

A VALLEY IN PERIL



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THE WORLD

Monsters have always ruled Sarus. From the earliest days, our ancestors did barely more than survive, find shelter and risk their lives for the little food they could find. This was until the monolith was discovered. A giant, upright-standing rock. We don't know why, but monsters become disoriented and even blind and deaf when they come to close to it, but like a miracle, it does not affect us. Smaller creatures seem to feel it less, and for bigger monsters it seems outright impossible to get into its vicinity. It is here that we built our sanctuary, and it is here that, for the first time, we can do more than just survive.

The seasons are of special importance to us. Perion is our central star and she defines the main seasons: summer, fall, winter and spring. Elos is her brother and further away. He decides the second season: full, dark and rising or falling. In dark seasons, Perion hides Elos. It's generally colder and nights are completely dark. In full seasons, we are between Perion and Elos. It's generally hotter and no real nights occur due to the light of Elos. These nights are called twilights.

We don't know much about the world beyond the monolith. The effect of the monolith is weaker with distance. That's why the elders declared three zones. The Haven is the innermost zone, where no monster has ever been spotted and even our farm animals display confusion. The Extends are a much larger zone and are used as farm land to feed all of us. In contrast to the rather flat topography of the Haven, the Extends cover mountain ranges, lakes, and even a small part of a beach. But here, monsters sometimes appear and go rampage. Fortunately, the monolith still weakens them, and the people are used to hide in small bunkers until the monsters are driven back. Lastly, we have the Outsides, a region where monsters are not weakened enough. They can still feel the monolith there and are repelled, but when a monster attacks, it poses a real threat to everyone living there. It is not forbidden to live in the Outsides, but the elders make it clear that those lands are not under their protection; the people there are on their own.

The Heaven and the Extends are protected by the Guardians, a troop of elite soldiers tasked with bringing down the largest monsters that find their way into the Extends. Because they can't be everywhere at once, the extends are protected by outposts. Here smaller troops are tasked with fighting smaller monsters and calling for help in the case major monsters are sighted. This system has worked great so far.

Monsters entering the Extends are already disoriented enough that they can't specifically attack villages or people. Villages are only damaged seldomly and it is even rarer that a civilian dies.

THE PARTY

This module was created for 4 players at level 3. Alternatively, it can be played with 3 level 4 characters or 6 level 2 characters. It is recommended to have at least 1 frontline class since both fights are single, melee heavy creatures.

A NEW RUMOR

The party is part of a squad stationed in one of the outposts. This particular outpost is within a valley and guards the outer rim of the Extends. There are two villages nearby: Strix and Westmore. Even though both are only 2.5h apart by foot, Strix is located within the Extends while Westmore is already in the Outsides.

The outpost is lead by commander Joan Balent. She commands the party and two additional soldiers (stats of a Thug, MM. p. 350). She received news about a possible large monster sighting in Strix and sends the party to investigate.

JOAN BALENT

medium Human, Lawful neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 30

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

BACKGROUND

Joan has been working for the outposts all her life. This is her third outpost but the first she is leading. She is tersely, work oriented and works by the book.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Joan makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage two handed.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Arriving in Strix, the party needs to find the source of the rumor: the blacksmith Krax

(dwarf). He tells the party that he has seen a monster near the forest half way to Westmore, which lies exactly at the border of the Extends. According to him, the monster has caused fear for quite some time and is coming in and out of the Extends. In reality, it was not he who has seen the monster but his son Marak who lives in Westmore were the monster actually was sighted. He does not want to tell the party because he fears that they will not investigate the monster if they realise that it is in the Outsides.

THE HOSTILE CREATURES

The "Giant Boar" and the "Monster" are balanced to be a medium and a hard/deadly fight. If you want change the monsters, select a challenge 3 for the Giant Boar fight, a challenge 4 for the Monster within the Extends and a challenge 5 for the Monster in the Outsides.

The party can walk to the forest were they will encounter a giant boar. These are common beasts here and can't possibly be mistaken for a large monster. Looking around, the party will find traces of a bigger monster that recently passed by here, and the trail leads towards Westmore.

GIANT BOAR

large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 42

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Charge. If the boar moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with a tusk attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If the boar takes 10 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Tusk. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 2d6+3 slashing damage.

TROUBLE IN WESTMORE

Arriving in Westmore, the party can clearly see the damages of a monster attack. The village seems deserted and many buildings are damaged, but not destroyed yet. The people have hidden in underground bunkers and will swarm the party once they announce themselves. They tell of a terrible monster that attacked the village twice in the last two days and they are scared it would attack again soon. What's more, it seems less affected by the monolith than other monsters and was able to specifically attack the village. The party can investigate the scene. Depending on the quality of their search they can find hints about the strength, stats and attack pattern of the monster. They might also find its lair, which is a known-to-be-deserted cave further up in the mountains.

The party can return to Joan and inform her about these findings. If they decide to search and fight the monsters by themselves, jump to chapter "The Final Fight". Back in the outpost, Joan believes the party. Her plan is to send evacuation orders to Strix and Westmore but it would take more than a day before Westmore can be fully evacuated and more than two days for Strix because of the elderly people living there. Joan will send for help from the Guardians and set up a line of defense further down the valley. The party has now four options:

- Agree with Joan and go to the line of defence and wait there to fight the monster.

Monster: Has no lair actions, is weakened by the monolith and the party has help from Joan and the soldiers.

Consequences: Half the people of Westmore and Strix will be killed by the monster and both villages will be destroyed.
- Tell Joan that they want to help evacuate Strix, which Joan allows.

Monster: Has no lair actions and is weakened by the monolith.

Consequences: Half the people of Westmore will be killed and both villages will be destroyed.
- Ask Joan to protect Westmore during the evacuation. This requires very good persuasion skills or disobedience.

Monster: Has no lair actions.

Consequences: Westmore will be destroyed.
- Attack the monster in its lair. Joan will under no circumstances allow this.

Monster: At full strength.

Consequences: None.

THE FINAL FIGHT

The party have time to reach the place where they decide to fight roughly 30 minutes before the Monster attacks. It fights fiercely and is not confused by the monolith. As long as it is engaged with the party, it does not focus on bystanders but if the party is not engaged in combat with the monster, it will attack whatever possible. The monster never flees; it fights until death. Depending on where the party decides to fight, the monster will have different stats as stated in the stat block. In the Outsides, the monster profits from all [...] bonuses. The monster only has lair actions while inside its lair.

After the fight, and if the party followed Joan's orders, she congratulates the party's braveness and recommend them for promotion to the central city. If they did not follow Joan's order she scolds the party and tells them that their foolish behaviour could have cost them their lives. If at any point the party decides not to stop the monster, or are unable to do so (e.g. dying) the monster goes on a rampage through the Extends until eventually stopped by the Guardians several days later.

THE MONSTER

Large aberration, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15 [+2] (natural armor)

Hit Points 113 (11d10 + 53)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	11 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Deep Speech, can't speak

Challenge 4 [5]

Amphibious: The Monster can breathe air and water.

Sense Magic: The Monster senses magic within 120 feet of it at will. This trait otherwise works like the detect magic spell but isn't itself magical.

Lair action: On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the Monster can take a lair action to cause one of the following magical effects; the Monster can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- The Monster sprints towards a creature, requiring no movement and not provoking attack of opportunities.

- The Monster spits goo at one target within the lair. The target must succeed a DC 14 dexterity saving throw or they are stuck to surface by goo. The target is restrained by goo. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the goo on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to water damage; immunity to poison, and psychic damage).
- The Monster cracks the surface in a 15 ft. radius. The ground is considered difficult terrain for any creature other than the Monster.

ACTIONS

Multiattack: The Monster makes two pincer attacks. If the chuul is grappling a creature, the chuul can also use its tentacles once.

Pincer. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 [+1] to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 11 (2d6 + 4) [+2] bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14 [+2]) if it is a Large or smaller creature and the chuul doesn't have two other creatures grappled..

Tentacles: One creature grappled by the chuul must succeed on a DC 13 [+2] Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Until this poison ends, the target is paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.