other means. The top of Mount Kallaris, however, is perpetually shrouded in clouds. Using the path is the easiest and safest way to find the castle, at least at that point.

The castle is actually more of a keep. There is no outer wall—it is a single structure. Its defense relies instead on its obscurity and the fact that it actually floats above the mountain itself. The place is beautiful and serene, with white and light blue marble walls and floors, intricately woven rugs and tapestries, and silver chandeliers. By human standards, it's cold and somewhat drafty, but that's intentional on the part of its owner and builder, Zoarth the cloud

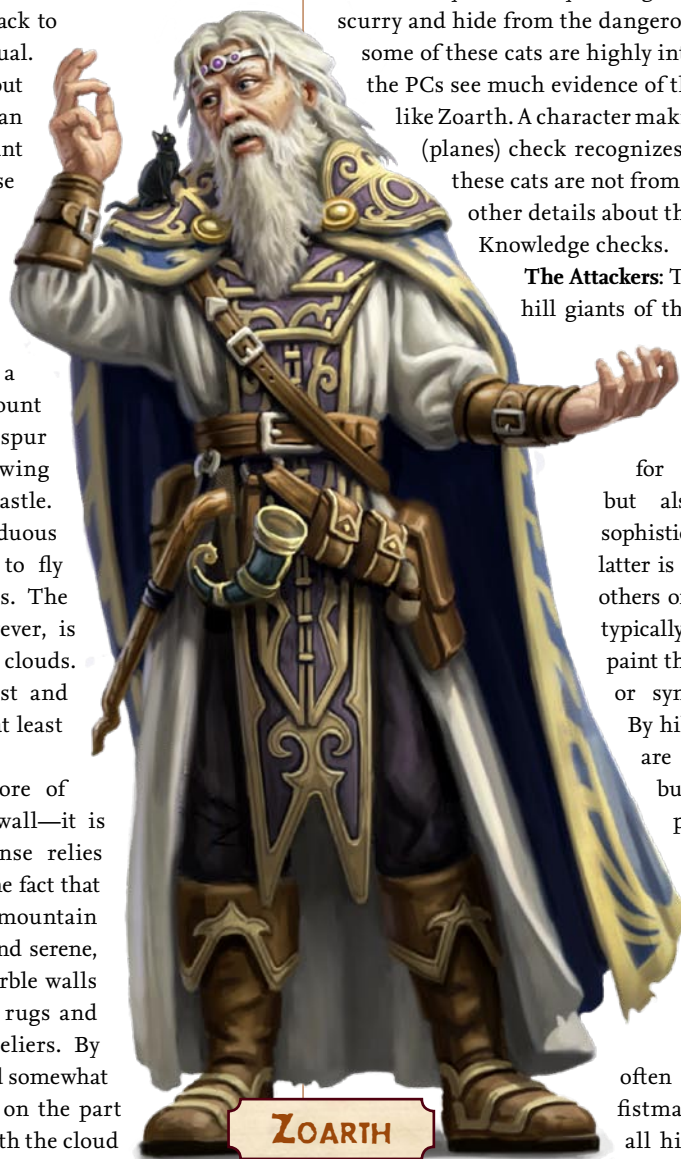
giant (see page 10). Beyond his training as a wizard, Zoarth knows much of the ancient lore of the cloud giants, which enables him to create certain permanent magical effects (making floating structures, solidifying clouds, and so on). His cloud giant abilities and innate magical nature make him a much more learned expert in the mystic arts than his wizard level would suggest.

The clouds extend for more than a mile around the castle in all directions and do not move, regardless of the wind's strength. Because of the clouds, the PCs must get quite close to the castle before they see that it is actually under attack. In fact, they'll almost certainly hear the battle before they see it.

Zoarth's Otherworldly Cats: Zoarth loves cats. The castle teems with hundreds of them, and somehow the giant mage knows all of them by name. During the attack, the PCs may catch only brief glimpses of them as they scurry and hide from the dangerous invaders. Although some of these cats are highly intelligent, it is unlikely the PCs see much evidence of this, as they only really like Zoarth. A character making a DC 15 Knowledge (planes) check recognizes that at least some of these cats are not from this world, though no other details about them are available from Knowledge checks.

The Attackers: The attackers are mostly hill giants of the Jurn tribe, although they've brought a few allies with them as well. This tribe has a particular reputation for causing destruction but also—paradoxically—for sophistication (of course, the latter is only in comparison to others of their kind). The Jurn typically shave their heads and paint them with crude images or symbols of destruction. By hill giant standards they are craftsmen and artists, but hill giants have very poor standards for such things. The Jurn create crude and ugly things made for war and destruction and designed to inspire dread and fear.

The Jurn warriors often work in pairs called fistmates. Although—like all hill giants—they're not





very smart, fistmates know the value of working together in a fight. They maneuver to get flanking bonuses, and sometimes one fistmate uses Intimidate to demoralize foes while the other bashes them with his greatclub.

Two-thirds of Jurn warriors are male, but the females are just as fierce and capable as the males. The Jurn have allied themselves with many related creatures, including a stone giant, some ettins and trolls, and even a cyclops. They keep ogres as slaves and dire wolves as pets.

The giants' mission is not to kill Zoarth, but rather to bring down the castle. Because of this, they have brought Bran-Fir (see page 8), a very strange frost giant possessed by evil spirits that are ideally suited to bring down the structure's magical cloud foundations.

The leader of the attackers is a female fighter named Beshtu (see page 9). She has no fistmate. Instead, she rides a triceratops mount that fights savagely on her behalf. She also wields a giant-slaying sword (given to her by Verakas) to inflict heavy damage on Zoarth.

The first encounter, and the first hint that anything strange is going on, occurs on the road up the mountain.

HILL GIANT REINFORCEMENTS [CR 12]

As the PCs hike up the steep mountain road, they come upon a small squad of monsters on their way to reinforce those attacking the castle.

The road up the mountain—such as it is—has been entirely free of other travelers until now. Further ahead, four massive humanoids coifed in chain hauberks and carrying gigantic clubs studded with nails and barbs trudge up the road. Each is accompanied by a spike-collared wolf the size of a small horse. A fifth wolf, closer to the size of an elephant and draped in chain armor, walks ahead of the group. A group of bulging, bald men—large, but smaller than the armored giants—brings up the rear, carrying something large and heavy between them. They're wearing the same spiked collars as the wolves.

Other than the road itself, there are no remarkable features in the area—just a few trees, the steep incline, and the fog.

Creatures: The group of monsters consists of seven hill giants, four dire wolves, an exceptionally large dire wolf, and four ogre slaves. Unless the PCs are attempting to move with great stealth, it's safe to assume that the wolves, at least, sense their approach at about the same time that the PCs become aware of the war party. These giants won't be automatically hostile to the PCs—they're trying to make their way to the castle as quickly as possible. They've been told they'll face a cloud giant and some magical defenders, but they've no reason to believe a small band of adventurers has anything to do with the castle. Normally, of course, they'd probably

attack the PCs out of spite or the desire for a tasty lunch, but they're in a hurry.

While the dire wolves serve the giants like war dogs, the enormous dire wolf, Frakas, does as it pleases. The giants don't presume to give it orders, and it wouldn't do what it was told if they did. It is particularly bloodthirsty and cruel.

The ogres are carrying a huge pallet of 75 boulders. Each of these boulders was chosen for being a good size and weight for the giants to throw and then was painted with crude, violent images, such as cracked skulls, broken bones, severed limbs, boots squashing bugs, and so forth. If attacked, the ogres drop their burden and pull out their greatclubs to fight.

If the PCs steer clear of this group, the giants quickly forget about them. If they attempt to engage them in conversation (assuming the PCs can speak Giant), they get a single rebuff: "Go away. We smash castle in cloud." If the PCs don't then go away, the belligerent giants—likely provoked by Frakas's bloodlust—probably attack. They certainly don't stop to answer questions. If two of the giants are slain or if Frakas and one giant die, the rest of the war party scatters and flees.

If the PCs do not fight these reinforcements and are moving faster than speed 30, they quickly outpace the giants on the trail; the GM should have the reinforcements show up at the siege of the castle shortly after the PCs arrive there. If the PCs travel at speed 30, they end up pacing the giants but slowly pull ahead over several minutes. If the PCs are slower than speed 30, the giants maintain their lead (often by stepping over obstacles that would slow the PCs) and reach the castle before the PCs.

JURN HILL GIANTS (4) **CR 7**
XP 3,200 each
 hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)
 AC 22, touch 8, flat-footed 22 (+5 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)
Gear Large chainmail, Large greatclub, 1d100 gp in a bag along with miscellaneous worthless gear

DIRE WOLVES (4) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
 hp 37 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

FRAKAS **CR 5**
XP 1,600
 Giant advanced dire wolf
 AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+6 armor, +4 Dex, +5 natural, -2 size)
 hp 60 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278, 294, 295)
Gear Huge nonhumanoid chainmail

OGRE SLAVES (4) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
 hp 30 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 220)

Flying PCs

Flying PCs can try to bypass some of the first few encounters of this adventure. However, getting into the castle is still not easy. There are many windows, but since the place is under attack, all are closed with shutters made of brass inlaid with panels of etched mahogany, barred, and sealed with *arcane lock* spells (Disable Device DC 30, hardness 10, 60 hit points, Break DC 45). If they do get in this way, skip right to the Inside the Keep section, but remember that the giants that they bypassed are still around. The PCs may, for example, run into the giants from the encounter in “The Breach” while making their way down to the foundation or into the Central Hall.

IN THE CLOUDS

Walking up the mountain path through the cloud is like entering the densest fog ever encountered. The cliché about being barely able to see your hand in front of your face is quite accurate here. Even two people ascending at the same time could only see each other if they huddled together. Still, the path itself, although little used, suggests a safe and relatively smooth passage.

Once the PCs enter the cloud, it’s about a half-hour hike up through the mist, if they hustle. In the last few minutes of their ascent, the PCs can hear the sounds of distant combat and pounding.

In the cloud, visibility is at most 5 feet. Anything beyond that distance has full concealment.

If the PCs check for magic, the cloud they’ve entered has a faint aura of conjuration. Essentially, Zoarth’s castle creates and maintains the cloud cover to permanently obscure his castle. More importantly, however, the clouds actually hold it up, providing a magical foundation.

ARRIVAL AT THE ASSAULT

Only when the PCs arrive at the base of the fortress do they get a really good idea of what’s going on. The mist parts enough for them to see Zoarth’s magnificent castle (see the inside front cover).

Standing at the pinnacle of the mountain, a truly remarkable sight rises overhead. A round castle of brass and glistening white stone floats amid and atop swirling clouds, rising like a massive pillar. Only a winding brass pathway, which starts at the mountaintop and swoops steadily upward, connects the castle with the ground.

The Castle of Zoarth floats 150 feet above the mountain peak. It is 280 feet tall and 200 feet in diameter. The white stone blocks from which the structure is built are

reinforced with glistening bands of brass and adorned with inset panels of dark, etched wood.

Zoarth has been defending his castle with conjured air elementals and lightning bolt traps, but most of the elementals are dead and the traps expended. The giant attackers, meanwhile, have already breached the outer wall of the keep. Some have moved into the castle, while others fight the last remaining elemental defender.

THE BRASS SPIRAL [CR 9]

A 10-foot-wide walkway of reinforced brass winds up and around to the entrance of the keep. The walkway has a Hardness of 10, 90 hit points, and a Break DC of 35. The slope of the path is fairly steep. The entrance is 150 feet above the mountaintop.

The walkway goes up to the main entrance to the castle, but then it circles around the circumference of the structure on the way. The giant attackers seem to have bypassed the main entrance altogether and smashed through a wall.

Hazard: Because something is smashing at the foundations of the castle, walking on the spiral path is hazardous because of the occasional quakes experienced by the entire structure. At a random point on their path up the spiral, each PC must make an Acrobatics check (DC 15). Failure means that they’ve stumbled or slipped and are sliding off the walkway. Falling characters can attempt Reflex saving throws (DC 18) to grab hold of the edge of the spiral and save themselves from falling. Because these checks are not made at the same time, adjacent PCs can also attempt Reflex saving throws (DC 20) to try to grab the slipping or falling PC. PCs who fall suffer from 6d6 to 15d6 damage, depending on how far up the path they were when they fell. (GMs wishing to simply randomize this should roll $[1d10+5] \times 10$ to determine how high the PC was when they fell.)

If the PCs took the time to lash themselves together with ropes before ascending the path, this safeguard can keep them secure on the way up the spiral. However, the GM should keep this condition in mind when the PCs encounter the giant bruiser. Fighting while lashed together imposes a –2 penalty on all physical actions (attack rolls, checks, and saves) taken by the PCs in a combat situation.

Creature: As the PCs make their way up the path, a giant comes down the path.

Coming down the path is a giant in black leather armor haphazardly studded with bolts and bits of metal. His face is swollen and misshapen as if he has been battered and bruised regularly and often and his features have never truly had time to heal. Scars cover his face and bald head, and his narrow eyes glare darkly. His hands appear to be giant metal hammer heads and he clangs them together as he moves forward.



This giant wields no greatclub. Instead, he has a hammer-shaped adamantine gauntlet on each of his big, meaty fists. It was he who smashed the breach in the wall, and now he intends to do likewise to the PCs.

The CR of the giant bruiser has been increased by 1 due to the dangerous terrain on which the fight occurs. Flying PCs can bypass this encounter without much trouble.

JURN BRUISER CR 9

XP 6,400

Advanced hill giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150, 294)

AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 24

hp 105

Melee 2 slams +15 (1d8+9)

CMB +17; CMD 28

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack

Tactics The giant attempts to use Awesome Blow to knock PCs off the path. The GM can allow the other PCs to attempt Reflex saving throws (DC 20), as before, to catch and save hurtling friends before they fall as an immediate action that uses a full-round action on their next turn, although there is a risk involved. If a PC is successful in grabbing another who has been knocked off the path by the giant, the grabbing PC must make a Strength check (DC 15) to actually save the victim. Failure means that the force of the giant's blow knocks them both off the path.

Gear Large masterwork studded leather armor, Large adamantine gauntlets

Treasure: The giant's adamantine gauntlets add a +1 bonus on the attack roll of his slam attacks and increase a Large wearer's slam damage by one step. They are not magical and are likely not of much use to the PCs as weapons. They are, however, worth 3,252 gp each.

C1. THE BREACH [CR 12]

Fearing traps and more defenders at the main entrance, the attackers stopped at another point along the spiral path and smashed their way through the wall. (Hill giants aren't much for doors anyway; smashing holes in nice, clean, smooth walls is much more fun.) Many giants have already passed through the breach, but a few have remained behind to finish off any remaining defenders and to ensure that the way out remains open when the invaders need to leave.

In a large hall beyond the violent breach in the wall, six giants smash what appears to be a living, swirling cloud. One of the giants is slightly taller than his fellows, with rough, gray skin like granite. The body of a dead giant lies on the ground nearby. A pair of gigantic corpses lies on the spiral path, blackened and burned. The interior hall is a place of serene beauty, with marble busts on tall columns, a white and blue carpet with a

delicate, woven pattern, and silver and white banners draped across the vaulted ceiling and hanging down the walls. The crude and ugly nature of the invaders and the violence they bring with them feels like a blight upon this elegant place.

The ceiling in the room is 30 feet high.

Creatures: The hill giants are of the Jurn tribe, while the taller creature is a stone giant named Karax. He's a friend of the tribe and of their chief, and is more violent and malicious than most of his kind. He wears magical half plate armor adorned with the heads of his slain enemies hanging from chains. The last of Zoarth's air elemental defenders fights on against the invading giants here. The PCs can sit back and watch the fight; it won't last long, as even with the air elemental's DR, the damage that the giants inflict vaporizes it (literally) in just a couple of rounds at most.

If the PCs do nothing, once the elemental is dead these giants go through the hole in the wall and join their comrades inside, making that encounter much more difficult. If the PCs intervene in the fight, attack the giants, or otherwise prevent them from entering the castle, the giants react with appropriate hostility and fight to the death. Even if the PCs merely attempt to talk to the giants, the giants assume the PCs are more conjured defenders and attack. If the PCs leave them alone, however, the giants won't go out of their way to engage them—they want to get inside the keep.

LARGE AIR ELEMENTAL CR —

hp 68, currently 41 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 120)

JURN HILL GIANTS (5) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 85 each, one currently at 68 (see page 5; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

AC 22, touch 8, flat-footed 22 (+5 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

Gear Large chainmail, Large greatclub, 1d100 gp in a bag along with other miscellaneous worthless gear.

KARAX CR 8

XP 4,800

Stone giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 151)

hp 102

AC 31, touch 8, flat-footed 22 (+5 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

Gear Large +1 half plate, Large greatclub, 10 gems worth 100 gp in a bag.

Treasure: The three dead giants are outfitted like their living counterparts, including having 1d100 gp each.

THE MAIN ENTRANCE

Not surprisingly, the main gate is sealed up tight. The doors are made of brass inlaid with panels of etched

mahogany, barred and sealed with an *arcane lock* (Disable Device DC 30, hardness 10, 60 hit points, Break DC 45). If the PCs do manage to get inside, they trigger a magical trap by crossing the threshold.

ZOARTH'S CASCADING LIGHTNING BOLT TRAP CR 6

Type magical; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (passing through the threshold); **Reset** no
Effect spell effect (three *lightning bolts* one after another in the same round, 6d6 damage each, Reflex DC 15 half each)

INSIDE THE KEEP

The keep is beautiful on the inside, serene and elegant in its construction and decor. Most everything is white, blue, or silver. Rare woods and stone can be found throughout, and silver inlay, other precious metals, and even semiprecious stones were used liberally to tastefully adorn every aspect.

Everything inside the structure is scaled for a giant about 15–18 feet tall. The doors are all massive and heavy, made of brass with inset wooden panels. The furnishings are far too large for humans to use easily. A full-grown human sitting in a chair found here would appear smaller than a child or a halfling. On average, ceilings range from 30 to 50 feet in height.

No matter how the PCs get inside, once they are in the keep and alone, a cat approaches them from another room or from behind a curtain or piece of furniture. It speaks.

“Please. I need your help. I’m in the central hall holding off the main force, but some... thing is at the foundation. Somehow, it’s causing damage. I don’t know how that’s possible, but please find it and stop it. Any stairway that you find can take you down to it—it’s at the very bottom of the keep.”

A DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check confirms that someone is speaking through the cat using some variation of an *animal messenger* or *whispering wind* effect. The cat runs away after it speaks.

Should the PCs look, it is easy to find a staircase; three run up and down the entire height of the structure. These staircases are open shafts 50 feet across with stairs spiraling around the sides. The steps are made of white granite and are sized for giants—they are 12 feet wide with a steep incline. The bottom 50 feet of the shaft is shrouded in thick, white mist like that found outside—beyond 5 feet, creatures and objects have total concealment.

C2. THE FOUNDATION MIST [CR 13]

The stairway spirals down an open shaft through the thick mist. Eventually the stair stops and the mist becomes solid like a

floor. This area is a chamber of sorts whose the floor, walls, and ceiling are also solid mist. The central portion of the chamber is a column of white mist sixty feet across. Near it is a bizarre creature that looks like a humanoid insect, twelve feet tall with a long tail and a thick, ice-blue carapace. It wields a wickedly barbed spear in both hands and is stabbing it into the misty column. With each blow, a portion of the mist turns to ice and shatters into a thousand brittle bits. Every third blow or so, the entire castle shudders and shakes. A giant with pale, blue-white skin and a scraggly white beard crusted with its own frozen drool guards the creature. The giant stands hunched over and looks toward the staircase with a weird, half-vacant look.

The column of mist is the main magical support for the castle. Normally it is all but indestructible; when struck, the column seems like air and the attack passes right through it, yet the column supports the castle as surely as if it were solid iron. Essentially, when it would be beneficial to it or the structure, the column acts like mist, but all other times, it is solid and strong. Its only weakness is magical cold, which freezes the mist to brittle ice that can then be shattered. Even Zoarth doesn’t realize this flaw in his otherwise indestructible support. Given another 10 minutes or so, the ice devil causes enough damage that the castle begins to collapse, at which point all the occupants—attackers and defenders alike—attempt to flee from it rather than be caught inside when it all comes tumbling down.

Creatures: Bran-Fir is a frost giant possessed by devils at an early age. He grew up stunted in intelligence and more than a little insane as a result. After he was cast out of his own clan, the hill giants of the Jurn tribe found him. Although they initially abused and mistreated him, they soon discovered—purely by accident—that the devils within him could be coaxed out. Furthermore, once they were out, they would do as Bran-Fir wished. Many abusive hill giants died after this discovery.

Today, Bran-Fir is an important member of the tribe. The hill giants have learned how to coax out a devil and how to get Bran-Fir to make the devil do what the hill giants want. It’s a complicated and dangerous process, but the devils inside him are very powerful. Today the giants have managed to coax an ice devil out and have convinced Bran-Fir that the devil should destroy the support of the castle. The hill giants, as a whole, are not smart, but they know destruction, and an ice devil is proving to be just the right tool for this job.

Anyone making a Knowledge (arcana) check (DC 20) can determine that there is some kind of mystical connection between Bran-Fir and the ice devil. *Detect magic* or a similar ability confirms this. Once that is determined, the character can make a DC 18 Knowledge (religion) or Knowledge (planes) check to understand that the devil has been possessing the giant. A successful check



also suggests that, in addition to standard strategies for dealing with the devil (attacking it, banishing it, and so on), convincing or forcing the giant to allow the devil inside him again may be possible.

Forcing the giant to allow the devil back inside him can probably only be accomplished using compulsion magic like *suggestion* or *dominate person*. Convincing him to do so requires the ability to speak Giant and a DC 30 Diplomacy check (the DC increases to 40 if the PCs have harmed the giant in any way).

Slaying Bran-Fir sends the possessing devils inside him back to Hell, though it doesn't affect any devil outside of his body (such as the ice devil).

If the PCs attack Bran-Fir, there is a cumulative 10% chance each round that a bone devil possessing him manifests physically and helps to defend him. No more than one new devil appears, and it cannot summon more devils itself. The ice devil and any other devils associated with Bran-Fir are treated as called (not summoned) outsiders.

The ice devil ignores everything that goes on around it until the support is destroyed or Bran-Fir dies—if the PCs attack it while the giant lives, it ignores the attacks and continues chopping at the column. If the support is destroyed, it goes back to possessing the giant (a standard action). If Bran-Fir dies, it attacks the PCs. It does not fight to the death; if reduced to 80 hit points or fewer, it teleports far away and plots to wreak some kind of new evil upon the world.

BRAN-FIR, POSSESSED FROST GIANT CR 9
XP 6,400
hp 133 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 149)

BONE DEVIL CR 9
XP —
hp 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 74)

ICE DEVIL CR 13
XP 25,600
hp 161 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 77)

C3. THE CENTRAL HALL

If the PCs come to find Zoarth, either instead of or after dealing with the frost giant and the ice devil, they eventually find him in the central hall. This is the largest and grandest of the castle's many large and grand rooms.

This vast chamber of white stone feels like a cavern. Surrounded by a colonnade and an upper gallery, a massive sculpture dominates the room. It appears to be the head and upper torso of a man with an arm raised above his head, palm held aloft. This sculpture is forty feet high and sixty feet long. A giant, eighteen feet tall himself, in white and blue robes,

If the Castle Collapses

If the PCs do not stop the ice devil, the castle collapses. The signs of its imminent demise are obvious and dramatic throughout the structure—violent shaking, toppling furnishings, crumbling walls and ceilings, and so on. Eventually, the entire keep falls down, crashing into the mountaintop. It takes at least a full minute for it to fall, giving most inside ample time to escape if they leave immediately, which is what all the NPCs do unless prevented. If the PCs do not leave, they suffer 20d6 points of damage (half bludgeoning, half piercing) inside the collapsing edifice; this damage applies even if they use *feather fall* or similar magic, as the castle is technically pushing them downward as it falls.

Perhaps most significantly to the PCs, if the collapse happens, Zoarth is unwilling to help them. His reluctance comes not out of spite (although if he knows that the PCs didn't even try to help him, there will be some spite involved as well), but from the fact that he has a lot on his mind more important to him than performing some ritual for strangers. The PCs have to take the initiative to offer to find and punish the perpetrators as well as the instigators of the horrible crime in order to get him to concede that he'll help them, and even then he needs time to relocate before he has a suitable place to perform the rite.

with a long white beard and a silver circlet, stands on the sculpture's palm casting spells down upon invading giants; the enemy giants are throwing boulders at him or attempting to climb the stone figure to get at him. A few giants already lie dead upon the tiled marble floor. Nearest to the entrance to this hall is a female giant in plate armor harness riding a three-horned beast with a bony crest atop its head. Its horns and feet are shod in spiked iron, and chain barding drapes across its bulging body.

Unless the PCs were using Stealth to approach this area, the female giant (Beshtu, see below) automatically notices them and calls out in Giant to her comrades, "The wizard conjured more aid—I will take them!"

The vaulted ceiling in the Central Hall is 60 feet high. The galleries are 20 feet above the floor. The statue, at its highest point (the hand), is 30 feet high. Climbing the statue is fairly easy thanks to its shape and size (Climb DC 15).

Creatures: The spearhead of the giant attack force is here—eight hill giants and their commander, Beshtu, along with Beshtu's triceratops mount. Zoarth stands atop the statue and uses his spells and his wand to fight off the invading giants (his list of spells prepared does not include the spells he has already cast during the invasion); he only attacks the PCs if they attack him.

BESHTU CR 11

XP 12,800

Female hill giant fighter 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

NE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +0; Senses low-light vision; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23 (+10 armor, +4 natural, -1 size)

hp 165 (14 HD; 10d8+4d10+98)

Fort +18, Ref +4, Will +10; +1 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities rock catching, bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee Large +1 *giant-bane greatsword*

+21/+16/+11 (3d6+16/19-20)

Ranged rock +10 (1d8+13/19-20)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

TACTICS

During Combat Beshtu remains mounted, attacking foes as her dinosaur tramples as many as it can each round.

STATISTICS

Str 29, Dex 10, Con 24, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 5

Base Atk +11; CMB +21; CMD 31

Feats Bleeding Critical, Cleave, Critical Focus, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Lunge, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword), Weapon Specialization (greatsword)

Skills Climb +9, Fly +0, Intimidate +14, Perception +8, Ride +6

SQ armor training 1

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*; Other Gear Large +1 full plate, Large +1 *giant-bane greatsword*, 248 gp



BESHTU

ARMORED TRICERATOPS CR 8

XP 4,800

hp 119 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 86)

AC 26, touch 7, flat-footed 26 (+5 armor, -1 Dex, +14 natural, -2 size)

Melee gore +18 (2d10+12)

Special Attacks powerful charge (gore, 4d10+16), trample (2d6+12, DC 26)

Gear Huge nonhumanoid chainmail, Huge masterwork spiked "boots," Huge masterwork steel horn-tips

JURN HILL GIANTS (8) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 85 (see page 5; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

ZOARTH CR 14

XP 38,400

Male cloud giant evoker 6

NE Huge humanoid (giant)

Init +7; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +17

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 11, flat-footed 28 (+4 *mage armor*, +3 Dex, +12

natural, +4 *shield*, -2 size)

hp 247 (22 HD; 16d8+6d6+154)

Fort +19, Ref +10, Will +16

Defensive Abilities rock catching

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 2 slams +25 (2d6+12)

Ranged rock +16 (2d6/19-20)

Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.

Special Attacks intense spells +3 damage

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +16)

At will—*levitate* (self plus 2,000 lbs.), *obscuring mist* 1/day—*fog cloud*

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +10)

7/day—*force missile* (1d4+3)

Evoker Spells Prepared (CL 6th; concentration +10)

3rd—*fly*, *fireball* (DC 17), *slow* (DC 17)

2nd—*glitterdust* (DC 16), *scorching ray*, *web* (DC 16)

1st—*mage armor* (already cast),

magic missile (2), *shield* (already cast)

o (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *open/close*

Opposition Schools

Enchantment, Illusion

TACTICS

Before Combat Zoarth has already

cast *mage armor* and *shield* on himself.

During Combat Zoarth casts *fireball* and *slow*, and then *scorching ray* and *magic missile*, only using his *wand of lightning bolt* once those spells are exhausted.

Morale If reduced to fewer than 85 hit points, Zoarth uses his *scroll of dimension door* to escape to elsewhere in the castle.

Base Statistics Zoarth's AC without spells is 23, touch 11, flat-footed 20.

STATISTICS

Str 35, Dex 17, Con 25, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 10

Base Atk +15; CMB +29; CMD 42

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Great Cleave, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Overrun, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Iron Will, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll

Skills Climb +20, Craft (carpentry) +17, Craft (stonemasonry) +17, Diplomacy +9, Fly +0, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (engineering) +12, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (nobility) +12, Linguistics +17, Perception +17, Perform (string) +8, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +17, Use Magic Device +10

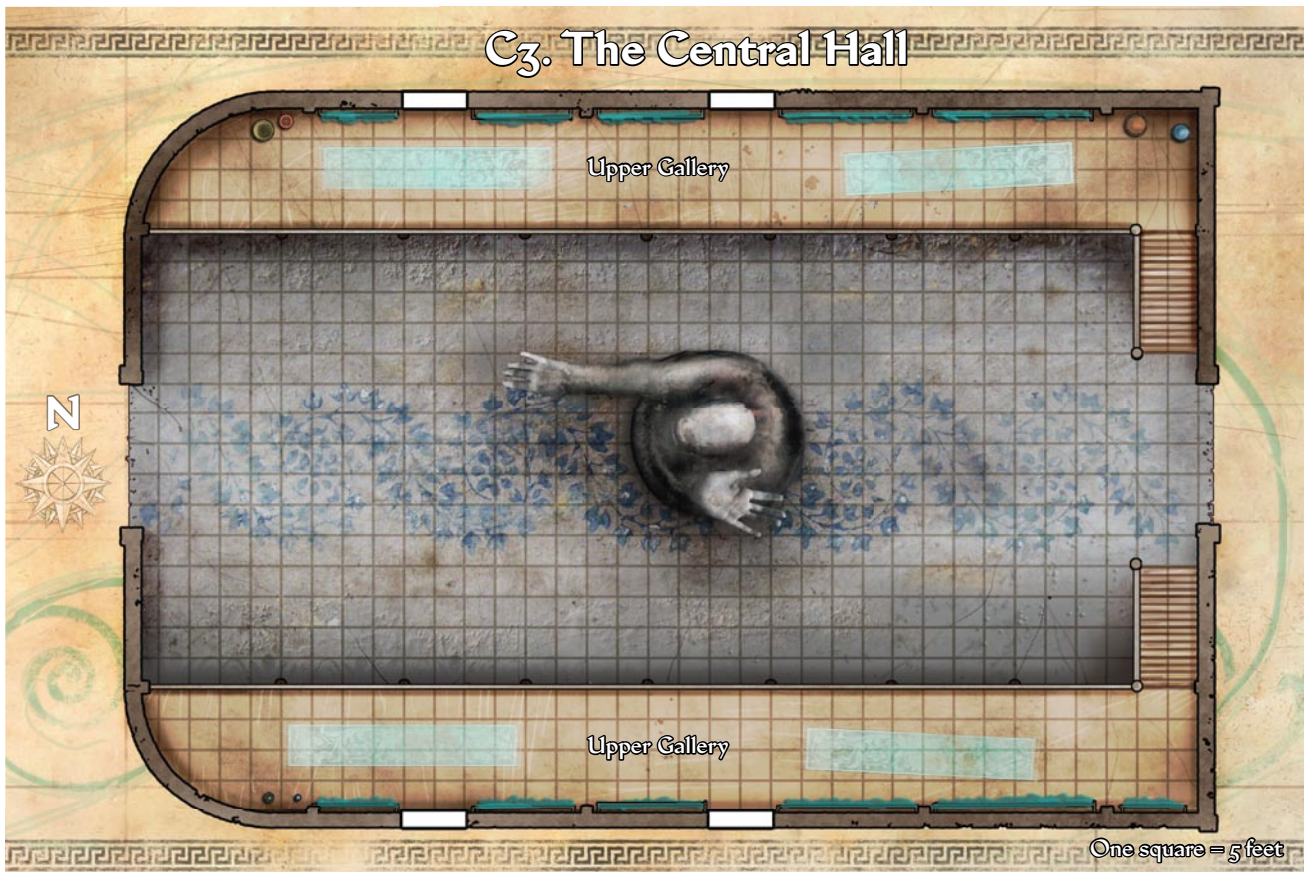
Languages Celestial, Common, Giant, Infernal

SQ oversized weapon, arcane bond (ring)

Combat Gear *scroll of dimension door*, *scroll of fireball*, *scroll of fly*, *wand of lightning bolt* (6d6, DC 14, 34 charges); Other Gear *headband of vast intelligence* +2



C3. The Central Hall



Treasure: The three dead giants are outfitted like their living counterparts and have 1000 gp each. The blade of Beshtu's sword (given to her by Verakas) has the following engraving: "Let's see your cats save you from this."

ZOARTH'S GRATITUDE

Should the PCs aid Zoarth in defeating the giants assaulting his castle, he is extremely grateful. Once the battle is over, Zoarth settles into a comfy chair in the Central Hall. A number of his cats come out of hiding and climb all over him. Some of the braver ones cautiously check out the PCs, but most are skittish.

The giant strokes his snow-white beard and manages a smile. "Whoever you are, you have my thanks. I am Zoarth, known to some as the Sky Mage. Welcome to my home. How is that you are here, at my time of greatest need? And what's more, do you know why these brutes have assaulted me in my quiet and peaceful studies?"

Zoarth honestly does not know what provoked this attack or who these invaders are (other than the obvious fact that they're mostly hill giants). He has no idea who sent them, and at the moment the idea that it might be

Verakas would never occur to him, for he believes her to be long dead.

Before getting into a long conversation about the attackers, however, he insists on giving the PCs a reward for their aid. He's been spending much of his time lately brewing potions. As a small token of his gratitude, he allows each PC to choose three potions from his stock, which currently consists of the following: *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *displacement*, *eagle's splendor*, *fly* (2), *fox's cunning*, *gaseous form*, *invisibility* (2), *owl's wisdom*, *protection from energy* (acid), *protection from energy* (cold), *protection from energy* (fire, 3), *see invisibility*, *water breathing*.

Furthermore, if the PCs ask, Zoarth immediately agrees to help them with the *Book of the Titan* ritual. However, he tells them that he can't do so until he's figured out who sent a small army of hill giants to attack him and why (and until he ensures it can't happen again.) If the PCs are willing to investigate this mystery for him, he remains in the keep, makes repairs and preparations in case of another attack, and readies his sanctum to conduct the ritual when they return successfully.

If the PCs try to bargain for more, they should attempt a Diplomacy check. All of the PCs speaking with him can help the most diplomatic among them, using the

Handling the Battle

While you can play out the entire battle, determining each NPC's actions each round, tracking all their hit points, and so on, you don't have to do that if you don't want to do. Instead, you could have the PCs face off against Beshtu and her dinosaur, while the other giants fight Zoarth in the background. While you run the PCs' half of the battle normally, simply describe Zoarth's struggle with the giants in broad terms ("The cloud giant blasts three of the giants with a spell; one of the other giants manages to smash his back with a club, but it looks like it would take more than that to bring Zoarth down.") If a PC attacks one of the other giants, that giant becomes part of the PCs' encounter.

aid another action. If they've been nice to his cats, grant them a +2 bonus. If the result is less than 20, Zoarth sticks to his original offer. If the result is 20 or higher, Zoarth promises to brew them each another potion of their choosing. If the result is 30 or higher, he also throws in a 5,000 gp reward for each PC.

PART 2: TRAIL TO THE HILL CAMP

If the PCs agree to help him, Zoarth tells them that he believes the giants came from the hills to the north. Their trail shouldn't be that hard to follow. He cautions the PCs, however, that a massive dragon uses the lands in that direction as a hunting ground. Zoarth doesn't know much about the beast other than that it's not a standard sort of metallic or chromatic dragon. His advice is to avoid it altogether and flee if they do encounter it.

The trail leads to the northwest. Most of the terrain the PCs must cross is at first mountainous; it later turns into a barren, rocky wasteland with occasional broad, thick copses of conifers that spread across hilltops and down into ravines. Cold winds blow across gray skies and tear at everything in the open terrain. Sleet and freezing rain are common companions.

Following the giants' trail presents few difficulties. Their size alone makes their tracks and other signs of passage obvious, and of course the brutes marauded as they traveled, leaving a trail of burned cabins, crushed crofts, and occasional scenes of widespread slaughter. Although homes and farms are rare here, it's unlikely the PCs come upon any that have not been raided and destroyed. The PCs are also likely to encounter a few surviving farmers, herders, or trappers who can attest to the direction of the giants' march.

The entire journey from Zoarth's castle to the hill giants' camp is about 100 miles long and likely takes 5 or even 6 days by land because of the rough terrain and the infrequency of real roads.

LINNORM [CR 14]

Zoarth wasn't kidding about the dragon. One of the terrible linnorms has recently come down from farther north to hunt in this region. Encountering this horrific monster may be the most dangerous thing that can happen to the PCs in this entire adventure. Fortunately, Zoarth's warning has them on the lookout for it, so when they first spot it, it is far in the distance, flying over the craggy, rocky terrain looking for a meal.

In the distance is a dark shape above the horizon. It is serpentine and winds its way across the sky, wingless. It must be close to sixty feet long, with grayish-brown flesh like the rocky crags all around it. The creature has a massive reptilian head with black, angular horns and a single pair of claws. Scales like crusty armored plates cover its body. Most of the beast appears to be a long tail that ends in three spiky tendrils.

From that point on, the PCs can keep an eye out for it and intentionally avoid it if they so desire by staying out of wide open spaces. If they do not take any such precautions or if they actually go after the linnorm, they are likely to be attacked from above.

Creature: The linnorm attacks a group of targets (like the PCs) with a spray of its magma breath weapon and then swoops down to grab a single target with its tail. It carries the victim off to a nearby high crag and slays him or her with constriction and poisonous bites. Then it returns for another, and then another, and so on. Overconfident and immeasurably tenacious, the gargantuan dragon fights to the death.

Crag Linnorm

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 202 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 190)

Treasure: If the PCs search around the area (DC 22 Perception check), they can find the creature's lair in a deep ravine devoid of any living thing for a mile in all directions. Within this ravine lie broken bits of bones from many large creatures (cattle, bears, elk, giants, and more). Scattered amid these remains are 8,377 gp, 16 gemstones of various types (worth 100 gp each), two jeweled necklaces (worth 1,000 gp each), a silver and onyx bracelet (worth 1,200 gp) a +2 *frost longsword*, a +1 *heavy steel blinding shield*, a *wand of cure serious wounds* (19 charges), and *gauntlets of fumbling* (a cursed item). Hidden in a tiny crevice (Perception check DC 30) is a diamond-studded medallion (worth 8,000 gp); hidden in another (Perception check DC 32) lies a *ring of freedom of movement*.

Raiding the lair before the PCs slay the dragon guarantees an encounter with the beast, whether it be while they are in the lair or after it tracks down the thieves.



THE FARMERS

A group of displaced farmers, herders, and settlers whose homes were destroyed by the marauding giants have gathered together in a small copse of trees. They are bitter, angry, and terrified folk who have lost much. Though they are powerless to gain it for themselves, they want vengeance.

As the PCs travel across the wilderness, a few of these individuals invite the PCs to join them at their hidden camp. The farmers assume that the PCs were also displaced by the giants and offer them food and drink. If the PCs tell them that they hunt the giants, these folk not only offer them detailed descriptions of which way the giants came from and which way they went, but any other information they can provide as well.

Furthermore, six of the stouter individuals want to come with the PCs to help fight. These are all 1st- and 2nd-level commoners and experts. They have few real weapons, no armor, and no other portable supplies of any use. Having them come along would likely be a very poor idea—a single blow from a giant's club would kill any one of them.

In theory, the PCs might be able to come up with useful things for these NPCs to do without putting them into overt danger, such as letting them act as scouts, guides, porters, or even as part of a diversion when the PCs attack the camp, but allowing them to come along is likely more trouble than it's worth. Smart (and certainly wise and caring) PCs are likely to come up with some way to persuade them not to come, whether it's some good reason, a few lies, or blunt honesty about how they would all meet terrible, bloody ends (Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate DC 25).

If the GM wishes, even after the PCs make their case and convince the farmers not to come along, one or two of the bravest (or the most foolhardy and stubborn) of them might follow anyway, trying to keep a distance. PCs making a DC 15 Perception check are likely to notice this soon after getting back on the trail; perhaps another talking-to convinces them to stay at the camp.

NAAZZA AND TH'TELIS [CR 6]

On their trek, the PCs come upon another, entirely unrelated encounter. It's not life-threatening for the PCs, but it can be complicated.

Up ahead, a woman sits in front of a large tree, head bowed. Leaves and twigs tangle in her wild, brown hair. She appears

to be sobbing. When she looks up, her face is stunningly beautiful despite her tears. "Please help me," she implores. "I am a prisoner here."

The woman introduces herself as Th'telis. Though she doesn't come right out and say it, Th'telis is a dryad.

To the untrained eye, she appears to be a lovely human woman. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check allows a PC to recognize her as a dryad.

If asked, she won't deny it. Th'telis is more consumed with her plight than her own identity. She says that a satyr named Naazza has kidnapped her and forced her to be his wife through enchantment magic. Because of this magic, she must stay in this spot until he returns. The only way the spell can be broken, she says, is if she gives the satyr a magical ring (although she believes any magical jewelry will do).

Th'telis's story is a lie, a con. Unlike most of her kind, she's Chaotic Neutral in alignment and is using the traditional tale of satyrs treating other fey poorly for her own advantage. Instead of ranks in Climb, she has ranks in Bluff (a +13 bonus). If she has to, she tries to subtly use *charm person* or *suggestion* to help with her ruse. Enough of her tale is true that she doesn't have to lie much—there is a satyr named Naazza who wanted her to be his wife. While it is true that she can't leave this spot, it's because the tree she leans against is the tree she is mystically bonded to.

Naazza is nearby. He's in on the con, but only because he's completely in love with Th'telis. Between his affection for her and the fact that she's manipulated him with *suggestion* for so long, he is basically her slave. If the PCs still aren't buying her story, he plays his role by showing up and invoking a *fear* effect with his pipes to thin the PCs' ranks, forbidding the PCs from giving his wife any magical gifts, then fleeing as fast as he can into the brush to hide. He's a timid satyr who has no love for combat or confrontation.

Both Sense Motive and Knowledge (nature) can help the PCs see through the lies, as both the dryad and the satyr seem to be acting strangely and anyone who knows that she's a dryad knows that she couldn't leave anyway.

Th'telis won't stick around if the PCs aren't going to give her what she wants—she disappears into her tree. If the PCs catch up to Naazza, he won't put up much of a fight either. If casting *suggestion* or *fear* doesn't save him, he offers the PCs his treasure in exchange for sparing his life. He explains that the whole scheme was Th'telis's idea but begs them not to punish her in any way.



TH'TELIS

Naazza has a stash of very valuable wine hidden in a nearby hollow tree stump. He has 12 bottles of wine, each worth 100 gp due to their rarity, excellent vintage, and bejeweled bottles. In the brush next to her tree, Th'telis has a masterwork bow, 14 +2 *seeking arrows*, a *ring of jumping*, and a +1 *amulet of natural armor*. The latter two she acquired using this con. She normally wears them but obviously cannot display them while perpetrating her swindle.

TH'TELIS CR 4

XP 1,200

Advanced dryad (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 116, 294)

hp 39

NAAZZA CR 5

XP 1,600

Advanced satyr (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 241, 294)

hp 60

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of invisibility*;

Other Gear dagger, shortbow with 20 arrows, gold ring with an opal (worth 600 gp), masterwork panpipes.

THE HUNTING PARTY [CR 12]

When the PCs get close (within 20 miles or so) to the Jurn camp, they come upon a band of giants stalking prey. If the giants notice the approaching PCs, read the following.

Cresting a tree-covered hill brings into a view a group of six thick-limbed giants with hunting clubs and throwing stones at the ready—but somewhat startled at seeing a group of adventurers, as if they were a hunting party looking for other prey.

The giants are startled, but they were ready for a dangerous foe already, so they are not caught entirely off guard. They are three pairs of fist-mates from the Jurn tribe, and they are hunting a giant bear. The Jurn have long hunted this bear, and it has attained almost mythic status for them. The tribe would laud the hunters who bring back its enormous skull, and one would likely be the eventual successor to the current chief; its pelt would make multiple cloaks and its bones fine weapons.

However, when the Jurn notice the PCs arrive, the giants attack them instead, despite the fact that their desired prey is nearby.

Creatures: As the PCs battle the Jurn giants, the huge bear smells the blood and hears the sound of the combat, and it joins the fray 2 rounds into the encounter.

There is a crash of underbrush and a cracking of breaking tree limbs as a huge monstrosity makes a sudden entrance with a ground-shaking roar. It seems almost inappropriate to call it a bear, for it stands an impossible 16 feet tall on its hind legs, its back is covered with bony ridges, its head and joints have horn-like projections, and its claws and teeth are unnaturally large, even for a beast of this size.

The creature, a dire bear with the giant creature simple template, wades into the fight attacking everything—PCs and Jurn alike. Smart PCs can maneuver themselves so that the bear attacks only the giants, at least at first. The bear fights to the death, but the giants yield if four out of the six are slain. They flee if the bear is still alive at that point, and surrender to the PCs otherwise (unless the opportunity to flee from the PCs is obviously available).

These hunters know the exact location of the hill giant camp, and they will betray their tribe to save their own lives. They also give up what treasure they have to buy mercy. They then go into the wilderness rather than return to the camp.

Development: If the PCs are particularly quiet and thus able to approach the giant hunters without being noticed, they can watch the Jurn battle the giant bear; the PCs can decide whether to give the whole situation a wide berth or take on the survivors of the bear.

JURN HILL GIANTS (6) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 85 (see page 5; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

Gear Large hide armor, Large greatclub, bag with miscellaneous supplies and 200 gp worth of various valuables (coins, jewelry, and so on).

GIANT DIRE BEAR CR 8

XP 4,800

Giant creature dire bear (size Huge) (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 31, 295)

hp 115

THE HILL CAMP

Ahead is an ugly, simple camp of crude, hide tents gathered around the side of a rocky, barren hill. A few ill-kept fires burn lazily in pits, roasting large haunches of meat or boiling pots of stew whose contents are better left unknown. By human standards, the tents are large, but the giants that live here likely find them barely big enough to sleep in. Piles of crudely painted stones lie near a pile of



NAAZZA



various weapons; most of the weapons are immense clubs, but there are also a few massive axes, swords, and spears. A few giants wander slowly about the camp, not terribly vigilant or energetic. The entire area stinks of dung, rancid meat, wet leather, old iron, and offal.

The camp of the Jurn tribe is a very simple affair. Like most hill giants, the Jurn are nomadic. Most of them live in crude hide tents that encircle large fire pits. The village consists of three such fire pits, with six to eight tents encircling each. Currently, the camp also includes a large cave where the chief has taken up residence, but since they frequently move around, this is not always the case. A total of 28 adult and 10 young hill giants currently live in the village. These numbers were recently higher, but many left to participate in the raid against Zoarth's castle or are with the Storm Queen. At any given time, 10–21 of the 38 giants of the tribe are absent from the camp, out hunting, foraging, or otherwise exploring.

One tent is pitched near a large wagon that serves as a portable forge where the Jurn create and repair arms and armor. Their creations are generally crude and ill conceived, but by giant standards, they are master craftsmen. The piles of weapons here—far more than the tribe could ever use—are worthless. Even the Jurn tend to leave them behind when they move on. Crafting weapons and armor and planning for war is an obsession with them. Their chief encourages this obsession, and most every night holds a sort of brutish rally to invigorate the tribe for the conflicts to come. It is ironic, then, that the chief himself is an abject coward.

Like those encountered at Zoarth's castle, the giants here typically shave their heads and paint threatening symbols on themselves. Even their tents bear painted images of fear and war: skulls, hammers, fists, and so forth.

GUARD WOLVES [CR 9]

Eight dire wolves patrol the perimeter of the hill giant camp. They are spread out, but if one finds an intruder, they all come running. PCs attempting to sneak into the camp have to deal with the keen senses of these animal sentries. PCs storming into camp find the wolves to be the first line of defense. These bloodthirsty beasts have been bred for savagery and fight to the death.

DIRE WOLVES (8) **CR 3**
XP 800 each
 hp 37 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

H1. FOUR FRIENDS [CR 9]

A trio of giants stands at the edge of camp. Although such things are not always easy to tell with the brutish creatures, one appears to be a young male and another a young female. They talk

excitedly with each other and with the third giant, who stands two feet taller than the others and has two heads—one head appears to be male while the other might actually be female.

When the PCs first come into the camp, three creatures stand out in the open, a male hill giant named Uhm, a female hill giant named Ruck, and an ettin named Yillas. These creatures are young adults, getting ready to forage in the wilderness for food, trouble, or both. The ettin is not particularly welcome in the camp, which is why the two young giants—rebellious, like all youths—have befriended it (or them).

The ettin is large for its kind, but—oddly enough—has one male and one female head. It's a hermaphrodite as well. Even by ettin standards, its heads act as though it were two creatures rather than one, even sometimes arguing with itself. It has but one name, so the heads always look at anyone speaking to it to see which one of them is being addressed. Remember that ettins speak a pidgin of Giant, Goblin, and Orc, and a creature trying to communicate with an ettin must make an Intelligence check (DC 15 if the speaker knows one of these languages, DC 10 if it knows two, and DC 5 if it knows all three). Uhm and Ruck gain a +8 bonus on this check due to experience with Yillas. Ruck also speaks a little Common.

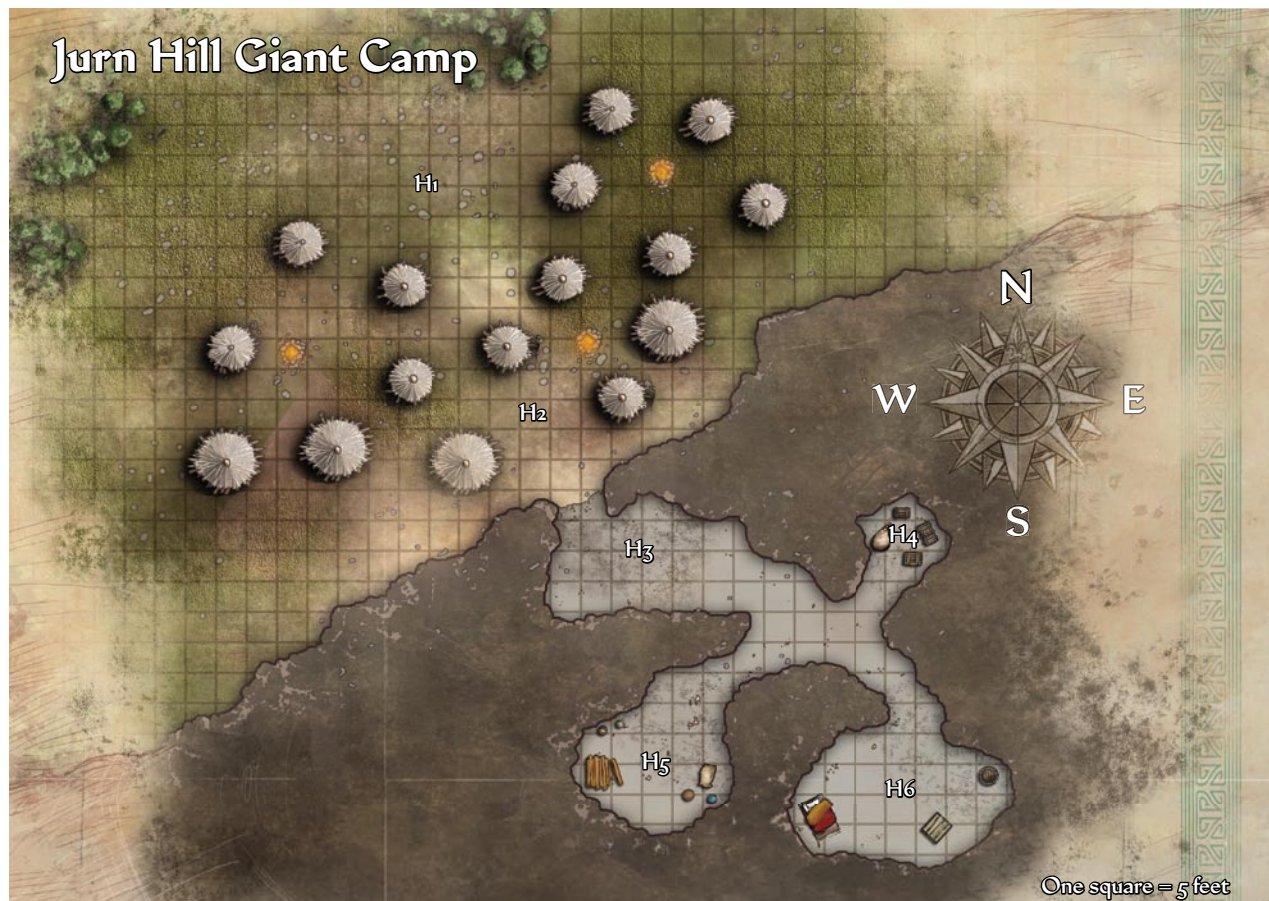
These giants long for excitement and likely approach the PCs with a sort of playful hostility. Once they see how powerful the PCs are, however, they beg for forgiveness and try to befriend the invaders, offering to show them their secret hunting place (it's a 3 hour walk from the camp and nothing special) or help them in some way. This is more out of boredom than fear, however. If the PCs react well to their gestures of friendship, the four friends help them to the best of their ability. Although they won't go so far as to attack another giant, they can tell the PCs where the chief is, warn them about his enforcers and their "living rocks," fetch them food, or perform other, similar tasks.

When the PCs leave camp, these four friends want to accompany them. Ultimately, this is likely a poor idea (the people of the city of Jol won't react well to a group of adventurers bringing giants into their community, and the young giants will cause an undo amount of trouble, no matter what the PCs do).

UHM AND RUCK, HILL GIANTS (2) **CR 7**
XP 3,200 each
 Hill giants
 hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

YILLAS **CR 6**
XP 2,400
 Ettin
 hp 89 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 130)

Jurn Hill Giant Camp



OTHER GIANTS

If the GM wishes, other hill giants (male and female) may attempt to muster themselves to defend the camp. Young hill giants (use stats for ogres or apply the young creature simple template to a hill giant) can even join in the fray. The truth is, however, the majority of the able warriors either partook in the raid against Zoarth's castle or were sent to serve the Storm Queen. More likely, then, the giants let their chief and his enforcers deal with the invaders and fight only if attacked.

H2. THE ENFORCERS [CR 13]

Standing near the entrance to the cave are three identical male giants. They wear banded armor and tote massive two-handed axes, so they are clearly not typical members of their kind. Their gear is well maintained and their stoop is less pronounced, which makes them even more different than their fellows. They seem relatively alert and ready for action.

The chief of the Jurn tribe rules thanks to three very powerful, very special giant "enforcers." Born in a sacred valley under an evil star sign, these identical triplets possess a very special innate ability: twice each day, each

can transform a hurled stone into an earth elemental that immediately attacks the giants' foes.

JURN ENFORCERS (3)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Male hill giant fighter 3

NE Large humanoid (giant)

Init +5; Senses low-light vision; Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 25 (+7 armor, +1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

hp 129 (13 HD; 10d8+3d10+68)

Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +6; +1 vs. fear

Defensive Abilities rock catching; bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee Large mwk greataxe +19/+14 (3d6+12/x3) or
2 slams +17 (1d8+8)

Ranged rock +11/+6 (1d8+8/19-20)

Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.

Special Attacks create elemental

TACTICS

During Combat The enforcers really enjoy using their ability to create earth elementals, and they use it before entering melee if possible.



STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 12, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 5

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 30

Feats Cleave, Critical Focus, Improved Initiative, Intimidating Prowess, Iron Will, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Focus (rock)

Skills Climb +9, Fly +0, Intimidate +13, Perception +9, Stealth +0

Languages Giant

SQ armor training 1

Gear Large masterwork banded mail, Large masterwork greataxe, 99 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Create Elemental (Su) As a swift action, as part of throwing a rock, an enforcer can transform a hurled rock into a Medium earth elemental. If the giant hits a target with its rock, the stone transforms into an elemental, suddenly sprouting arms and automatically attempting to grapple the target on the giant's turn. If the rock misses, it lands 1d6x5 feet away in a random direction and transforms into an elemental; the elemental is not prone and immediately charges into battle.

MEDIUM EARTH ELEMENTALS (6)

CR 3

XP —

hp 34 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 122)

H3. CAVE ENTRANCE [CR 10]

In the entrance to an unlit cave, six trolls stand around a large tarp of stained, crudely stitched hide. One holds a large spool of thick thread, and two others sharpen big bone needles with their teeth, while another attempts to thread a similar needle with little luck.

Six troll slaves toil here stitching holes in the chief's tent to prepare for when the tribe moves and he cannot enjoy the comforts of living in a cave. They hate this job and have no skill with such things, so when the PCs arrive, they joyously throw the tent down on the cave floor and leap into battle. Frankly, they'd rather fight a group of adventurers than face another moment of sewing.

TROLLS (6)

CR 5

XP 1,600 each

hp 63 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 268)

H4. TREASURE CAVE

This small, unlit cave is empty except for a large chest of wood and iron, fitted with a hefty padlock. Painted sloppily on the wall behind it are a skull symbol in red and some crude writing.

The writing is in Giant and says, "Go Away or Chief Will Kill You." The chest is locked (the chief has the key,

but a DC 25 Disable Device check opens it just as easily). It contains the tribe's treasure, which is primarily the payment that the Storm Queen gave the chief to convince him to send the attack force to Zoarth's castle.

Treasure: This stash includes seven gold rings (worth 50 gp each), a golden oil lamp (worth 180 gp), a human-sized vestment made of cloth-of-gold (worth 250 gp), a jeweled glass bottle (worth 550 gp), an etched lute with mother-of-pearl inlay (worth 800 gp), 12,499 sp, and 8,307 gp.

H5. SEER'S CAVE

This is a simple, little cave with a bed made of woven wooden strips and a pile of rags as a pillow. The walls are covered in crudely fashioned paintings, but the subject matter is strange and surprisingly complex, involving movements of the planets and the events that they seem to inspire. A large burlap sack lies on the floor.

This unlit cave belongs to Ramma, the cyclops seer of the tribe. He is currently with the chief in his cave (area H6).

Treasure: The sack contains paints, brushes, some clothes, and a wide variety of worthless trinkets and fetishes (feathers, colored stones, dried plants, bones, teeth, bits of hide, and so on), but none of it is valuable. Within the pile of rags Ramma uses for a pillow, however, the cyclops keeps a stash of 11 gems, each worth 100 gp. PCs who make a successful Perception check (DC 15) find these easily.

H6. THE CHIEF [CR 9]

A flickering pair of torches lights this cave. Furs and skins hang on the walls, and the skulls of beasts and humans are displayed like trophies. More furs lay across the floor, around a bed of still more furs piled high. Two giants stand in this cave. One, a hill giant, bears a large scar from a wound that appears to have torn away one of his ears long ago. He wears a short red cloak of some scaly hide, as well as a large glittering earring in his remaining ear. The other is thin by giant standards and wears a silver necklace covered in charms of moons and stars. Most remarkably, however, he has but one eye—he's a cyclops.

This is the cave of the chief of the Jurn tribe, Grunf. Currently, his cyclops seer/advisor is with him here, and they are conferring about the events of the day.

Grunf rules by might—his own, to a degree, but also the might of his trio of bodyguards. If they have been defeated, he's not going to try to best the heroes who took them down. If the PCs make it to the chief, he already knows he's lost; he surrenders immediately, offering to tell them anything they want. He even offers them a lot of gold if they'll leave him alone.

Grunf is challenging to deal with, not because he's difficult or belligerent—in fact, just the opposite. Once he's been shown that the PCs are superior to him and his tribe physically, he becomes eager at appease them—too eager. He struggles to figure out what the PCs want to hear and he tells them that, whether it's true or not. He's also not very smart, so he'll inadvertently contradict himself and get confused in his own lies. A Sense Motive check opposed by his Bluff check (his Bluff modifier is +1) reveals his attempts at deception.

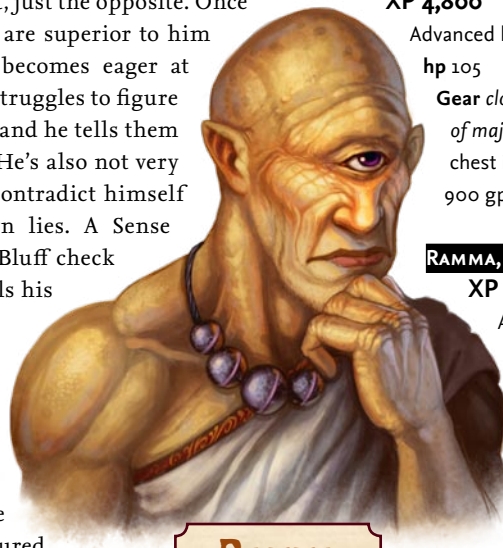
The only accurate, useful information Grunf can tell the PCs is this:

- Someone called the “Storm Queen” promised him great rewards if he attacked the “Mountain Castle” and captured the cloud giant who lives there.
- The Storm Queen can be found about 90 miles west of his camp, but he doesn't know exactly where. He'll likely describe this as “less than four days walk,” rather than in miles.
- She contacted him via an envoy, a “pretty lady” on a “really big bird” bearing gifts. (This was a female cloud giant on a roc.)
- The “pretty lady” gave him a magical sword, which he gave to Beshtu, leader of the attack on Zoarth's castle.
- He sent a few of his best warriors back with the “pretty lady” to serve the Storm Queen.
- The rest of treasure that Verakas sent is in the chest in the treasure cave (Grunf has the key).

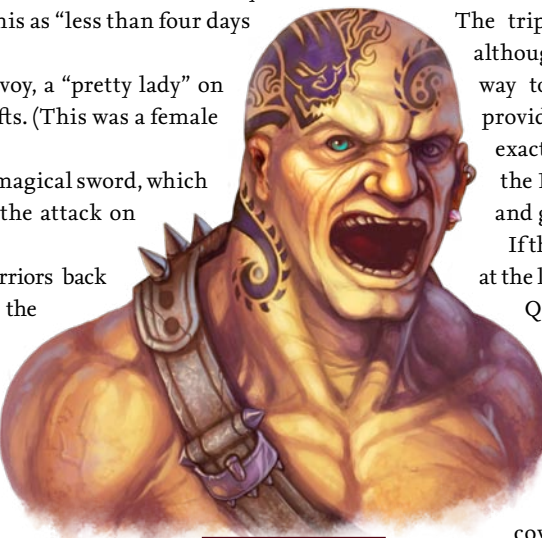
Note that Verakas demanded that Grunf send her a few of his best warriors; he sent her *some* warriors, but he didn't actually send his *best*. The PCs may encounter these giants in the next portion of the adventure.

Grunf won't give up his personal treasure (his cloak or his earring) without a fight, but he won't die for them. In other words, if the PCs demand these things, he'll resist, but once he gets down to less than 30 hit point, he gives them up if the PCs let him live.

Ramma the Cyclops does whatever the chief says, but if the chief is dead, he disavows himself of any connection to the giants, telling the PCs that he was held here against his will. He uses the *idol of the eye* on their behalf to appease them and get them to spare his life.



RAMMA



GRUNF

GRUNF, JURN CHIEF CR 8

XP 4,800

Advanced hill giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150, 294)

hp 105

Gear cloak of major energy resistance (fire) (as a ring of major energy resistance, but a cloak), key to the chest in area H4, large diamond earring (worth 900 gp)

RAMMA, CYCLOPS SEER CR 6

XP 2,400

Advanced cyclops (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 52,294)

AC 26, touch 10, flat-footed 25 (+7 armor, +1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

hp 85

Gear Large +1 breastplate, idol of the eye (see page 30), silver necklace (worth 250 gp)

PART 3: SEEKING THE STORM QUEEN

The trip northwest is likely uneventful, although cold. The city of Jol is on the way to the location that Chief Grunf provided—in fact, it's quite close to the exact location. It's extremely likely that the PCs stop there to rest, get supplies, and gather information.

If they don't go to Jol, they find nothing at the location they were given. The Storm Queen is not yet there, but she will be. If they wait, the thunderhead appears above them eventually, as described later.

JOL

Jol is a small city, though covering a large area as if it were several large towns grown together. Its people are a hardy folk accustomed to harsh conditions and unruly barbarians.

Here, the PCs can easily find most any mundane supplies and gear they need.

JOL

N Small City

Corruption +0; **Crime** +0; **Economy** -1; **Law** -2; **Lore** -2; **Society** +1

Qualities insular

Danger +5

POPULACE

Government monarchy (linnorm king)

Population 9,500 (8,700 human, 700 dwarf, 100 other)



Notable NPCs

Linnorm King Opir Eightfingers (CN male human ranger 3/rogue 2/expert 1)

Nish Baranbos (CG female halfling wizard 5)

Urlen Farborn (NG male human cleric 5 of Erastil)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 3,500 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd

Minor Items +2 battleaxe, belt of giant's strength +2, +2 chainmail, +2 longsword; **Medium Items** —; **Major Items** —

Opir Eightfingers claimed the title of Linnorm King after staggering into the city with the (slightly decayed) head of a linnorm lashed to his back. Because some folk think he found a dead linnorm rather than slaying it himself, some doubt his legitimacy as ruler, and local steadings often ignore his pronouncements.

Nish Baranbos is a one-legged halfling wizard with no further interest in adventuring. She settled down in Jol to cast spells for hire and make the occasional scroll (although there aren't many in the city interested in or able to buy them, she still makes one or two a month just so she doesn't fall out of practice). Casting the occasional *locate object* or *mending* spell for the locals keeps clothes on her back and a roof over her head, and that's about all she cares about anymore.

PCs looking for divine assistance find the Temple of Erastil (which doubles as a meeting hall) a useful stop. Priest Urlen Farborn can provide cleric scrolls and potions and can cast helpful spells, all for the appropriate donation. Urlen is particularly helpful to outsiders, as he is always interested in news from far off lands beyond the reach of a remote city like Jol.

PCs looking for other, more expensive or powerful magic are very likely out of luck in this place. There is a moderately powerful druid in the Grungir Forest to the north (Xeruit, see page 23), but other than that, no one is willing or able to provide much magical assistance (even for a fee).

It's likely, however, that the PCs are more interested in information than gear in Jol. If the PCs ask around in Jol about the Storm Queen or anything to do with giants, no one can offer them any real help. People seem mostly interested in talking about the weather. While that is often the case, in this situation, it's significant. People mention that the wind should be coming out of the north this time of year, but it's coming from the south and the east, and it's warmer than normal too. It's possible that the players won't pay much attention to this kind of talk at first (although the connection to the Storm Queen should be obvious), but there's enough of it to eventually draw their attention. Plus, some of the talk is really strange; one person might say that he heard that it rained fish on a farmer's field east of the city, and a few others talk about how the wind blew from two different directions at once for a short while 3 days ago.

Talking with Grunf

Grunf has never seen the Storm Queen and doesn't really know who or what she is—he's only met one of her cloud giant allies. He'll say whatever he thinks the PCs want to hear, which usually entails answering their questions in the affirmative.

For example:

PC: Is this storm queen a giant, like you?

Grunf: Uh, yeah.

PC: A hill giant?

Grunf: Yeah. Uh huh.

PC: But she is some kind of master of storms?

Grunf: Hmm. Yeah. That's right.

PC: So then, she's maybe a storm giant?

Grunf: Oh, yeah. That one.

PC: Which is it?

Grunf: Uh, that one.

PC: Which one?

Grunf: The right one?

Eventually, someone points inquisitive PCs in the direction of local sage Thedan Nammass, a man living outside the city in a house full of books.

THE SAGE

Thedan Nammass (LG male human wizard3/expert6) is a sage who lives in the hills just outside of Jol. His home is a small log cabin with a thatched roof. As the PCs approach, the smell of freshly baked bread greets them. Thedan is tall and remarkably thin, with overlarge features—ears, chin, and nose. Despite being no charmer in the looks department, he's an affable, warm, and sincerely charming guy, perhaps all the more surprising considering he's a scholar who lives by himself and spends almost all of his time alone.

Thedan's passion is history. He's no stranger to natural sciences, however, and the odd changes in the weather haven't escaped his notice. On the contrary, it's made him spend the last week conducting research to find out whether anything like it has happened before. He has concluded that it hasn't, but based on some interesting things he has turned up in his research, he has developed a theory about the weather anyway.

He welcomes the PCs into his house, a homey place crammed with books, scrolls, and manuscripts. If a PC mentions the books, he'll say with a wink, "well, it was either my wife or my books. I had to get rid of something." In truth, however, Thedan's never been married.

Thedan offers the PCs some tea, and—if they express interest—some freshly baked rolls. If they ask him about the giant attacks, he says that he doesn't know much about them, but that he can try to do some research.

He's also never heard of anyone calling themselves the "Storm Queen," although he's intrigued by the name considering recent meteorological events. He tells them that he's been spending all of his time researching the strange weather. If they ask him about that, he has a lot more to say.

Thedan can tell the PCs that he thinks the strange weather is linked to a sort of ritual keyed to a mysterious jewel called the *orb beyond*. The *orb beyond* is a large gem from another world tied metaphysically to the spirits of those who have died wrongly but whose names are now forgotten by all remaining alive. Called the Pale Ones, these are the hungry, angry spirits of those who cannot be avenged, but forever seek vengeance (see the sidebar on the next page). The orb slips from world to world of its own volition, enabling the creation of doorways through which the Pale Ones can travel. To use it, one need not be a spellcaster. However, the *orb beyond* is drawn only to those who seek revenge.

The ritual in question, he explains, tears a hole in the world. It's a process without finesse, and it must be done in a locale with some significance to the creator. For example, a human might create a hole in a city, a fey might tear a hole in the forest, an efreeti might tear a hole in a volcano. He believes that because the weather is being disrupted, the hole is high in the sky. However, he doesn't know if this is linked to the PCs' "Storm Queen."

Thedan asks for no payment for this information. If the PCs ignore the issue of payment, or it never comes up because they're entirely focused on giants, he promises to do some research for them for his standard rate (5 gp/day). He asks for a few days to work on this research.

Even after a few days, however, Thedan finds that there is no historical reference for anyone called the Storm Queen (it's a title Verakas has just given herself recently). However, he is convinced that whoever she is, she is a creature of the sky, interested in vengeance, and in possession of the *orb beyond*. He advises the PCs to look to the sky for specific disturbances.



THEDAN

If the PCs happened to ask him to look into Zoarth's background and history, however, he can (after at least 2 days of research) provide them with a few intriguing details, gleaned from an obscure text on giants and dragons of importance: Zoarth apparently once lived with a cloud giant "bird maven" named Verakas far to the south. During this time, Verakas seems to have died under mysterious circumstances. Although no one knows what happened for sure, all of Verakas's birds were apparently killed and eaten by a large number of cats. Zoarth told others that Verakas died of a mysterious ailment, but no one ever saw a body.

This should be a clue to the PCs regarding who the Storm Queen is, and what her motives might be.

WEATHER AMOK

While the PCs conduct their research and investigation in Jol, it becomes clear that the rumors about the strange weather are true. At some point during their stay, a bizarre storm comes out of nowhere. Dark clouds gather rapidly and fill the sky. Amid fierce winds and frequently lightning strikes, it begins to rain—but what falls isn't water.

What falls from the sky is a strange reddish gelatinous goo that comes down in fist-sized clumps. It's soft enough that it doesn't inflict any real damage, although people struck by the goo report feeling a little ill—they tell of immediate muscle aches and a general feeling of sluggishness.

After just 30 seconds or so, the rain turns to real water. All characters should now attempt Perception checks (DC 15). Those who succeed notice that the globs of goo move slowly across the cobblestones of the street or the rooftops upon which they fell. When two clumps meet, they join to form a larger one. A minute later, all of the PCs can see (without making a Perception check) that there are fewer, but larger, gobs of the stuff around. It's time for PCs to attempt Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks (DC 15). Anyone succeeding realizes that the slimy bits of goo are forming into creatures very much like the normally subterranean gelatinous cubes.

As they're not shaped by years of sliding down square corridors and along walls, these things do not take a cubic



ORB OF STORMS



shape. Rather, they're amorphous blobs. They're also not transparent—they're translucent red. Other than that, though, they're just nasty gelatinous cubes.

It takes another 3 rounds for the blobs to fully form. Once they do, however, they begin moving around the city, looking for food. There are 12 creatures in all, spread out all over Jol. Fortunately for the inhabitants of Jol, they're fairly slow. Most people can just run from them. Those in trouble are the ones who the creatures corner in an alley or inside a building before the inhabitants can close the door to keep them out.

Initially, the PCs should face two of these things at once, with another menacing local folk within sight just down the street.

In this first engagement, it's not a matter of whether the PCs can destroy their foes, it's how fast they are able to do so. If the PCs don't slay the third monstrosity within 3 rounds, a woman who tripped while trying to run away from it is engulfed and paralyzed; she'll be dead in 2 more rounds.

GELATINOUS BLOBS (12) **CR 4**
XP 1,200 each
 Advanced gelatinous cubes (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 138, 294)
 hp 58 each

Fighting in the raging storm is difficult. All attack rolls and Strength-, Dexterity-, or Constitution-based checks suffer a -2 penalty. Only the "cubes" are immune to the weather's effect.

Ultimately, even with the storm, it shouldn't be that hard for the PCs to run around the city slaying the gelatinous blobs. For PCs of this level, the creatures aren't too much of a challenge, even with the advanced creature template. Unless the PCs can figure out a way to get them all very quickly, you can assume that at least four oozes are slain by the city's watch or other heroic, lower-level characters who happen to be present at the time.

After an initial encounter or two, you may be tempted to simply hand-wave the rest of the fights, assuming that the PCs will be victorious. The point here isn't to present a serious challenge for the PCs—it's more the horror of the thought that "it's raining gelatinous cubes!" This is also a good opportunity for the PCs to really show their stuff in front of an audience of NPCs. Lastly, some PCs might worry about what will happen if these dangerous and weird weather patterns continue. What if they spread? What if the PCs aren't around the next time? Something's got to be done.

After the storm, when the threat has been dealt with, the PCs are lauded as heroes and treated to more free meals and drinks than they could possibly consume. The saved city folk don't have a lot more they can reward

The Pale Ones

Spirits of those who died with unfinished deeds or revenge in their hearts, whose names, tasks, and desires are now forgotten, the Pale Ones exist restlessly outside the mortal world. If given the opportunity to return, they do so not as undead creatures but a pearlescent ectoplasm, for they do not have the power or the presence to maintain any other form.

In this form, they cannot take any physical action. They can provide power (if the proper rituals were conducted beforehand), or they can attempt to possess a living creature they touch. Even if they do possess a body, their will is weak and no longer accustomed to controlling a body. However, usually not just one Pale One spirit, but rather dozens, inhabit the body, all with conflicting and confused motives. Thus, those possessed act as though mad or fall into an almost catatonic state. The Pale Ones, then, are more about desire than action, at least at first. Eventually, if allowed to exist in the world for a long period, the strongest and most willful among them are able to form themselves into ghosts attempting to right the wrongs they perceived when they died, but of course it's likely that years if not centuries (or longer) have passed. And they might not even be in the correct world. This disconnect, however, can make for particularly angry and dangerous undead spirits.

Fortunately, the ectoplasmic form of the Pale Ones is vulnerable to certain attacks (see area **B2** on page 25).

them with beyond hospitality, however (though you may want to use this opportunity to add a plot hook for a later adventure, perhaps with a wealthy merchant or notable city official).

A SPY IN THEIR MIDST

Verakas is extremely intelligent. She knows that the creation of the rent in the sky is going to attract unwanted attention, and that the humans in the area—few as they are—are likely to attempt to take some kind of action, but she doesn't know what. Because Jol is the only major settlement in the area, the giant has planted a spy in the city to keep her eyes and ears open for any kind of talk about anything related to Verakas or her plans. This spy is Nashatha, a female cloud giant wearing a *greater hat of disguise* in the form of a leather headscarf. Nashatha has been playing the role of a merchant for the last few weeks, selling minor trinkets and jewelry from a cart. In this guise, she easily learns most of what's going on in the small community.

When Nashatha hears that there are visiting adventurers asking questions—particularly about the weather, giants, or ancient magic—she knows she must

get word to Verakas. This is accomplished not by spells or anything so grand, but by the mundane method of using carrier pigeons, creatures for which Verakas has always had a special affinity. She has a pair of the birds in cages in her cart.

Once Nashatha sends off the message to Verakas, she follows the PCs in her human guise. The PCs may very well notice the woman following them. If they confront her, she'll just pretend to be the local busybody intrigued by the newcomers. She's not much at bluffing (Bluff +1), but she's fairly diplomatic (Diplomacy +9), so she'll try to be quaintly charming rather than convincing.

If she must, Nashatha reveals herself as a giant and attacks. She's no slouch in combat—Verakas sent one of her most capable allies to work as a spy.

NASHATHA **CR 12**

XP 19,200

Advanced cloud giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 147, 294)

hp 200

Gear Huge chain shirt, Huge morningstar, *greater hat of disguise* (see page 30), bag with 399 gp and 935 sp

STORM QUEEN'S MINIONS ATTACK!

It takes about 4 hours for Verakas to get the message from Nashatha, and a few more for her to contemplate her next move. Eventually, Verakas sends word to her allies on the ground near Jol, who send two spirit nagas and two armored hill giants to attack the party. It takes at least another 6 hours for these minions to get the message, mobilize, and get into position, so at the very earliest the attack

comes 12 hours after the PCs start their investigation in Jol. It could come as much as 24–48 hours later, however, depending on circumstances.

They would prefer to attack the PCs while they are outside of Jol to avoid getting others involved—not that they're concerned about sparing the lives of commonfolk, but they know their job would be more difficult if they have to fight city guards at the same time. Perhaps, if the timing works out, they attack as the PCs make their way to or from Thedan's cabin. Otherwise, they confront the PCs past the edge of the city, out in the open as much as possible, even if it means they must wait for their targets for hours. When the attack occurs, read the following.

Two black-scaled serpents with female faces writhe into view, each guarded by a massive, armored humanoid. The squamous flesh of these creatures is punctuated by lines of red runic tattoos that run down the considerable length of their bodies. The giant warriors, girded in glistening steel armor inlaid with intricate gold patterns, wield massive halberds, likewise adorned. One of the witch serpents rasps: "This warning is both the first and the final word you little ones shall receive from the Storm Queen. Those who even contemplate crossing her die swiftly. She has no room for mercy in her heart—only vengeance!"

The hill giants wear full plate made of steel inlaid with intricate patterns of gold rather than their traditional simple hide armor. Each wields a massive masterwork halberd also adorned with gold patterns.

SPIRIT NAGAS (2) **CR 9**

XP 6,400 each

hp 95 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 213)

JURN HILL GIANTS (2) **CR 7**

XP 3,200 each

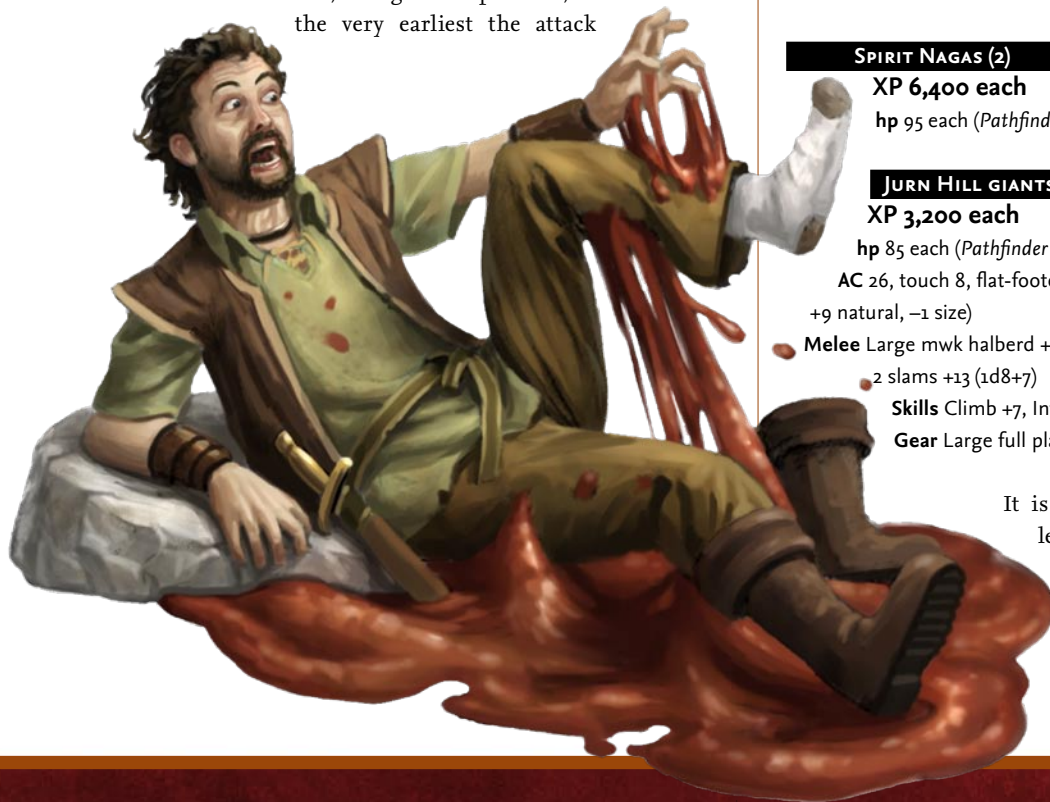
hp 85 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (+9 armor, –1 Dex, +9 natural, –1 size)

- **Melee** Large mwk halberd +15/+10 (2d8+10) or
- 2 slams +13 (1d8+7)

Skills Climb +7, Intimidate +12, Perception +6

Gear Large full plate, Large masterwork halberd



It is possible that the PCs could leave Jol so stealthily or quickly (for example, by teleporting) that the Storm Queen's strike force does not reach them in time or is never in a position to attack. In this case,



these foes stay near Jol to cause trouble at a later date or to attack the PCs should they need to retreat back to the city before ultimately dealing with the Storm Queen.

PART 4: THE HOLE IN THE HEAVENS

Once the PCs have recovered from the attack of the Storm Queen's minions, they're likely going to want to take the fight to her. Fortunately, with Thedan's words in mind, it should be obvious where they need to go: a massive thunderhead rumbles in the sky, with flares of lightning stabbing the darkness the storm brings. A Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) can confirm that this is no ordinary or natural storm; just about anyone in Jol can confirm this verdict based on years of experience with the local weather. After their experience in Zoarth's castle, it should not be a huge leap for the players to consider that their foe—who calls herself the Storm Queen, no less—has some kind of home or lair inside the massive cloud. If there is doubt, however, over the next few hours people begin seeing a handful of giants astride massive raptors (rocs) flying into and out of the cloud.

GAINING ALTITUDE

The Storm Queen's floating barge is about 4,000 feet in the air, inside the lower portion of the thunderhead (which is itself miles in height). The PCs have many options for getting there.

Flying Magic: *Overland flight* is very likely the safest option, although a *fly* spell cast by a PC probably gets them where they need to go, but perhaps only just barely (at 11th level, a caster using this spell could move 6,600 feet, or 4,400 if armor or encumbrance is an issue). A *potion of fly*, however, probably won't; cast at 5th level, the potion may allow the drinker to reach 3,000 feet before it runs out, though the character could always drink another potion to extend the journey. It's also worth noting that at these heights, the fail-safe built into the *fly* spell (allowing the target to float downward 60 feet per round for 1d6 rounds) isn't going to help.

Flying Mounts: This might be the best option, if for no other reason than that it's fun and visually pleasing. Obtaining such mounts can be tricky, but it's possible—perhaps by using enchantment magic on a flying creature, calling a flying outsider to carry the PCs, or enlisting the aid of a local druid named Xeruit.

Nish Baranbos: The halfling wizard of Jol has two *scrolls of fly* and one of *overland flight*. If the PCs helped save the city from the gelatinous rain, she is willing to sell these to the PCs for half price.

Teleportation: Teleporting (presumably after managing to successfully scry Verakas) into a storm cloud thousands of feet in the air is about as foolhardy a thing as one could try, considering that an off-target result likely implies

a very long fall. If the PCs try it and manage to pull it off, good for them! Unfortunately, it doesn't change the climactic encounter all that much whether the PCs fly to it or transport themselves instantaneously.

Transformation: Whether through *beast shape*, *polymorph*, wild shape, or similar magic, transforming into a flying creature may allow PCs to reach the barge, but it likely has the same duration issue as the *fly* spell, so the chosen shape had better be a fast bird or bat.

Xeruit the Druid: PCs who have endeared themselves to the people of Jol have no trouble learning about a druid in the nearby Grungir Forest named **Xeruit** (N male half-elf druid 8) from the locals. Xeruit comes to Jol from time to time, and everyone there knows that he has devoted his life to shepherding a flock of griffons. If the PCs go to speak with Xeruit and explain that they are going to confront the agency behind the weather disruptions, he entrusts a griffon mount to each of them. If they cannot ride well, he shows them how to at least strap themselves into the saddle so they won't fall off in mid-flight.

GRIFFON (1 PER PC) CR —
XP —
 hp 42 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 168)

INTO THE STORM CLOUD [CR 12]

Flying into the storm cloud presents three challenges beyond simply navigating through it successfully to find the Storm Queen in the darkness.

The first challenge comes in the form of lightning strikes. At varying times, each PC should have to deal with a 10d6 lightning bolt. Unlike with similar spells, however, the Reflex save each PC must make (DC 20) is not for half damage, but is an all-or-nothing proposition. Randomly determine which PC must make a save, with one or two potentially facing the danger multiple times, but each PC should have to attempt the saving throw at least once during the journey.

The second challenge is Verakas's flying guardians. Patrols of two hill giants (conscripted from the Jurn tribe and outfitted with better gear) mounted on rocs fly through the cloud. Each roc wears a medallion that keeps it and its rider from being struck by lightning bolts from the cloud. The amulet is magical (faint aura of abjuration, CL 5), but it only affects lightning bolts from this specific cloud and does not provide any protection against other electrical attacks. The PCs may find some use in these items, but they have no long-term value.

The PCs certainly run afoul of one such patrol on their way to find Verakas. Combat within the cloud—random lightning bolts aside—presents some difficulties. Visibility is only about 100 feet, which means that it is

easy for a foe to swoop out of the cloud and attack with surprise, even when mounted on a giant bird.

If the PCs spend too much time wandering about the cloud, they may encounter the third challenge: Elactrialis, the blue dragon (see area **B1**), which is taking a quick jaunt around the cloud.

JURN HILL GIANTS (2) CR 7

XP 3,200 each

hp 85 each (see page 23; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 150)

AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (+9 armor, -1 Dex, +9 natural, -1 size)

Melee Large mwk halberd +15/+10 (2d8+10) or

2 slams +13 (1d8+7)

Ranged rock +6 (1d8+10)

Feats Cleave, Martial Weapon Proficiency (halberd), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Ride), Weapon Focus (halberd)

Skills Intimidate +2, Perception +6, Ride +4

TACTICS

During Combat The giants normally allow the rocs to set their own casual flying pace (a single move of 80 feet each turn), which allows the giant to throw one rock per turn without an attack penalty. If the PCs seem especially dangerous, the giants have the rocs fly faster (a double move for a total of 160 feet per turn), though this means the giants have a -4 penalty on hitting with their rock attacks. The giants throw rocks at the PCs; they aren't smart enough to target the PCs' mounts (if any) unless the PCs target the rocs instead of the giants. If they are feeling confident, the giants urge their rocs to attack the PCs (a DC 10 Ride check as a free action each turn). Each giant then makes one melee attack per turn against his mount's target.

Morale If a giant is reduced to 30 or fewer hit points or his mount is reduced to 50 or fewer hit points, he directs his mount to fly away using the run action (320 feet per turn).

Gear Large masterwork full plate, Large masterwork halberd, sack of 12 throwing rocks

COMBAT-TRAINED ROCS (2) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 120 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 236)

VERAKAS'S FLOATING BARGE

Using primal magic and ancient secrets discovered thanks to the *orb beyond*, Verakas has rent asunder the sky above Jol, creating a hole through which the essence of the Pale Ones pours forth. With cloud giant theurgy she learned from Zoarth, she has fashioned a floating barge of oak, mithral, and gold to float beneath the fissure and collect the pale ectoplasm.

The rift drifts slowly with the thundercloud around it, and the barge has been created to do the same. However, most of the time this movement is so slow as to be unnoticeable.

The entire upper structure of the barge centers around a massive, gold-rimmed pool that collects the essence of the Pale Ones. The barge's underside provides some space for rocs and other flying servants to roost. It's worth noting, however, that the barge isn't a dwelling. Verakas has no real permanent home. She has spent all of her resources creating this barge and putting her plan into motion.

Verakas plans to bathe in the Pale Ones' essence for at least a full day, while the storm intensifies and becomes truly dangerous. This process ensures that the powers she gains are permanent. Then she plans to use the barge, her servants, and the storm itself to hunt down Zoarth for his final destruction.

B1. THE BARGE UNDERSIDE [CR 9]

The PCs almost certainly approach the barge from the underside. A scaffold-like lattice of supports and platforms lies beneath the barge's main structure, initially used while the structure was being built. The platforms are large enough for a roc to roost on, and they are connected by 5-foot-wide catwalks for others to navigate. Currently, the only inhabitant here is Elactrialis, a young blue dragon that Verakas has befriended. The dragon attacks any intruders that she sees.

ELACTRIALIS, YOUNG BLUE DRAGON CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 95 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 94)

TACTICS

During Combat: The dragon uses both the open air around the barge and the configuration of the barge's underside to her advantage. She attempts to single out weaker members of the group, isolate them, and slay them first.

Morale: Elactrialis does not fight to the death. If reduced to fewer than 40 hit points, she flies off, never to return (blue dragons are not loyal friends).

Treasure: Elactrialis has stashed a hoard in three chests located on one of the platforms. Each is equipped with a sort of sling so that a dragon could easily carry it slung onto her back. Each of the chests is locked, but the mechanism is a combination lock rather than a more typical key lock. They are devilishly difficult to open without the combination, but anyone with the skill can try (Disable Device DC 34).

The first chest contains 5,105 gp.

The second contains 5,041 sp and a cloth of gold bag (worth 80 gp) containing 100 miscellaneous gems (each worth 50 gp).

The third contains 2,960 gp, a golden trumpet (worth 150 gp), a jewel-studded belt (worth 450 gp), a gold statue of a dwarven warrior (worth 300 gp), and a necklace of gold and emeralds (worth 1,800 gp).



Since Verakas has spent everything she had on her scheme, these chests are as close to a final treasure hoard as the PCs are going to get.

B2. THE POOL OF PALE ECTOPLASM [CR 14]

When the PCs arrive at the top of the barge, Verakas is literally bathing in the pool. She stands, the essence of the Pale Ones clinging to her like a suit of armor made of liquid ghosts, to greet the intruders.

A structure of wood, mithral, and gold, almost one hundred fifty feet long and over fifty feet wide, floats beneath what appears to be a wound in the sky itself, as though someone has pierced it from “the other side”—whatever that might mean. A thin stream of liquid drops down out of the sky into a gold-rimmed pool at the center of the floating structure. The substance at first seems like milk, but a more careful look reveals that quasi-human forms can be seen within it,

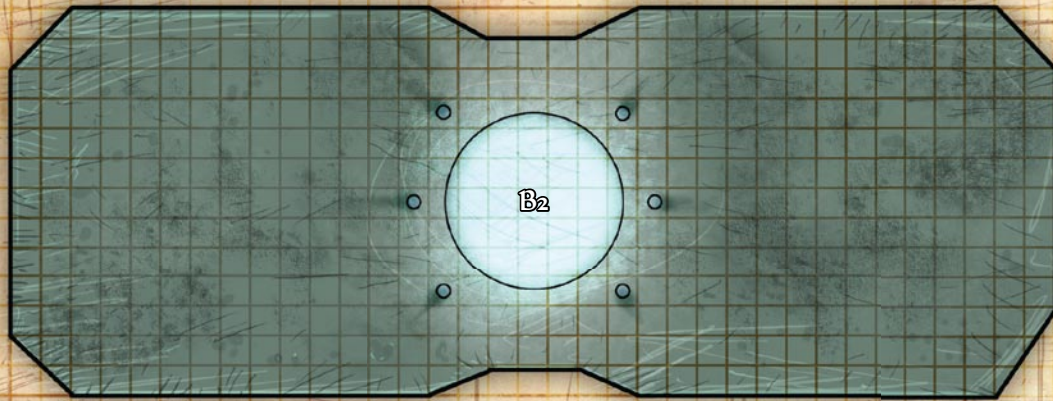
as just for a moment a bit takes on the shape of a face or a hand clenched in a fist, and then fades back into liquid. A female cloud giant stands in the pool of thick, pearlescent white fluid as it undulates with a will—or wills—of its own.

Faces of ancient warriors scowl and moan as they seep off of her massive form. She says, “So Zoarth has sent his lackeys all the way here. Even now he cannot confront me directly. Mayhaps I will let one of you live to carry back a message—a warning of his too-long-delayed demise.”

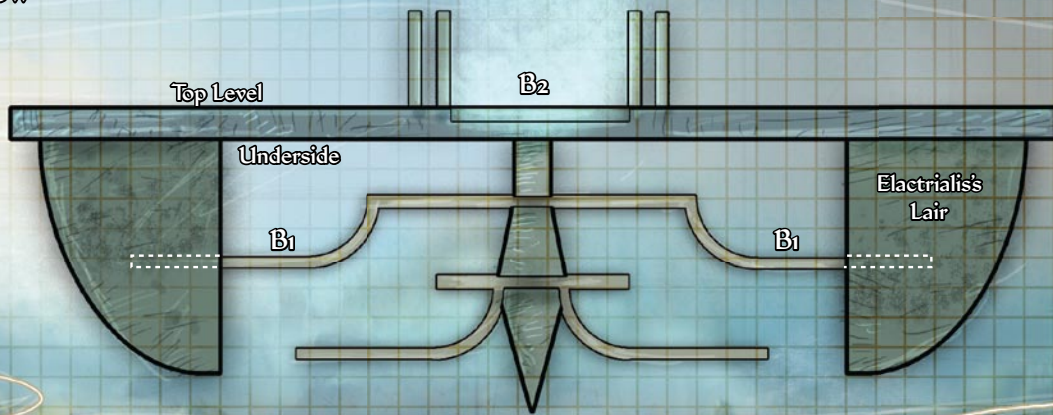
Hazards: Throughout the battle, the storm winds intensify. After the third round, the wind reaches severe strength (50 mph, –4 ranged attack penalty, Small creatures may be checked, Tiny creatures may be blown away, Fly checks suffer a –4 penalty, see page 439 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*). Verakas’s ranged attacks are considered to be the equivalent of siege weapons and are not affected. Each round after the first, a random character (PC or NPC) and all who are adjacent encounter

Verakas's Barge

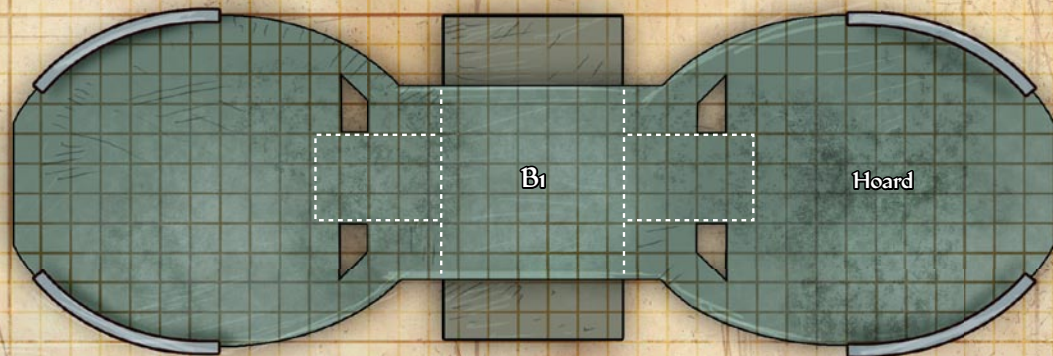
Top Level



Side View



Underside



One square = 5 feet

N



a gust of hurricane strength (75 mph, ranged attacks are impossible, Verakas's ranged attacks suffer a -4 penalty, Large creatures may be checked, Medium may be blown away, Fly checks suffer a -12 penalty, see page 439 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*).

Verakas has gained several abilities due to her exposure to the ectoplasm of the Pale Ones (see the Special Abilities section of her stat block); destroying the ectoplasm can make the battle against her go much easier. The ectoplasm only takes damage from channeled energy, divine energy damage (such as from *flame strike*), and magical fire. The material coating the cloud giant has 50 hit points; the ectoplasm in the pool has 100 hit points. Attacks against Verakas that use positive energy, holy damage, or magical fire automatically damage the ectoplasm coating her (though channeling positive energy heals Verakas herself just as it does any living creature). A PC can use these kinds of attacks as readied actions against her throwing ectoplasm; doing so automatically destroys the thrown ectoplasm in addition to the PC's attack's normal effect. If the ectoplasm coating Verakas is destroyed, she loses all of the abilities she gains from it, although she can re-coat herself by entering the pool and spending a standard action to apply more ectoplasm to her body. Spells like *dismissal* or *banishment* can send the ectoplasm away from this plane, although it is treated as a 20 HD creature with a Will save bonus of +12.

VERAKAS CR 13

XP 25,600

NE Pale One-enhanced advanced cloud giant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 147, 294)

hp 256

AC 33, touch 15, flat-footed 30 (+4 armor, +4 deflection, +3 Dex, +14 natural, -2 size)

Immune enchantment; SR 22

Melee Huge +2 greatsword +26/+21/+16 (4d6+20) or 2 slams +22 (2d6+14 + 1d4 Con drain)

Ranged ectoplasm +13 ranged touch (3d6 negative energy plus possession) or rock +14 (2d6+20)

TACTICS

During Combat: When combat with Verakas starts, the dragon Elactrialis comes to help the giantess (assuming she hasn't fled the barge already); she still flees if reduced to 40 hit points or below. Verakas is likely to spend the first few rounds throwing the ectoplasmic essence of the Pale Ones at her opponents, hoping to sow dissent and confusion. She is not afraid of taking up her greatsword and wading into battle. For the duration of the battle, she talks while she fights (see sidebar on page 28); in her rage, she gives away the final pieces of the puzzle as to what's really going on. Four rounds into the battle, two rocs come flying in to help her fight. Verakas fights either to the death, or until she is convinced to surrender by the PCs.

Gear Huge +2 chain shirt, Huge +2 greatsword, gold and ruby bracelet (1,200 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pale One Enhancements (Su) The essence of the Pale Ones grants Verakas a +4 deflection bonus to AC, SR 22, and immunity enchantment effects. Anyone touching Verakas or striking her with a natural weapon must make a DC 20 Fortitude saving throw or suffer 1d4 points of Constitution drain. This is also true of anyone she touches, including with slam attacks. While in the pool, Verakas can hurl giant-sized handfuls of the essence as a ranged touch attack with a range of 100 feet.

Possession (Su) Any creature struck by Verakas's hurled ectoplasm must make a Will saving throw (DC 20) or become temporarily possessed by one or more of the spirits within the essence. A possessed creature gains the confused condition while the spirits within it war for control. If the "act normally" result comes up on the *confusion* table, the creature can spend a full-round action to successfully cast out the possessing spirits; otherwise it can attempt a new saving throw every round (even if confused) to cast them out.

ROCS (2) CR 9

XP 6,400 each

hp 120 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 236)

TACTICS

Morale These animals are loyal to Verakas; she has always had an affinity with birds, and these great creatures gladly lay down their lives to aid her.



VERAKAS

Verakas's Speech

Faced with the "minions" of her betrayer, she can't help but rage at the PCs.

With each mighty swing of her massive greatsword, the Storm Queen shouts with rage. "So after all this time, Zoarth can't even come here on his own? Did those cats send you here? When I am done dealing with you, I will get my revenge upon him and those damned cats! Did he tell you that he left me for dead? That I loved him, and he let those cats destroy all I had worked for? That they would have killed me if I had only been a bit weaker? Did he tell you that? Those cats seeped into our lives from Hell itself, and he chose them over me. We had a life! But it didn't mean anything to Zoarth. So now, I will destroy him!"

REDEEMING VERAKAS

It is possible that the PCs won't want to slay Verakas once they hear her story—she's ultimately the wronged party here. However, she's clearly used all the wrong methods, made some very unsavory allies, and committed some truly evil acts.

The first thing the PCs need to do is to convince her that they recognize she was wronged. Being sympathetic to her plight goes a long way to winning her over, and she's so self-absorbed right now that she's very open to people telling her what she wants to hear and agreeing with what she already feels. No checks are needed at this point. If the PCs use this strategy and hold off their attacks, she also pauses, going on full defense to wait to hear what the PCs say next. Her allies—the rocs and the dragon—do not pause unless she tells them to, which she won't do until she is truly convinced by the PCs.

To get her to believe that they aren't just trying to trick her, the PCs need to make either Bluff or Diplomacy checks (depending on whether they're being honest or not). If they are bluffing, her Sense Motive bonus is only +4, but she gets an additional +11 bonus due to the circumstances and the influence of the Pale Ones whispering words of vengeance in her ears (for a total of +15). With Diplomacy, the DC is 26 since she is hostile. If they fail, Verakas begins attacking again. The PCs can continue to try to bluff or persuade her while they fight, but each subsequent attempt suffers a cumulative –1 penalty.

If the PCs are successful, they should next attempt to get her to understand and believe that what she's done is wrong. Verakas didn't start out evil—circumstances put her in this position. Her need for revenge blinded her. Obviously, this is probably the hardest part of this task. No Bluff checks are possible—this is pure persuasion. The DC is 31, but if the PCs succeeded on the previous check (to convince her to stop fighting) by 5 or more, the DC for this check is only 26. If successful, she breaks

down with remorse and tells her allies to stop fighting. If the PCs fail, she demands that they leave immediately and tell Zoarth that she's coming for him. If they don't, she begins attacking again.

Lastly, if the PCs truly seek to redeem her, they need to get her to attempt to right the wrongs she has committed. Again, this requires a Diplomacy check (DC 25). The only way this works, however, is if the PCs agree to go deal with Zoarth, either on their own or with her. During this time, if the dragon is present, she attacks the PCs against Verakas's wishes.

If this last check is successful, the giant agrees with them and immediately closes the rift with a wave of her hand. She promises to deal with the hill giants (if necessary), but immediately holds the PCs to their promise to go to Zoarth's castle. She demands that he apologize to her and thus begin to right the wrongs he has committed. She will accompany them unless they suggest otherwise (and knowing how volatile she still is, that may be wise).

If the last check is not successful, she agrees to close the hole in the sky only if the PCs go slay Zoarth themselves. She accepts that what she has done is evil, but won't consider any action until Zoarth is dead. If they do not agree, she continues with her original plan; the only difference is that she is filled with despair as well as hatred.

In all of these checks, the GM is encouraged to allow the PCs to work together, and to grant bonuses if the players actually make convincing arguments in addition to simply rolling the dice. Play this out as dramatically as possible. If desired, the GM can forgo the checks altogether and simply make this a roleplaying issue.

CLOSING THE RIFT

If the PCs must repair the rift in the sky on their own, the following options exist:

- *Dispel magic* (the rift has a CL of 15)
- *Dimensional anchor*, *dismissal*, or *hallow* if the caster can make a DC 25 caster level check
- *Antimagic field*, *banishment*, *forbiddance*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* work automatically
- Characters using channel energy focused on the rent must inflict 30 points of damage in a single round to close the hole (multiple characters using channel energy in the same round all count toward this total)

With the rift closed, the pool of ectoplasm fades and the storm cloud's fury turns to gentle rain and dissipates in a few hours. The strange and destructive weather around Jol comes to an end.

BACK ON THE GROUND

If the riven sky is healed, Jol is safe from further storms. The people are quite grateful and offer the PCs free food and lodging for as long as they desire to stay. If the hole in



the sky is still open, the storms continue to rage, getting stronger and stranger until the entire area is scoured, a blasted wasteland where nothing can live.

PART 5: RETURNING TO ZOARTH

Knowing what they now potentially know about Zoarth, the PCs need to decide whether to work with him or not. Ultimately, it was his betrayal that caused all of this trouble to begin with. He's not a good guy, although they never really had the opportunity to find that out when they met him (they saw him at his best). That said, they may not care. Self-serving PCs, or ones who ended up hating Verakas despite her backstory (which isn't all that surprising, considering that she's not good either), may not concern themselves with the issues; they may just return to Zoarth, get his help with the needed ritual, and be done. And that's fine.

When they arrive, he of course wants to know what they discovered. Zoarth is very surprised to learn that it was

Verakas behind the attack against him. He's shocked, in fact, to learn that she's even alive. After all this time, however, he feels little in the way of remorse for his past actions, and instead ultimately regards news of Verakas with contempt.

If the PCs don't find that satisfying, they can attempt to make him feel guilty about what he's done. They can play on his past love for her, her devotion to him, and so on. A successful DC 25 Diplomacy check means that he suddenly regrets his past and wishes to apologize to Verakas (if such a thing is possible anymore).

If this happens, however, the cats begin to jump—seemingly playfully—all over Zoarth. Their hold on him is supernatural, and he recants any remorse. If the PCs attempt to harm or otherwise interfere with the cats, Zoarth attacks the PCs. In either case, he will not perform the ritual with them.

If Verakas is with the PCs, she rages and rants at the very sight of Zoarth, and demands that he must die in front of her. "He must die, just as he left me to die." If the

PCs aren't interested in fighting Zoarth, they'll have to use lots of reasoning and levelheaded words to calm her down (DC 25 Diplomacy check). If Verakas is there and is calm, the PCs gain a +3 bonus on Diplomacy checks to get Zoarth to apologize.

FIGHTING ZOARTH [CR 16]

If the PCs present any kind of a threat to him or his cats, Zoarth calls his last remaining guardian to help defend him. He calls it a layered golem. In effect, it is an iron golem inside a stone golem. When they see it, the PCs likely believe it to be a bulky, crudely carved stone golem. If the PCs fight it, with each blow that knocks away a bit of stone they uncover a bit of iron. When the stone golem is destroyed, all the stone is broken away, and a fully intact iron golem begins to attack them. To defeat the layered golem, the PCs must completely destroy both golems, in order.

STONE GOLEM

CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 107 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 163)

IRON GOLEM

CR 13

XP 25,600

hp 129 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 162)

Meanwhile, Zoarth himself uses his spells and *wand of lightning bolts* to defend himself (see page 10). He won't fight to the death unless he feels the cats might somehow be endangered. If he is clearly fighting a losing battle, he either attempts to escape with *dimension door* or begs for mercy.

If the PCs have Verakas with them, four of the strange cats in the castle transform into dire tigers and concentrate their attacks on her; they probably keep her busy for much of the encounter.

DIRE TIGERS (4)

CR 8

XP 4,800 each

hp 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 265)

CONCLUSION

Whether or not the PCs actually get a chance to perform the ritual needed to access the *Book of the Titan* is up to them. If they end up alienating or even killing Zoarth, they'll have to find a different giant mage to help them. If they end up helping Verakas, she helps them to find a giant mage who can assist them.

If Zoarth is dead and Verakas is alive, she claims his castle as repayment for his mistreatment of her. She pledges not to utilize the Pale Ones any longer (not that she could even if she wanted to), and not to work with evil creatures, either. Her alignment changes to neutral.

If Verakas is dead and Zoarth is alive, things return to relative normalcy. If both are dead, assume that the cloud giant magic supporting the castle eventually fails, and it comes crashing to the ground, with nothing remaining but a pile of rubble.

Assuming the rift is closed, the weather around Jol returns to normal. Otherwise, the inhabitants there have to try to hire adventurers to take care of this ongoing problem for them. Either way, if the rift is closed within a reasonable amount of time, the essence of the Pale Ones is too weak to sustain the spirits loosed into the world. They fade away harmlessly. Otherwise, soon there are literally many hundreds of new, vengeful ghosts roaming the area, stirring up all sorts of metaphysical trouble.

But what happened to the *orb beyond*? By the time the PCs got to Verakas, the orb had already moved on. Finding what kind of mischief it stirs up next could clearly lead to further adventures. The magic it provides not only allows for the opening of doorways, but also for mass possession, the haunting of locales, manipulating events, or anything else that might give the Pale Ones access to the world or some kind of revenge. All it needs is to find a willing creature lusting after vengeance of its own.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

These new items may be found in this adventure.

GREATER HAT OF DISGUISE

Aura faint illusion; CL 3rd

Slot head; Price 12,000 gp; Weight —

DESCRIPTION

Like a *hat of disguise*, this garment allows its wearer to alter her appearance. It functions as an *alter self* spell (as opposed to *disguise self*). The hat becomes a part of the disguise and can be a hat, a helmet, a headscarf, and so forth.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *alter self*; Cost 6,000 gp

IDOL OF THE EYE

Aura moderate divination; CL 9th

Slot none; Price 19,000 gp; Weight 5 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

This squat, golden idol looks like a bald, obese wise man with an extra eye in his forehead. It can be used once per day to gain information as with an *augury* spell, and once per day as a *divination* spell. Once per week, a single yes-or-no question can be asked of it (as with a *commune* spell). The answers do not come from a deity, but instead from insights granted by celestial movements and conjunctions; a sample insight might be, "Because Aballon and Eox are in conjunction in the House of the Eagle, the answer is yes."

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *augury*, *commune*, *divination*; Cost 9,500 gp



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Valeros

MALE HUMAN FIGHTER 10

ALIGN NG INIT +7 SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

20	STR
17	DEX
12	CON
13	INT
8	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 79

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 22

Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +4
(+3 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Melee +2 frost longsword +19/+14
(1d8+11 and 1d6 cold/17-20),
+1 short sword +17 (1d6+6/19-20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +10/+5
(1d8+3/x3)

Base Atk +10; CMB +15; CMD 29

SPECIAL QUALITIES
armor training 2, bravery +3, weapon
training (heavy blades +2, light blades +1)

SKILLS

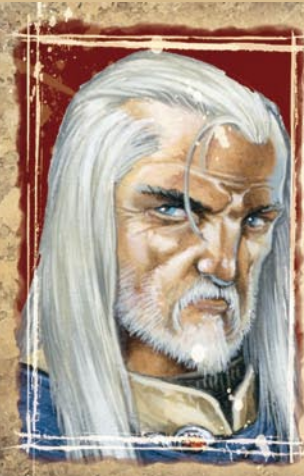
Climb	+18
Intimidate	+13
Perception	+9
Ride	+11
Swim	+13

FEATS

Combat Expertise, Greater Weapon
Focus (longsword), Greater Weapon
Focus (longsword), Imp. Critical
(longsword), Imp. Initiative, Power
Attack, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-
Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus
(longsword), Weapon Focus (short
sword), Weapon Spec. (longsword),
Weapon Spec. (short sword)



Combat Gear elixir of fire breath, potions of cure serious wounds (3), potion of resist energy (electricity); **Other Gear** +2 mithral breastplate, +1 composite longbow with 20 arrows, +2 frost longsword, +1 short sword, silver dagger, amulet of natural armor +2, belt of giant strength +4, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +1, backpack, lucky tankard, rations (6), silk rope, 275 gp



Ezren

MALE HUMAN WIZARD 10

ALIGN NG INIT +3 SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

11	STR
9	DEX
12	CON
24	INT
15	WIS
9	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 47

AC 16
touch 11, flat-footed 16

Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +11

Familiar Sneak (weasel)

Lang. Common, Draconic, Giant

SPELLS (CL 10TH, CONC. +17)

5th—cone of cold (2, DC 22), teleport
4th—dimension door (2), ice storm, stonikin
3rd—dispel magic, displacement, fireball (2, DC 20), fly
2nd—bear's endurance, invisibility (2), scorching
ray (2), web (DC 19)
1st—charm person (DC 18), grease (2, DC 18),
magic missile (2), shield
o (at will)—daze (DC 17), detect magic, light,
mage hand

SPECIAL ABILITIES

hand of the apprentice 10/day,
metamagic mastery 2/day

FEATS

Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Emp. Spell, Great
Fort., Greater Spell Penetration, Imp. Initiative,
Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration

OFFENSE

Melee cane +3 (1d6)
Ranged mwk light crossbow +3 (1d8/19-20)
Base Atk +5; CMB +5; CMD 16

SKILLS

Appraise	+20
Bluff	+9
Craft (alchemy)	+20
Fly	+12
Intimidate	+9
Knowledge (arcana)	+20
Knowledge (geography)	+20
Knowledge (history)	+20
Knowledge (planes)	+20
Perception	+12
Spellcraft	+20



Combat Gear potions of cure serious wounds (2), scrolls of dispel magic (2), wand of lightning bolt (CL 6th, 30 charges), wand of magic missile (CL 7th, 50 charges); **Other Gear** cane (as club), light crossbow with 20 bolts, dagger, amulet of natural armor +1, bracers of armor +4, cloak of resistance +2, headband of intellect +4, ring of protection +2, backpack, diamond dust (250 gp), pearls (2, each worth 100 gp), rations (6), scroll case, spell component pouch, spellbook, 325 gp



Merisiel

FEMALE ELF ROGUE 10

ALIGN CN INIT +10 SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

12	STR
23	DEX
12	CON
10	INT
13	WIS
10	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 58

AC 26
touch 19, flat-footed 19

Fort +4, Ref +13, Will +4
(+2 vs. enchantment)

Defensive Abilities evasion,
trap sense +3, uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Melee +2 keen rapier +16/+11 (1d6+5/15-20)
Ranged dagger +13/+8 (1d4+1/19-20)

Base Atk +7; CMB +8; CMD 27

Special Attacks: sneak attack +5d6

SPECIAL QUALITIES

immune to sleep, improved uncanny
dodge, low-light vision, rogue talents
(bleeding attack +4, defensive roll, finesse
rogue, resiliency, weapon training),
trapping +5

SKILLS

Acrobatics	+19
(jumping)	(+24)
Bluff	+13
Climb	+14
Disable Device	+19
Escape Artist	+19
Intimidate	+8
Perception	+16
Sleight of Hand	+19
Stealth	+24
Swim	+9

FEATS

Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility,
Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse,
Weapon Focus (rapier), Wind Stance



Combat Gear potions of cure serious wounds (2), potions of invisibility (2); **Other Gear** +3 shadow studded leather, +2 keen rapier, daggers (12), amulet of natural armor +1, belt of incredible of Dexterity +4, ring of jumping, ring of protection +2, masterwork thieves' tools, polished jade (worth 50 gp), 155 gp



Kyra

FEMALE HUMAN CLERIC OF SARENRAE 10

ALIGN NG INIT +3 SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

13	STR
8	DEX
14	CON
10	INT
23	WIS
12	CHA

DEFENSE

HP 68

AC 23
touch 11, flat-footed 23

Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +17

SPELLS (CL 10TH, CONC. +16)

5th—breath of life, dispel evil (DC 21), flame strike^P
(DC 21), summon monster V
4th—air walk, divine power (2), freedom of
movement, fire shield^P
3rd—daylight, dispel magic (2), remove disease,
searing light^P
2nd—aid (2), bull's strength, cure moderate
wounds^P, hold person (2, DC 18), resist energy
1st—command (DC 17), cure light wounds^P,
divine favor (2), sanctuary (DC 17), shield of faith (2)
o (at will)—create water, detect magic, light, mending
D Domain spell; **Domains** Healing, Sun

SPECIAL ABILITIES

channel positive energy 6/day (DC 16, 5d6 [+10 vs.
undead]), healer's blessing, nimbus of light (10
rounds/day), rebuke death 9/day (1d4+5)

OFFENSE

Melee +1 holy scimitar +10/+5
(1d6+2/18-20)

Base Atk +7; CMB +8; CMD 19

SKILLS

Diplomacy	+14
Heal	+19
Knowledge (religion)	+13
Perception	+11
Sense Motive	+14

FEATS

Combat Casting, Extra Channel,
Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Selective
Channeling, Weapon Focus (scimitar)



Combat Gear potion of cure serious wounds, potions of lesser restoration (3), wand of cure moderate wounds (50 charges), holy water (3); **Other Gear** +2 chainmail, +2 heavy steel shield, +1 holy scimitar, cloak of resistance +2, headband of inspired wisdom +4, ring of protection +2, backpack, gold holy symbol with continual flame (worth 300 gp), rations (6), 615 gp



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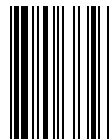
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