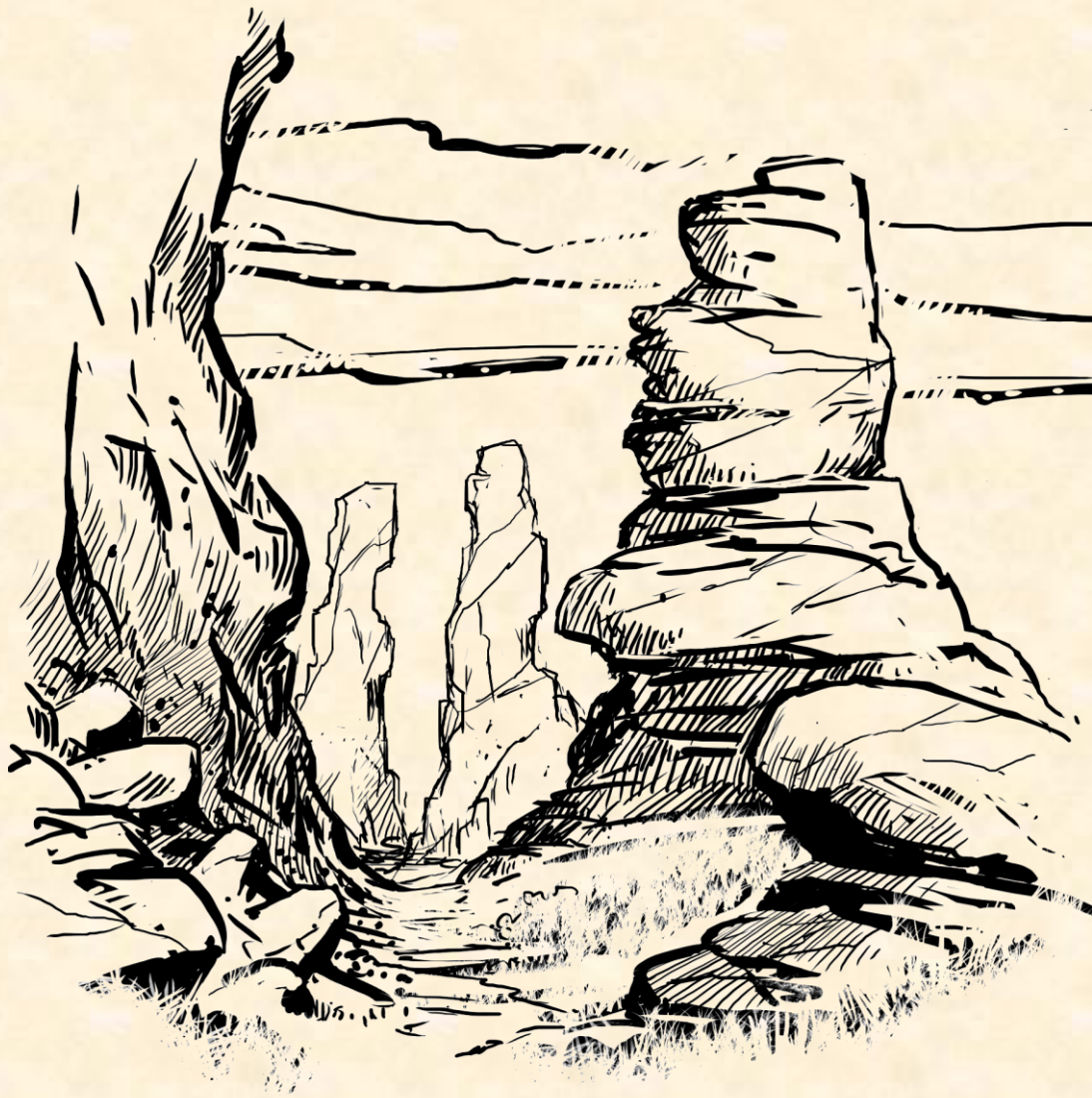




PILLAR PASS



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Rumours & Hooks:

A contingent of hill giants have descended from the high mountains and are lurking in the hills, causing trouble for nearby civilization. Workers from the local silver mine are refusing to go back to work until the giants are removed.

Rumour has it a band of giants from the high mountains have made camp two days trek from the mountain fortress of *Dol-Karok*. The Circle (the merchant masters of the city) want someone to meet with the giants and find out what they want.

Warning: This adventure framework includes a double cross while the adventurers are hip deep in angry hill giants. If the table is unlikely to enjoy such a twist, the GM might need to tweak things.

Stolen Goods

The *B'Yarg* hill giant clan has lived in the high mountains for centuries, largely keeping to themselves or skirmishing with rival giant and beastmen clans.

Recently however a thief named *Rupero* infiltrated their camp and stole their most sacred object: a horned skull pendant fashioned of mithril, hanging from an oversized gold chain. The pendant belongs to the tribe's chieftain, *Rogg*, as a sign of authority and divine power.

Hill giants have a sense of smell similar to bloodhounds (a little known fact, since few can get close enough to study them), able to detect scents up to 300 hours old. The tribe have possessed the pendant for so long that they can literally smell its fey metal tang, along with the spore of the thief.

They tracked the pendant and thief to the outskirts of *Dol-Karok*, and sent word to the Circle of their dilemma, demanding the return of both the pendant and thief (whom they intend to eat).

House Vorrox

House Vorrox, one of the five merchant houses on the Circle, has assumed control of the situation, but have no intention of handing over the pendant or the thief. *Milvara Vorrox*, third daughter of the House, hired *Rupero* (a member of the *Sumptown Alley* thieves guild) to steal the amulet for her.

Milvara has however concocted a scheme to resolve matters. She intends to hire some dupes to meet with the giants - ostensibly to offer them gifts and find out what they want - and report back to her. In reality she plans to offer the giants a replica pendant, plus one of the dupes as the "confessed" thief, confident the dull witted oafs will take both and go away.

To ensure success, *Milvara* is sending her trusted ambassador, *Virek*, an underhanded, but charismatic and engaging young lady, to execute the plan. In case the plan goes awry, *Virek* will be armed with a magical earring to enable her to turn invisible and escape (or so the pair believe).



House Vorrox offers the party 1,000 gp to accompany *Virek* as wilderness guides, guards and porters to the meeting. The cargo includes ale kegs, chests of hams, chickens, sturdy bowls and metal tools, and the replica pendant.

If asked why House Vorrox's own guards cannot attend to this important duty, Milvara explains that the mission is simply too volatile/dangerous for her guards, and she wants someone capable - but expendable - which is where the PCs come in.

Virek understands the risks, but is willing to go to better her career and standing with House Vorrox. If there is trouble, Milvara expects the giants are least likely to eat her (as the official ambassador).

Milvara is very up front about this being a business deal, with very real risks attached, and that a commensurate payment is on offer (considering it's only a few days work).

The meeting is scheduled to occur in three days time at *Pillar Pass* (a ravine studded with large hoodoo rock spires), about two days trek from the fortress city.



Uncovering the Plot

If the PCs ask around about the giants, they might learn (with a Cha (Information Gathering) check, and a few hours of ale rounds) that some giants have indeed been spotted in nearby mountains, causing local silver miners concern. A great success on the check reveals that the giants are after something that was stolen from them, which may or may not arouse suspicion as this isn't mentioned by Milvara.

Alternatively the PCs might uncover the plot during the two day trek. If anyone unlocks the chests (Virek has the key) and carefully studies the "mithril" pendant, an Int check at disadvantage (unless the examiner has a background in appraising or jewellery) reveals it to be a fake; merely a nickel/mithril coating, which was only recently crafted in the last few days.

Finally, at some point during the trek, Virek attempts to plant drops of Rupero's sweat on the clothes of one of the adventurers (hoping the giants will smell it, and infer that the PC is the thief). The sweat is contained in a perfume bottle with a puffer, which if examined, exudes the unpleasant smell of perspiration.

During her time with the adventurers, Virek tries to ingratiate herself with them. She is warm and friendly, cultivating the appearance of a city dweller unused to the wilderness. She inquires about the party's prior deeds and exploits, interested to hear their stories (and glean any bones of contention between party members).

If any of the party flirt with her, she reciprocates in an effort to build trust and plant the thief's spore. When the time comes to reveal the "confessed thief", Virek nominates whichever character she is closest to (or whoever she is most upset with, if there has been a confrontation).

Random Encounters

Unless the GM determines otherwise, check for random encounters three times in the day (morning, noon, afternoon) and night (evening, midnight, early morning). The chance of an encounter is generally 30%, unless the party is particularly stealthy or conspicuous. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d6:

- (1) 3d4 *Wolves* (LFG p.129) are prowling the area, looking for a meal. They will target the weakest member of the party. There is a 50% chance the pack is led by 1d3 *Dire Wolves* (LFG p.130)
- (2) 2d4 prospectors with 1d4+1 dogs (LFG p.114, 129) are passing through, looking for rivers to pan or new veins to chase. If

it is night they will be camped with a fire, and at least one sentry on duty.

- (3) 1d4+1 *Giant Eagles* (LFG p.106) are hunting here, their chicks hungry for food. They will be attracted to shiny metal humanoid.
- (4) An *Assassin* named *Loc* is tracking the party for some prior misdeed; hired for revenge, justice or to tie up loose ends. He has AC 14, Str/Con/Perc/Will 10, Dex 17, Int 15, Cha 14, HD: 7 (40 hp), Luck: 9. *Loc* has Backstab, Skirmisher and Finisher abilities like a 7th level rogue, *Off Turn Attacks*, and may use the following Tricks & Techniques (up to three times per combat): *Choking Dust*, *Hidden Blade*, *Rapid Dose*, *Smoke Bomb*, *Unseen Whip*, *Cat's Grace*. He carries dual swortswords (1d6+3), a light crossbow and 1d4 doses of poison at the GM's option.
- (5) 3d6 *Brigands* (LFG p.114) have claimed this area and extort a "toll" from all comers. If the bandits are driven off, they return to their hideout, before tracking the party with reinforcements (5d10 bandits with swords/knives/axes and bows).
- (6) 1d6 *Giant Scorpions* (LFG p.121) are scavenging from a nearby cave, and would gladly feast on some humans, their horses or hirelings. If the scorpions' den is searched, numerous humanoid corpses produce 1 x Carry Loot (LFG p.136).

Rogg is accompanied by 1d6+4 giants; a selection of his best hunters and the tribe's most fearless, bloodthirsty and overbearing brutes.

Hill Giants

Armor Class: 12

Hit Dice: 8+2

Attacks: Oversized Club (2d8+2)

Nat 19: special

S:20 D:8 C:15 I:6 P: 9 W:12 Ch:8

Luck: 9

Move: 40 ft

Giants hurl boulders, carts, barrels or humanoid creatures up to 120 ft for 3d6 damage. Hill giants have an acute sense of smell, gaining advantage on related checks. Rogg has the same statistics as the other giants, but has 57 hp and *Off Turn Attacks*.

When the meeting occurs, the giants are immediately suspicious. They listen while Virek offers the gifts and nominates one of the PCs as the thief - delivered to the giants "as agreed".



Of course, it all goes horribly wrong for Virek. The giants are initially confused about Rupero's scent, and might mistake the adventurer for the thief, but they have no doubt that the pendant "smells wrong" and fly into a rage, furious at the attempt to cheat them. Similarly, the party will probably be upset that Virek has betrayed them.

Unless the party is able to miraculously calm the situation, battle quickly erupts, with the giants

seeking to kill and devour all of the puny man things.

Virek takes the first opportunity to use her Earring of Invisibility (once per week, use an action to cast *Invisibility*). Whether she is killed before she gets the chance is another matter. If she does succeed in turning invisible, the ambassador immediately flees and attempts to make her way back to the safety of Dol-Karok.

Virek

Armor Class: 13 (leather)

Hit Dice: 2

Attacks: Dagger (1d4)

Nat 19: as weapon

S:12 D:15 C:11 I:10 P: 10 W:10 Ch:16

Luck: 5

Move: 30 ft

Virek has the Bard abilities Silver Tongued (Deception) and Bardic Knowledge, and is also a skilled outdoorswoman, gaining advantage on all Wilderness Lore related checks. In addition to her magic earring, she has 3 vials of alchemical scent blockers (imposes disad on tracking by scent, and scent dissipates much faster).

Treasure:

The adventurers might get their hands on Virek's magic earring, and the giants have 1 x Carry Loot (LFG p.136). Additionally, the Circle's gifts consist of food/ale worth 3d100 gp, 1 x Valuables (LFG p.147) and 1 x Trinkets & Curios (LFG p.141).

Aftermath

If the PCs survive, they might wish to chase Virek back to Dol-Karok, and/or confront their double crossing employer. Milvara for her part may or may not seek to tie up loose ends, at the GM's discretion. Either way, the events of Pillar Pass are likely to lead to further politics and schemes from House Vorrox, the adventurers, or both.

Without Rogg, the B'Yarg clan are likely to be kept busy deciding a new leader, and fending off attacks from rivals who seek to take advantage of their disarray. On the other hand, the killing of a giant chieftain might just unite the other clans, setting in motion a plan to destroy Dol-Karok entirely.



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