

V4
LVL11

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Silver Linings



A fifth edition dungeon adventure to take
a party from 11th to 12th level.

Dungeons
ON DEMAND

Silver Linings

Tips for the Game Master

- This is **your** dungeon adventure. If you don't like how something works, change it. If you think an item or NPC from your campaign world works better than an item or NPC presented here, make the switch. If a puzzle is too hard or an encounter is too easy, drop some hints or add some monsters - do whatever is best for your game. You're the master of your gaming world, this packet is just a guide to help you. It will present hints and opportunities for you to customize, but ultimately everything is up to *you*. You don't need permission to break the mold.
- The encounters listed within this packet were designed by the book - but by the book isn't always the most practical for every party of adventurers. You may need to give a monster fewer hit points, fudge some dice rolls, or just plain ignore some of the rules if you think an encounter is a risk of killing the entire party.
- This adventure will work best when you take the time to read through the packet first, so you're familiar with everything that's going on. Sometimes the monsters that lie in wait to ambush the party, traps that are hidden from sight, or the clues to a puzzle may be glossed over if you're not prepared.
- The goal of each adventure is to give the party enough experience points to advance one level. This depends on a lot of things however - the party needs to complete most of the encounters and be of the appropriate size and level for that to work out. Ultimately, you might want to go without experience points altogether, and simply allow the players to advance to the next level once they're finished the dungeon. This means a lot less record-keeping on you part!
- The ultimate goal is to have fun! If you're having fun while playing, then you're playing correctly.



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Dungeons On Demand are designed with Game Masters in mind, created to be instant adventure sites a GM can wholly customize to fit his or her campaign. Unlike lengthy, full scale published adventures, *Dungeons On Demand* can often be played in a single gaming session, requires little planning beforehand aside from reading the packet, and gives plenty of options to make the dungeon fit seamlessly within the owner's campaign. Each dungeon has enough encounters and challenges to advance the party playing through it by one level.

Silver Linings is designed for a party of 4 to 5 11th-level adventurers. If your game has more or fewer players, you can adjust the number of monsters present in each encounter to fit the proper difficulty.

Dungeon Background & Information

Well before the modern races of humanoids established their dominance over the surface, the skies were home to a different people. This race of ancient and enigmatic people originated from the Elemental Plane of Air; so few were their numbers and so brief was their tenure, that very little remains of their presence. They called themselves *olëk*, although this name was lost among many different labels. Skyfolk, cloud lords, stormsmiths, wind dukes, airsouls, and other names have crept their way into legend for them, and there's no evidence to prove to modern men such people actually existed.

No evidence, of course, with one exception. Miles above the ground is the sole relic left by the skyfolk: the floating sanctum *Highsquall Apex*. The place is a beauty to behold, built of silver and glass, and held aloft on a magic cloud that floats above all others. It was here that the skyfolk appointed a kinsman to watch this world as they traveled to others, naming him or her the *Voice of the Storm*. What role the Voice of the Storm served within the world may never be known; and whoever was chosen to bear this title has either left this world, or passed away long, long ago.

Today, Highsquall Apex meanders about the planet upon its cloud, looming over all else. It hides safely out of view from land-dwelling creatures. All that is visible to them is the cloud which billows beneath it. So remote is it, that it's even escaped the notice of dragons, rocs, and other flying creatures, none ever taking the effort to explore its reaches. Until very recently, its airy halls and open chambers have remained unseen and untouched since the time of the skyfolk who constructed it.

The following developments have occurred in the time leading up to the events of *Silver Linings*, and should be kept secret from the players at this time.

Developments

The Agony of Defeat

Far below Highsquall Apex, the hobgoblin overlord *Grarir Rutbane* suffered a most crushing defeat against an allied force of humans and humanoids. Humiliated, the overlord retreated to the mountains to hide and regroup, accompanied only by the paltry remaining force of hobgoblins and loyal cyclopes of what was once his mighty legion.

Grarir and his forces scaled their way slowly through mountain trails until they came upon the summit; the overlord was unsure where to proceed or what to do once he got there, and considered flinging himself from the ledge when they arrived.

When he did arrive, however, the hobgoblin found something truly remarkable: a spired stone, flat on its top surface and engraved with a mark he did not understand. When he climbed up the stone to inspect it, he was jettisoned from the mountain, flying uncontrollably, and at great speed, towards the clouds on the horizon.

[**CUSTOMIZE**] It's not important which battle or war Grarir is recovering from; you can feel free to round out the details of the conflict or change the hobgoblins' enemies to best suit your campaign. The mountain peak is likewise left ambiguous. You can name it or change it to any relevant mountain in your campaign as well.

A New Voice

When his flight came to an end, the overlord was deposited in the Core of Highsquall Apex. Grarir had unwittingly activated a magic rune left by the skyfolk, one designed to cause any who touched its mark to travel to the sanctum. Though he was far from his faithful soldiers, the hobgoblin was overtaken by the wonder and decadence of the place.

Grarir's arrival awoke *Stratus*, a unique sentience innate to Highsquall Apex. Stratus was pleased to have a new master present within Highsquall's chambers, and bestowed upon the hobgoblin the title Voice of the Storm. The title carried great power; Grarir soon learned that he could shape the sky around him, giving rise to great storms, and complete control over wind, clouds, and air.

Silver Linings

In the midst of his telling defeat, Grarir now had an incredible opportunity. The hobgoblin guided Highsquall Apex to the vestiges of his army, bringing them aboard to fill the halls of its sanctum while he conducted something quite sinister from its Pinnacle.

Concentrating all his newfound power, Grarir summoned a mighty thunderstorm, unrelenting and with overwhelming force. Now, he seeks revenge against his enemies, using the great storm to wreak havoc upon them before descending with his forces to conquer whoever remains.

The Perfect Storm

Grarir's storm wasn't seen as anything unnatural at first, but after days without relenting, untold devastation, and scores of deaths, its victims now suspect otherwise. Many considered the storm to be a punishment from the gods, others thought it to be the work of cruel wizards, while still others believed it to be the herald of the apocalypse. None suspected the disposed Grarir Rutbane was behind it!

Each day, the hobgoblin's storm grows wider in its berth and increasingly more destructive. Thunder roars across the countryside, lightning ravages the landscape, and the unending

rainfall makes it difficult and miserable to see, hear, or talk. If something isn't done to disperse the storm soon, it threatens to swallow not just Grarir's enemies, but entire kingdoms!

Exploration

Magical Weapons

It's assumed that the party has access to magical weapons for this adventure. One magical weapon can be found in the dungeon.

Open Progression

Once the party arrives in Highsquall's Core at Area B, they're free to explore the rest of the floating sanctum in any order of their choosing. However, before they can be directed to Highsquall's Pinnacle at Area G, they'll need to retrieve both halves of the silver crest, stored in the vaults in Areas C and E.

Variable Light

Most of Highsquall Apex is constructed of glass framed by steel and silver, with nothing overhead save the reaches of the atmosphere. This means that the entire sanctum is well lit when receiving sunlight, and dimly lit when receiving moonlight. Since the sanctum can move, times of day or night are not bound by a 24-hour period.

Magic Detection

Several magic items left from the skyfolk remain in Highsquall Apex. However, due to their distance from each other, a player casting *detect magic* cannot detect the auras of magical items from anywhere but the area he or she is in.

A Long Way Down

Highsquall Apex is miles above the surface, meaning a character that falls from this height will assuredly die on impact. As the Game Master, it might be helpful to provide the party with assets to prevent instant death from such a fall, such as *potions of flying*. A *ring of feather falling* can be found in the dungeon.

A Storm Without End

It's assumed that the party is affected by Grarir's storm before finding their way to Highsquall Apex, where they're safely above its reach. While affected by the storm, creatures cannot see beyond 20 feet and cannot communicate without shouting. The storm's blustery wind and heavy rains extinguish open flames almost immediately, disperses fogs and gases, and make nonmagical flight impossible. Creatures have disadvantage on ranged weapon attack rolls, and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Stratus

When the party arrives in Area B, they'll become acquainted with the sentience known as *Stratus* that occupies the sanctum. Stratus is unique, as far as NPCs go, in that it doesn't have a physical form, and occupies most of the adventure areas at the same time. Stratus' mind is alien to the humanoids that now occupy Highsquall, knowing very little of the hobgoblins or player characters. You can use Stratus to communicate with, assist, or distract the party at your discretion from anywhere in the

sanctum. More information for Stratus is listed in the description for Area B.

The Pinnacle's Ward

Highsquall's Pinnacle floats thousands of feet above the rest of the sanctum, warded by a magic that prevents access other than directly via its Core. Flying creatures, or creatures aided by magical flight such as by the *fly* or *wind walk* spells cannot physically travel to the Pinnacle; the ward bars their entry. The ward extends to means of flight provided by magical items such as *brooms of flying*, as well as magic that would bypass direct travel such as the *teleport* spell.

Sight to Highsquall Structures

Though the buildings that make up Highsquall Apex are largely made of transparent glass, it's difficult to see from one location into another. Sunlight produces a sharp glare that turns the eye away, and the cloud that supports the structures has many wispy tendrils that block the view.

Walking on Clouds

The clouds that support the structures of Highsquall Apex are magical in nature; they're substantial enough to support the party and other creatures walking on them even though they appear vaporous.

Random Patrol

Grarir's army once consisted of tens of thousands of hobgoblins of varying skill, brute cyclopes, and siege beasts. Now, it's reduced to those still loyal to the overlord since his last defeat.

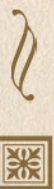
In the event that you need a random encounter anywhere, you can use the following monsters:

Random Encounter: hobgoblin patrol ★★☆☆

1 *cyclops* (MM pg. 45) 2,300 XP

3 *hobgoblin captains* (MM pg. 186) 2,100 XP

3 *hobgoblins* (MM pg. 186) 300 XP



Elevation: 8,680 feet









Elevation: 22,430 feet

Elevation: 25,810 feet

Silver Linings

1 square = 5 feet

-  Hostile Creature(s)
-  Trap
-  Plot Driver
-  Treasure
-  NPC
-  Puzzle



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Introduction

Adding Silver Linings to Your Campaign

You can use any of the following adventure hooks to bring the party to the adventure site.

Hook 1: Who'll Stop the Rain?

The unrelenting storm that ravages the countryside threatens to destroy everything. People cannot travel safely, and the storm claims more and more each day from its ruin. Authorities have sought heroes strong enough to investigate the matter, offering a reward of titles and lands to anyone who can bring it to an end. The diviners are mixed in their opinions as to the storm's source, but there's one thing all their visions point to: a remote mountain summit.

Hook 2: Chasing the Horde

The party was actually present for the great battle that defeated Grarir and his legions of hobgoblins, and has been tracking the overlord down since their victory. They'd tracked the last vestiges of his forces to the mountains when his storm opened up across the land, and spent the past few days carefully scaling its heights to the top.

Hook 3: Reclaiming the Sky

In the midst of Grarir's storm, the party is given a tip from a mysterious NPC regarding the location of the peak, which will take them to Highsquall Apex. The NPC is actually one of the enigmatic skyfolk, desperate to rid the hobgoblin from the sanctum so the Voice of the Storm can be reclaimed by one more worthy.

Prelude: Beginning the Dungeon

The party can reach Highsquall Apex the same way Grarir did – by touching the marked stone on the mountain peak. The elements preceding the adventure direct their attention to the mountain so they can ultimately confront the hobgoblin overlord and new Voice of the Storm.

The Storm Rages

The adventure begins assuming the players are familiar with Grarir's storm, even if they're unaware of its cause. It's possible they've been caught in it while traveling, have been taking shelter from it, or dealing with the devastation it's causing. You can summarize the storm by reading the following text aloud to the players.

A storm has been ravaging the land for days on end now, although merely calling it a "storm" is an understatement. Relentless rain hampers sight and sound, lightning obliterates all in its path, and thunder shakes the very sky itself. It has reached the point where you, and others, have realized this storm is not going away, and its cause is worrying. Some blame unscrupulous wizards for conjuring it, while others say the storm is the gods' wrath given form. Whatever gave birth to it, the storm threatens to swallow and destroy all which lies under its vast shadow.

[**CUSTOMIZE**] – The exact timeline for how long the storm has been raging is up for you to decide. *Silver Linings* presents the storm as occurring for at least several days, but you could certainly extend this duration to weeks or longer, whatever best suits the story for the party and your game world.

Gossip

Everyone affected by the thunderstorm has an opinion on it, one way or another. If the party speaks to NPCs in the area hammered by the storm, they can offer their advice or viewpoints.

The party may or may not be aware of the region's recent victory, repelling off the hobgoblin legions and crushing its remaining forces. Although the rise of the endless thunderstorm is a more pressing concern, most people in the area have an opinion on the hobgoblins as well.

You can refer to the *Gossip* sidebar for information and dialogue you can use for NPCs while interacting with the party on either topic.

Receiving a Tip

If you're using the adventure hooks *Who'll Stop the Rain?* or *Reclaiming the Sky*, the party receives a tip from an NPC identifying the mountain that may be connected to the relentless storm. Who the NPC is, and the nature of how the party receives the tip, is up to you. You can read the following aloud to the players when the NPC delivers the tip.

The stranger gives you a long look, as if weighing your merit against the size of [his/her] words. [He/She] wallows in the silence for a moment before finally speaking.

"If you're willing to help, our corner of the world here would be most grateful. This storm is only part of a greater, looming threat, I fear, one that will be upon us all before long. There is a place, a mountaintop, connected to this storm. I cannot tell you how I



know of this, only that I do.”

The stranger hands you a rolled up piece of parchment, unraveling it reveals it to be a map. The mountain marked upon it isn't far from here.

“Commit it to memory,” [he/she] says, “the paper won't hold up in the storm. Climbing a mountaintop isn't something I could ask just anyone to do, but adventurers of your caliber should be able to handle it, storm or no. I fear that reaching this place won't be the end of this endeavor, though, merely just the beginning.”

The stranger may offer a reward in exchange for the party's service, depending upon his or her affiliation and goals.

Hunting the Hobgoblins

If you're using the *Chasing the Horde* adventure hook, then the party may already be on the mountain in question, hunting down the remnants of the hobgoblin army. Their pursuit has brought them near the top. In this instance, you can read the following aloud to the players:

As if the strain of battle and scouring the mountainside for straggling hobgoblins weren't enough, a damnable storm has made this mountain slick and slippery, and has lasted days on end. Your only solace is you're nearing the mountain's summit, close enough that you know there's nowhere else a hobgoblin could run to.

This adventure hook assumes that the party participated in the battle that saw Grarir Rutbane's defeat, which means that the players may have some inside information. It's up to you to determine how much the party knows about the remaining hobgoblin forces. It's reasonable to assume they're aware Grarir has cyclopes fighting for him, and, while they may not know the overlord by name, they might be able to recognize him as the overlord.

Climbing the Mountain

You have some options on how quickly the party is able to scale the mountain. If the party has access to magical flight, they should be able to reach the top of the mountain within hours. If you want to speed up the action so that the party reaches the first adventure area quickly, they may have a benefactor provide them access to *potions of flying*, or perhaps *teleport* them just outside its location.

If the party is forced to travel the mountain on foot, they must contend with the vertical climb and the elements, made all the more difficult by Grarir's storm. You could spend a great deal of time roleplaying the party's ascent; perhaps leading to side quests before they tackle the challenges that await them in Highsquall Apex.

On foot, climbing the mountain takes days, assuming the party is prudent, finding shelter, and getting ample rest. You can paraphrase the ascent by reading the following aloud to the players:

Days of climbing the mountain feel like an eternity. You're fortunate so many natural ravines, ledges, and caverns have helped you make your way to the summit; otherwise, you'd be left climbing straight up. All the while, the storm is a constant reminder. Even when taking shelter from the endless rain,

the thunder rattles you from your sleep, and the lightning paints haunting silhouettes of clouds. Your arms and legs are sore, your clothes and equipment drenched, your throats sore and ears ringing from shouting and the constant din. As the mountain's summit comes in sight, you're hard pressed to think of a happier thought than the end of such misery.

Whichever way the party reaches the top of the mountain, they arrive just outside of Area A, where you can begin the adventure proper.

— Gossip —

The recent defeat of the hobgoblins, and the ensuing storm days later, have left an impression on people throughout the countryside. If the party seeks the advice or opinions of NPCs regarding either before they embark on their adventure, you can use the following lines of dialogues as sample replies.

If asked about the storm...

Folks are sayin' the rain won't end 'til the gods are happy, and given it's been on for so long now, it's hard to doubt them. Don't know what started this storm, more worried about what will stop it.

We were celebrating the victory, near a week or so after the battle. We were all so happy we wouldn't be dealing hobgoblin whips, then we get this awful storm to kick us right back in the arse. The thing has leveled homes, ripped up the land, and left us all drenched and shivering. They say it's not gonna end, but that's not possible, is it?

Dark work is at play, friend. The storm cries with a million voices, its thunder echoes clear across the world. It swallows our country and every day its black clouds reach further. This is not natural work. Not for it to last this long, not for it to rain this hard. Seek shelter. Stay dry.

They're saying this storm is our penance from the gods. Weeks ago, they said the same gods favored us, said they helped our men stave off the hobgoblin attack. It's not rain or hobgoblins that'll kill you, traveler, its fickle gods. Pray the storm passes, and pray the gods are in the right mood when you ask.

If asked about the hobgoblins...

The hoggoblins were on the advance for weeks; they overran most of the countryside before they were right on our doorstep. Everyone was afraid we'd be killed in the attack if not kept as slaves; but we managed to beat them in their own attack. We lost a lot of brave soldiers on the battlefield, but their sacrifice is not forgotten.

The hobgoblins had great beasts and machines of war in their army. Can't say I was one of the poor souls that had to fight that day, but all the soldiers report a terror whose image I can't shake. Enormous, one-eyed giants, larger than oak trees and half as smart, each with the strength of twenty men.



Area A: The Peak

The mountain's peak contains the spired stone, which first transported Grarir to the halls of Highsquall Apex. Since the hobgoblin is aware of the location, he's installed one of his generals here to watch the stone to ensure no others use it as well. As a result, Grarir has lightened the effect of the storm on the peak to give his troops some respite.

The peak is a flat surface that forms a ledge overlooking the north side of the mountain; the spired stone rises closest to its precipice.

When the party enters this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:

As you near the mountain's peak, you notice the wind's drag lighten. The thunder's din is softened, and the rain's assault reduced to a gentle spray, as if you were standing under a gentle spring storm and not the maelstrom that has wrought havoc upon the land for days on end.

The summit is flat at the top, save for an odd, spired structure of stone seemingly carved out from it. Nearly a dozen creatures mill about it, biding time. Most are hobgoblins, although two are enormous brutes over fifteen feet tall, each sporting a single, off-putting eye in their foreheads.

The hobgoblin force will view any newcomers as a threat and attack them (see *Combat*).

Grarir's Storm

The effects of Grarir's Storm are lessened here, removing the penalties described under *A Storm Without End* in the *Exploration* section. However, the mountain is still dangerously slick, and any creature making Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks for balance does so with disadvantage.

Falling

Obviously, falling off the northern ledge of the area means falling to the ground, nearly 9,000 feet in distance. A creature that falls suffers 20d6 bludgeoning damage and lands prone. A creature pushed off the edge can attempt a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to catch itself, hanging from the ledge on a success and requiring the use of an action to pull itself up.

Hostile Creatures: hobgoblin patrol ★★☆☆

2 cyclopes (*MM* pg. 45) 4,600 XP

8 hobgoblins (*MM* pg. 186) 800 XP

1 hobgoblin warlord (*MM* pg. 187) 2,300 XP

Magic Detection

A player who casts *detect magic* detects a strong aura of transmutation magic emanating from the spired stone structure on the precipice. This effect cannot be dispelled.



Combat

It's not likely the party can sneak up on and surprise the hobgoblins, the peak is a mostly open space with little to hide behind and only one point of entry. However, if the party is able to approach invisibly or attack at far enough range, they can surprise them.



The hobgoblins are spread out through the area, though they're careful not to touch the spired stone structure (marked by the plot icon on the area map).

Once the hobgoblin force is aware of the party, the warlord sends half the hobgoblins to engage in melee while the other four attack at range with their longbows. Likewise, one cyclops lumbers into melee while the other stands back to use its *rock* attack at range. The warlord uses its *leadership* action during its first turn, and then heads into melee.

The cyclopes understand enough Common to understand that they're to attack the players, but not enough to benefit from the warlord's *leadership*.

The hobgoblins fight until slain. The cyclopes fight until reduced to 30 or fewer hit points, and then flee from the party members (they're liable to tumble off the edge of the peak in their haste to escape!) If the warlord is reduced to 20 or fewer hit points, it will attempt to use the spire stone to reach Highsquall Apex in an effort to warn Grarir.

If slain, the hobgoblins can be looted of pouches containing an average of 13 silver pieces each. Each cyclops has a rucksack containing gaudy jewelry worth an average of 5 gold pieces. The warlord has a coin purse containing a gemstone worth 50 gold pieces (*DMG* pg. 134) and 18 gold pieces.

COMBAT DEVELOPMENTS

- If the hobgoblin warlord escapes the area, it uses the stone structure to jettison itself to Highsquall Apex. From the party's point of view, they see it rocket into the sky and disappear beyond the storm clouds. If the warlord escapes, use the scenario *The Hobgoblin Escaped* in Area B when the party arrives.





Spired Stone

When the party first examines this structure, you can read the following aloud to the players:

The top of this stone is broad and flat, engraved with a strange, crude symbol.

The symbol is scribed in Primordial, in the Auran dialect. If a character understands it, they know it reads “up.”

Touching the engraving is all that is necessary to trigger its effect, whether a character is aware of it or no. When a party member touches the engraving for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the player.

You feel inside out for a moment, like your feet are above you and below you at the same time. The world shrinks beneath you, but the bite of raindrops into your flesh makes you realize you’re flying – quite rapidly – to the menacing dark clouds overhead. Then, in an instant, it’s over. You break through the clouds, and are reminded of what the sun feels like for the first time in days. You’re flying faster and faster, higher and higher, until suddenly you see it: a beautiful building of glass and silver, floating on a cloud in the distance. Whatever force propels you is taking you to it.

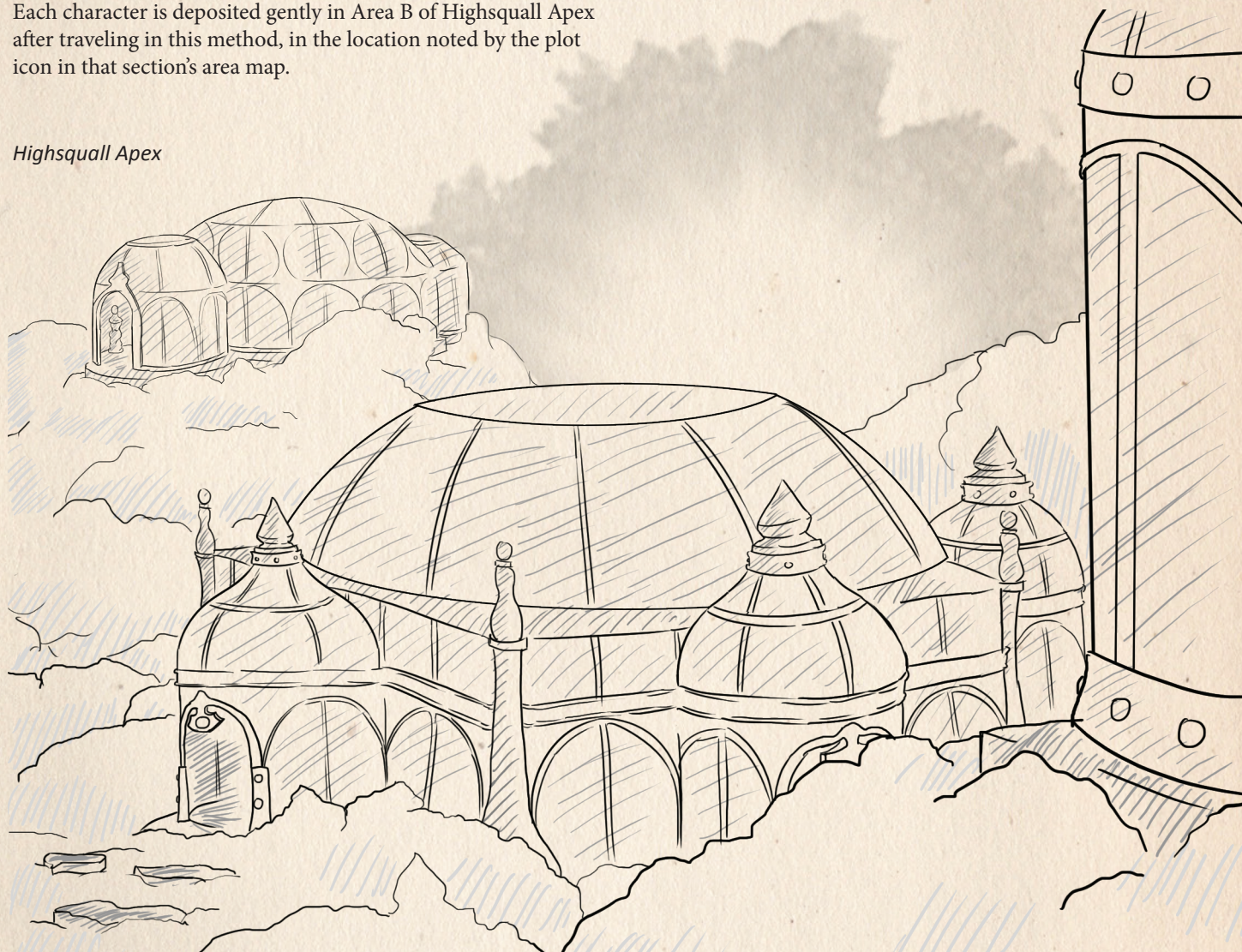
Each character is deposited gently in Area B of Highsquall Apex after traveling in this method, in the location noted by the plot icon in that section’s area map.

Highsquall Apex

Hobgoblin Names

If the party interacts with one or more hobgoblins here, or in other parts of the dungeon, they may ask for its name. Hobgoblins use simple, crude names usually one or two syllables long. A hobgoblin of great importance may carry a second name or title, though such prestige is usually reserved for their captains and warlords. A few sample names are provided below.

Arlod	Morsguk
Dilguk	Novrong
Fokled	Riloor
Gralgrek	Sevram
Hektif	Tungo
Kalon	Zordek



Area B: Highsquall Core

The party or individual party members arrive in Highsquall's Core under one of two scenarios; either the hobgoblin warlord escaped the encounter with the party from Area A and is here as well, or the warlord was slain in battle (or is otherwise earthbound).

If the warlord escaped to arrive here in Area B, you can begin with the scenario *The Hobgoblin Escaped*. If not, use the scenario *An Empty Hall*.

The Hobgoblin Escaped

If the hobgoblin warlord retreated to this area, he's here when the party arrives, seemingly yelling into the open air.

When the party enters this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:

The set of structures you're propelled towards are as strange as they are beautiful: ornate buildings rising from a cloud, gleaming in the unblemished sunlight. They twinkle like silver and diamond jewels floating in the sky. The magical force sets you down in the central building through its open ceiling, setting you softly on the ground at its middle on a raised dais. Domed archways lead outside its walls to the other buildings beyond it, their open paths allowing the cloud to leak into this place and form a hazy ring around its perimeter.

The hobgoblin you battled at the mountain peak is here too, screaming in frustration to the open hall. "A dozen hells upon you, cloud! Grarir! My Lord! If you can hear me, the scum have followed me here!"

Hostile Creatures: escaped warlord ★★★★★
1 hobgoblin warlord* (MM pg. 187) 450 XP

*The hobgoblin warlord from Area A is in this area with the same amount of hit points as it exited the previous area with. Due to its weakened state, its XP total has been adjusted accordingly.



Combat

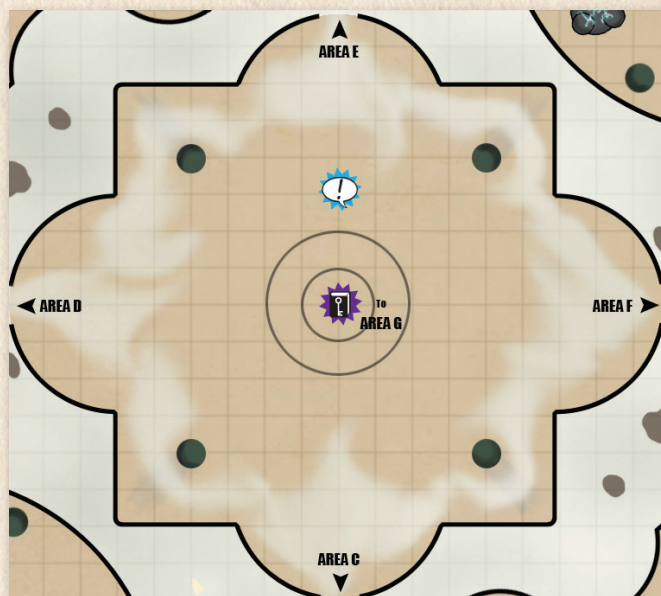
Unless an hour or more has passed since battling the party on the ground, the warlord expects the party's arrival and cannot be surprised. The hobgoblin remains hostile to the party, although it is badly outnumbered. It will attack the party as soon as they arrive.

The hobgoblin fights till slain. It has a coin purse containing a gemstone worth 50 gold pieces (DMG pg. 134) and 18 gold pieces.

An Empty Hall

If the hobgoblin warlord retreated to this area, he's here when the party arrives, seemingly yelling into the open air.

When the party enters this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:



The set of structures you're propelled towards are as strange as they are beautiful: ornate buildings rising from a cloud, gleaming in the unblemished sunlight. They twinkle like silver and diamond jewels floating in the sky. The magical force sets you down in the central building through its open ceiling, setting you softly on the ground at its middle on a raised dais. Domed archways lead outside its walls to the other buildings beyond it, their open paths allowing the cloud to leak into this place and form a hazy ring around its perimeter.

Regardless of the scenario the party arrives under, this area also has the following features.



Stratus

A special sentience known as Stratus occupies all of the structures of Highsquall Apex. The sentience was infused into the place from its origin, and has largely been dormant in the eons that Highsquall remained undiscovered.

Grarir Rutbane's arrival changed that. When the overlord arrived, the sentience awoke and named the hobgoblin the new Voice of the Storm. Now Stratus questions the sanctum's new inhabitants with child-like curiosity, even more excited by the party's arrival.

When the party is alone in the area, either after disposing of the retreating hobgoblin, or upon first arriving, you can read the following aloud to the players.

The inside of this place is like the inside of a dream. The structure is open and airy, yet a stone tile feels firm and secure beneath your feet. It's just as you're taking in its beauty and extravagance that you hear a voice in the hall, spoken as if only a few feet from you. Its inflection is warm though foreign, carrying no hint of being either a male or female speaker, as if the wind itself were talking to you.

"Warm breezes, you who come from below! I welcome you to



Highsquall Apex. I find your languages intriguing, although I fear none of them properly translates my name. For now, please call me Stratus. I would be most grateful to know your names as well, so I may inform the Voice of the Storm."

Stratus can communicate in Auran, Common and Goblin, and instantly learns any language of a creature in Highsquall Apex. It cannot, however, communicate telepathically. Any words it speaks are audible to all creatures in the area, though it can change the volume of its voice.

Stratus is accommodating and inquisitive. It seeks to learn as much as possible from the party, and is unrestrained by a typical moral compass. For instance, if the party slays the hobgoblin warlord in this area, it treats the event as a new opportunity to learn and understand death, without associating ethics to the party's actions.

Stratus can ask and answer questions for the party. It cannot, however, interact with the physical structure or magical properties of Highsquall Apex at all. Stratus serves Grarir, who currently resides in Area G, and the sentience is happy to inform the party as much. It can also warn them about the ward that prevents entry to the Pinnacle, as well as a method to reach the area themselves.

— Stratus' Input —

Stratus can be contacted from any location inside Highsquall, and may respond or interrupt the party as they progress, even in the midst of combat or as the players attempt to solve a puzzle or contend with a trap.

In other areas, a sidebar Stratus's Input provides you with sample dialogue you can use for the sentience as the party explores Highsquall Apex.

Though Stratus is all-present here, it is not all-knowing. It answers questions as best it can, but sometimes cannot explain why it knows something, and often may not have an answer for the party at all.

Setting the Stage

Stratus' main role in this area is to explain to the party how they can reach Grarir at the Pinnacle overhead. Doing so requires assembling the *silver crest* from its two halves, located in Areas C and E. Once the party completes this task, they must return to the Core. When that occurs, refer to the section Return to Area B.

For more information and sample dialogue you can use for the sentience, refer to the sidebar *Role-playing Stratus*.



Dais

A dais, ten feet in diameter and raised two feet off the ground, lies in the middle of this chamber. A small recess, the size of a dinner plate, is carved into its center. The dais serves as the landing zone for creatures magically propelled here from Area

— Role-playing Stratus —

Stratus relays information and asks many questions of the party. It enjoys their company and is delighted by the answers to its questions. You can use the following lines of dialogue for Stratus as the sentience interacts with the party.

If asked about Highsquall Apex...

This sanctum was built by the olëk very long ago. I am a result of its creation. It was made to serve the Voice of the Storm. By count of the light cycle, Highsquall Apex is 5,847,625 cycles old.

If asked about the creators...

The olëk come from a world beyond this one, one of endless open air. You do not have an accurate word for them in your languages, though you may refer to them as skyfolk, wind dukes, or stormsmiths.

If asked about the Voice of the Storm...

The Voice of the Storm commands the clouds, winds, and air from Highsquall's Pinnacle. You can see the cloud it rests upon, if you look up. The title is currently held by Grarir Rutbane, previously a surface-dwelling humanoid, much like yourselves.

If asked how to get to the Pinnacle...

Sadly, only the Voice of the Storm may fly into the Pinnacle. Others will find their trip cut short by a ward that protects it. However, the silver crest once served the Voice's servants, and could take you there unimpeded. It's since been divided into two halves, each half resting in the vaults currently located northeast and southwest. If you can bring each half here, you'd be able to regain its service.

If asked about others in the sanctum...

Currently, 24 organisms occupy Highsquall Apex, excluding yourselves. I do detect, however, another creature flying here slowly, though I do not know what it is. Perhaps a guardian has been awoken now that a new Voice of the Storm has been named.

If asked about "a guardian"...

Each Voice of the Storm is served by a guardian, although there hadn't been a Voice of the Storm in some time. Now that a new Voice of the Storm serves, a guardian will inevitably awaken to protect this place.

If asked about the cloud...

The cloud will support you, even if it appears as if it will not. Clusters of stones reside between cloisters of this sanctum, if that is a more comforting feel for you. I am told the best thing to do is to refrain from looking down.

A, as well as another source of transportation to Highsquall's Pinnacle in Area G. However, the dais isn't active until the party completes the *silver crest* and sets it within the dais's recess (see Return to Area B).



Area C: The Meteorlabe

This grand building at southwest side of the sanctum is built with a great glass dome. It's the location of Highsquall's *meteorlabe*, a device which predicts the natural weather patterns throughout the world. The encounters in this area are divided into two parts; the party must **battle in the clouds** against the hobgoblin forces before they can enter the **meteorlabe's chamber**.

Battle in the Clouds

One of Grarir's generals is in this area, contending with the meteorlabe in an attempt to open the vault in this area. It is accompanied by a unit of hobgoblins and air sentries.

When the party exits Area B heading southwest toward this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:

A grand building, topped by a magnificent glass dome, lies in this direction.

Detecting the Sentries

The air sentries are aware of the party as soon one or more party members exits the building in Area B heading southwest towards this area, thanks to their blindsight. They are positioned on the cloud, between the buildings (marked by the combat icon on the area map). The sentries are completely transparent while standing still, and will attempt to surprise and ambush the party members as they approach (see *Combat*).

Hostile Creatures: sentries on the cloud ★★☆☆★

- 1 hobgoblin warlord (**MM pg. 187**) 2,300 XP
- 6 hobgoblins (**MM pg. 186**) 600 XP
- 3 air sentries* (**Appendix A**) 5,400 XP

*The sentries are standing motionless on the cloudy path leading to the building in this area, and benefit from their *transparent* feature.



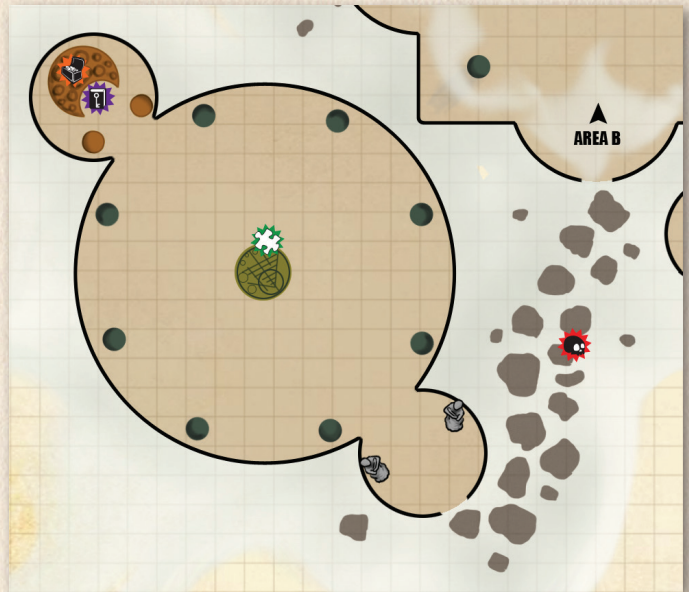
Combat

A party member with a passive Perception of 15 or higher notices the sentries, at which point you can read the following aloud to the player:

Something is off about the cloud leading to this building. It billows and swirls in sections, as if something unseen occupied it. It's then that you notice, just on the edge of your vision, a transparent form there, watching you.

If undetected, the party is surprised by the sentries. If the party detects the sentries, then neither side is surprised. As soon as combat begins, the hobgoblin warlord and hobgoblins provide reinforcement, exiting the building in Area C.

The hobgoblin warlord uses its first action to use its *leadership* trait, instructing its unit of hobgoblins to stay back and fire their longbows at the party. Each air sentry uses melee attacks against the party members, but will attempt to use *gust of wind* if it thinks it can knock a creature off the cloud with it, or *ray of frost* if its target is out of range.



All the creatures here fight till slain. The hobgoblins can be looted of pouches containing an average of 19 silver pieces each. The warlord has a coin purse containing 73 gold pieces.

The Meteorlabe's Chamber

When the party enters the building in this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:

As you enter this building through a small antechamber, you are greeted by a pair of statues carved to look like bald men fading into clouds below the waist. Beyond it is an enormous hall, mostly empty with the exception of marble pillars that run along the wall, and an elaborate device constructed of bronze at the room's center. Another small room lies beyond it still, containing a large, gilded chest fashioned in the shape of a crescent moon.

The chest is one of the two vaults in Highsquall Apex, which contains a piece of the *silver crest* the party must obtain in order to confront Grarir Rutbane. The vault is locked, and the only method of unlocking it lies with moving the levers of the meteorlabe to the correct configuration (see *The Meteorlabe* and *The West Vault*).

Magic Detection

A player who casts *detect magic* detects an aura of illusion magic emanating from the meteorlabe while it is active. The hilt and half of the silver crest, located in the vault in this area, both emanate a strong aura of evocation magic.



The Meteorlabe

The meteorlabe is a construct of overlapping rings and sliding bars, each marked with units like a ruler. It is mounted on a grand dais about nine feet in diameter, and a large crystal is embedded into the device at its center. Protruding from one end of the meteorlabe is a series of small levers; a discarded pair of gloves rests upon them.



A character examining the gloves recognizes them as belonging to the hobgoblins, and can surmise that the hobgoblins were attempting to use this device to some end.

If the party moves any of the levers on the meteorlabe, the rings and rules move about its surface, and an image is projected throughout the room like a hologram. You can read the following aloud to the players:

Moving the lever first causes the rings and rules on the device to move, turning like clockwork. The crystal at the device's center shimmers for a moment, and with a low-pitched hum, it casts an image from the device into the empty space of the chamber. It appears to be a map of sorts, although instead of looking down at the ground it looks upwards, into the sky. Regions are marked not by landmasses or bodies of water, but by clusters of clouds, moving and swirling in the projected image. Tips of a crescent moon symbol poke out from just beyond the clouds.

Switching the levers on the meteorlabe into different positions causes the projected clouds to move and form differently, sometimes causing them to darken and turn violent, sometimes causing them to dissipate. Either way, the crescent moon remains blocked by them. You can share this information with the party once they attempt a couple different configurations.

If a party member attempts to use the device to remove the clouds in the projected image away from the crescent moon symbol, then he or she solves the puzzle. Doing so doesn't require a check, but does take about 10 minutes to deduce the proper lever configuration. You can read the following aloud to the players upon doing so:

You fidget and fiddle with the levers, and after a handful of minutes, you find a setting that removes the particular cluster of clouds you're looking for. The crescent moon stands in the image, unmasked by the clouds, and you hear the sound of something mechanical echo from the small chamber to the north.

Solving the puzzle unlocks the vault and allows the party to collect the treasure there (see *The West Vault*).



The West Vault

The far side of this area is occupied by a magnificent vault, gilded and carved in the shape of a thick, crescent moon. The lids of many secured compartments line the surface of the vault. They unlock only when the meteorlabe in the area is set to the right configuration (see *The Meteorlabe*). Doing so causes all the compartment lids to spring open, revealing the vault's contents.

Inside the vault's various compartments are 90 gold bricks worth 50 gold pieces each, and 8 platinum bricks worth 500 gold pieces each. Each brick weighs 1 pound. There is also what appears to be one half of a silver dinner plate here, set on a silver stand studded with tourmalines. It is actually one piece of the *silver crest* (see *Silver Crest Half*); its display stand is an art object worth 750 gold pieces.

Additionally, one compartment holds a silver and steel longsword hilt, which bears a large diamond mounted in its pommel. Its crossguard has been fashioned to look like parting clouds, a sun

Stratus' Input

Stratus is aware of the meteorlabe's purpose, although it doesn't know it's the method of unlocking the vault here.

Visitors, this is Highsquall Apex's meteorlabe, a grand device for emulating and predicting natural weather patterns in this world. It is standard practice for the Voice of the Storm to study here, although the current Voice seemed disinterested. However, I am sure you'll be appreciative of all the wondrous calculations it is capable of!

rising between them to form its chappe. The hilt is actually a *sun blade*.



Silver Crest Half

Among the treasures in the vault is one half of the *silver crest* required to grant the party access to Area G. If the party has collected both halves of the crest, the next time they enter Highsquall's Core at Area B refer to the description for Return to Area B.



Area D: North Cloister

A small cloister is situated to the north and south of Highsquall's Core. Each contains a gallery with treasure available for the party to claim, although the most expensive of the treasures are trapped. One of Grarir's squads of hobgoblins has found its way to this cloister, loitering long enough to set off the trap just before the party arrives.

When the party enters this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:

The cloud leads you to a domed cloister. Before you enter, you hear the sound of glass shattering and a guttural cry. Instinctively you look up to catch a woeful hobgoblin rocketing through the cloister's glass ceiling and into the blue abyss above. Another hobgoblin spins around the corner from inside the building beneath its arched entrance. Its spots you and shouts something in its barbaric language to alert its comrades.

The hobgoblin says "Men are here" (or whatever is appropriate for the party's composition of races and sexes). The hobgoblins attack the party immediately (see *Combat*).

Hostile Creatures: hobgoblin squad ★★☆☆

1 cyclops (MM pg. 45) 2,300 XP
1 hobgoblin captain (MM pg. 186) 700 XP
6 hobgoblins (MM pg. 186) 600 XP

Magic Detection

A player who casts *detect magic* detects auras of transmutation magic emanating from the horseshoes on the floating pegasus statue (marked by the treasure icon on the area map).



Combat

The hobgoblin flying through the ceiling distracts the characters long enough for the remaining hobgoblins to spot the party; neither side is surprised.

The hobgoblin captain uses its first action to use its *leadership* feature, then instructs the other hobgoblins to form a phalanx in front of it. The cyclops is happy to smash the party, although it is terrified of the cloud. It stays in the cloister at all costs.

The monsters fight until slain. If slain, each of the hobgoblins can be looted of a small pouch containing an average of 17 silver pieces. The hobgoblin captain has a gemstone worth 10 gold pieces as well (DMG pg. 134)



The Floating Horse

A beautifully sculpted statue of a pegasus is against the fall wall of a circular expanse inside the cloister (marked by the treasure icon on the area map). The statue is crafted of polished stone; despite its weight, it floats inches off the ground. The statue's horseshoes are made of steel, and are actually *horseshoes of a zephyr*. A party member with a crowbar can remove the shoes with 10 minutes' worth of work. Removing all four horseshoes causes the statue to fall to the ground, possibly damaging or ruining it.



...Must Come Down

The area marked by the plot icon on the area map was a trap. A silver stand bearing a beautiful sapphire etched with cloud imagery once stood here, though a curious hobgoblin set off the trap just as the party arrived. As a result, the hobgoblin was flung through the glass ceiling from a localized *reverse gravity* effect, causing glass shards from the ceiling to rain down on the floor, and the unlucky hobgoblin to fly to its death.

One minute after combat ends, the hobgoblin lands in this area, on top of the wreckage (or any creatures foolishly standing under hole in the ceiling). If the party inspects the sky above this area before this time, they can see the hobgoblin suspended 100 feet overhead.

When the hobgoblin falls back into this area it dies. If a creature is standing in the space it lands in, the creature suffers 4d6 bludgeoning damage as the hobgoblin collides with it. After it lands, the sapphire rolls out from its hand and is now safe for the party claim. The sapphire is worth 2,500 gold pieces.

This event is a clue to the trap in Area F (see *What Goes Up...* in that area's description); although it is possible the party has already explored that section before coming to this one.

— Stratus' Input —

Stratus knows of the treasures in this cloister, but doesn't explicitly mention the trap placed on the sapphire. Instead, it only says that is a treasure not meant to be handled.

The olëk had many valued treasures they took from the worlds they explored. The equine statue that you see here may take one of their craftsmen more than 4,800 resident light cycles to complete. The gemstone displayed here was etched by their finest artisans, and put on display to be seen, not touched. I tried to warn this creature not to touch it, but it did not heed my advice.



Area E: The Fulgur

The large building northeast of Highsquall's Core contains the fulgur, a device used to channel the electric current in storm clouds to produce lightning. The last of Grarir's generals occupies this area with a force of hobgoblins, investigating the building's vault and mysterious device.

When the party enters the building in this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:

The grand building to the northeast opens first to a small alcove, which houses a pair of statues, each sculpted to appear as a human whose lower body has the form of a twisting cloud. A much larger area is visible beyond here, where a handful of hobgoblins have their attention centered on something in the back of the chamber. Great metal devices are stationed on the left and right sides of the room. Each consists of three metal spheres placed in a triangle and mounted on a dais about 7 feet in diameter and 5 feet high. Sparks of lightning crackle and dance in the center of the triangle between the spheres.

The metal devices are, collectively, the fulgur, which is necessary to open the vault in the back of the room (see *The Fulgur*).

The hobgoblins are investigating an ornate box they've found in room, among other things. The box is about 8 inches on a side, is beautifully crafted of steel, and is locked. They're attempting to pry it open, although they don't know that the box contains a greater air elemental.

High Voltage!

The fulgur may be a tool of study, but it's not without its danger. The electricity generated by it arcs to conductive metals within 5 feet of its space, which then arcs to any *other* conductive metals within 5 feet of that space, and so on until there is no other source to arc to. The hobgoblins are aware of this, and keep their distance from the device because of it. A creature that has electricity arc to it takes 7 (2d6) lightning damage.

Hostile Creatures: hobgoblin investigators ★★★★★

1 hobgoblin warlord (*MM* pg. 187) 2,300 XP

8 hobgoblins (*MM* pg. 186) 800 XP

1 greater air elemental* (*Appendix A*) 3,900 XP

*The elemental is contained in a box the hobgoblins have in their possession. It cannot be seen by the party members when they first enter the area.

Magic Detection

A player who casts *detect magic* detects an aura of evocation magic emanating from each metal device that is part of the fulgur. This effect cannot be dispelled.



Combat

The hobgoblins in this area are huddled in the back of the room, around a single hobgoblin attempting to open an ornate box (marked by the combat icon on the area map). They can be surprised by the party if the party approaches stealthily, or attacks at range.



The hobgoblin warlord uses its first action to use its *leadership* feature, while four of the hobgoblins attack the party at melee and three attack at range.

The hobgoblin holding the box does not attack. Instead, it continues attempting to open the box. When combat begins, you can read the following aloud to the players:

As the fray begins, you notice one of the hobgoblins wrestling with a steel cube, perhaps half a foot on each side. It has jammed a crude knife under its lid, and is attempting to pry the lock open.

If the hobgoblin is killed before its turn, it drops the box on the ground. Otherwise, it uses its action to open the box on its first turn, releasing the greater air elemental held within. If the elemental is released from the box, you can read the following aloud to the players:

The box's lid comes open, rocketing backwards as a high-pitched rush screams out of it. Wind pours out from the box, causing you to struggle to keep your feet, as if a tornado was just given birth to in the room. When you collect your senses, an enormous creature made of clouds and air stares down upon you!

The air elemental is confused and extremely angry. It attacks both the hobgoblins and party alike, if able. You can determine targets for its attacks randomly. If the hobgoblins are still alive, they split their attacks between the party and the air elemental.

All the creatures here fight till slain. When the elemental dies, it howls like a rushing wind, its form dispersing in all directions. The hobgoblins can be looted of pouches containing an average of 18 silver pieces each. The warlord has a coin purse containing 69 gold pieces.



- If the hobgoblin holding the box is killed before it gets an action, the party can claim the box. The box is a beautiful art object worth 300 gold pieces, and is very light to hold. A character with thieves' tools can attempt a DC 25 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to pick the lock, or the lock can be pried open with a successful DC 20 Strength check. Regardless of how the box is opened, the elemental attacks all creatures in the area when it is released.



The Fulgur

The fulgur is typically used for testing and study, although in this instance it also serves as the unlocking mechanism for this area's vault.

If asked about the fulgur or the vault, Stratus provides some insight to the device's function and clue to solving the puzzle it poses (see *Stratus's Input*). The puzzle is solved by forcing electricity to arc from either portion of the device to the vault (the framework of which is made of conductive metal).

The party can achieve this by using conductive metal items on their person, or using the arms and armor of the slain hobgoblins to guide the current. When placing a metal item near the device, a character who is aware of its effect can avoid the damage by placing the item and then quickly retreating, or using a different method of placement, such as sliding it safely into place with a pole.

Once a circuit is made and electricity is arced from either portion of the fulgur to the vault, the compartments on the vault open. You can read the following aloud to the players upon doing so:

Lightning dances from the arcane device, across the circuit you've built, finding its way to the vault in the back portion of the chamber. As soon as it touches the vault, a whirring noise hums from it, and dozens of compartments unlock and open from its surface in unison.

Solving the puzzle unlocks the vault and allows the party to collect the treasure there (see *The East Vault*).



The East Vault

The far side of this area is occupied by a magnificent vault, gilded and carved in the shape of a thick, crescent moon. The lids of many secured compartments line the surface of the vault. They are set to unlock only when the fulgur in the area is set to run its electrical current between both nodes (see *The Fulgur*). Doing so causes all the compartment lids to spring open, revealing the vault's contents.

Inside the vault's various compartments are 90 gold bricks worth 50 gold pieces each, and 8 platinum bricks worth 500 gold pieces each. Each brick weighs 1 pound. There is also what appears to be one half of a silver dinner plate here, set on a silver stand studded with tourmalines. It is actually one piece of the *silver crest* (see *Silver Crest Half*); its display stand is an art object worth 750 gold pieces.

Stratus' Input

Stratus understands what the fulgur is used for, although it does not know it opens the vault in this area. If asked about either, Stratus gives the following reply.

The fulgur is a most prestigious device, used to accumulate lightning from the sky. Even here, well above the tallest clouds, lightning is produced from either node. The Voice of the Storm would often test storm energy here, gauging the strength of a lightning strike. How did the expression go? "There are few treasures that cannot be unearthed by the touch of a thunderstorm."

Stratus does not know what lies inside the box that contains the air elemental.

Curious, I have no recollection of this item being opened. It may predate my genesis. Please, open it, so I may record its contents!

Additionally, one compartment holds a crown of white cloth spun around a ring of steel. It's studded with silver bolts, and bears a beautiful opal where it's widest. The crown is actually a *headband of intellect*.



Silver Crest Half

Among the treasures in the vault is one half of the *silver crest* required to grant the party access to Area G. If the party has collected both halves of the crest, the next time they enter Highsquall's Core at Area B refer to the description for Return to Area B.



Area E: The Fulgur

Another cloister, similar to the one located in Area D, is located to the south of Highsquall's Core. Unlike the north cloister, however, this area has been untouched by the hobgoblin forces.

When the party enters this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players:

The cloudy walkway leads to a smaller building with a glass roof. The entire structure is shaped in a semicircle, bulging at its center in an open, circular area. Three statues of men are in this open area. Each is bald and posed with his arms folded, his torso disappearing into a swirl of clouds that forms the statue's base. At the end of the arched hallway is a silver stand, about five feet in length and displaying an incredibly valuable sapphire.

Magic Detection

A player who casts *detect magic* detects an aura of transmutation magic emanating from a ring worn by one of the statues (marked by the treasure icon on the area map). A strong aura of transmutation magic can be detected from the sapphire and its stand at the end of the hall (marked by the trap icon on the area map).



An Odd Adornment

The statues in the open space of the cloister all appear as perfect copies of each other, with one exception. One of the statues wears a *ring of feather falling* on its left hand. The statue and the ring are both made of the same material, so it's easy to miss. A character examining the statue in question can make a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check, discovering the ring on a success. The ring is easily slid off the statue's hand.



What Goes Up...

The sapphire on display at the end of the hallway is trapped. If the party moves to inspect it, Stratus warns them before they touch it.

"An invaluable keepsake of the olëk homeworld, precious gemstones such as these serve as a reminder to each Voice of the Storm of the natural beauty of the world. Of course, such beauty is appreciated with the eyes, not with the hands."

If the party asks any more about the gemstone, Stratus has little left to offer. It knows that the sapphire must not be touched, but it does not know what the consequences of doing so are.

Detecting the Trap

Stratus' clue should be enough to warn the party that the sapphire is not safe to touch. If the party has already traveled to the cloister at Area C, they've seen the results of the trap firsthand (see *...Must Come Down* in that area's description). Otherwise, there's no method of detecting the trap, other than using the *detect magic* spell to see its magic aura, and even that will not reveal the trap's effect.

Triggering the Trap

If a creature touches the sapphire on display, or its display stand, that creature and all creatures within 10 feet of it are subject to the effect of the *reverse gravity* spell. The trap does not create a persistent cylinder that can affect other creatures that move into the area, it is local to the initially affected creatures only. An



affected creature "falls" upward, shattering the glass roof of the area and suffering 2d6 slashing damage as a result. It is propelled 100 feet in the air, where it stays for one minute until gravity returns to normal, at which point it falls back down to the cloister and suffers 10d6 bludgeoning damage, landing prone.

An affected creature must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw to avoid "falling" upward, grabbing onto a fixed object or part of the cloister on a success.

Stratus' Input

Stratus is unaware of the magic item worn by the statue, and takes the initiative to warn the party about the trap on the sapphire. Otherwise, it is content to relay information about the area to the characters.

These cloisters were intended to be places of quiet contemplation for the Voice of the Storm. On the surface, I imagine you have places of solace as well, no? Please, tell me about them.



Return to Area B

When the party returns to this area after collecting both halves of the silver crest, you can read the following aloud to the players:

You've collected both halves of this strange, silver object, making your way to the majestic building that lies in the center of the cloud. Before you can enter its halls, the sentience that inhabits this place addresses you.

"Surface dwellers, you have in your possession both pieces of the crest necessary to... ah, it appears the guardian has arrived!"

The guardian is a gynosphinx with no name other than its title. It was born into the world for the sole purpose of guarding Highsquall Apex, summoned to the sanctum's location only when Grarir took the reigns as the Voice of the Storm.

As the guardian arrives, you can read the following aloud to the players:

A shadow runs over you, forcing you glance upwards. You find that it belongs to a peculiar creature: winged, like an eagle, but possessing the body of a lioness and a humanoid, female face. She is draped with jewelry and cloth vestments, with glowing sigils marked upon her forehead. She descends through the open roof and lands gracefully in front of you, in the center of the building here.

"Warm breezes," Stratus says, inviting her, "I find your languages intriguing, although I fear none of them properly translate my name. For now, please call me—"

"Cease your babbling, I am delayed enough," the creature interrupts. "Inform the Voice of the Storm that I have arrived." Then she turns her attention to towards you. "What are these creatures of the land doing here? Why is there blood in these halls? Who sullies Highsquall Apex?"

A Conversation with the Guardian

The party can interact with the guardian for a period of time. The gynosphinx isn't directly hostile towards the party, although she isn't pleased with their presence or the condition Highsquall is in. She is loyal to the Voice of the Storm however, and defends Grarir's actions even if the party informs her he is using his powers malevolently. The guardian might be further provoked, or become amicable towards the party by their conversation, but after a couple minutes Stratus cuts in to deliver some bad news.

"Pardon my interruption," Stratus says, breaking into your conversation, "I've just received word from the Voice of the Storm. It would appear that he approves of the presence of the creatures in the other parts of the sanctum. This particular group, however, is unauthorized, and he has requested their immediate eradication. My humblest apologies."

The guardian's eyes narrow, looking down at you. "Very well."

Hostile Creatures: the guardian ★★☆☆
1 gynosphinx (MM pg. 282) 7,200 XP



Combat

The gynosphinx can't be surprised by the party, given the circumstances, and is ready to fight to the death to fulfill its duty.

The guardian flies overhead on her first turn, using her first action to cast *detect magic* to identify which opponents are benefiting from magical spells or effects. So long as she can stay out of range of the party's attacks, she'll use subsequent actions to use *dispel magic* to remove their spells before attacking them in melee. If flying doesn't give her any advantage, she'll use *greater invisibility* instead and attack the party in melee.

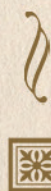
The guardian attacks in melee with her *multiattack* once she's ready. She uses her reactions to cast her *shield* spell, and her legendary actions to *teleport* to a safe spot, or deliver additional *claw* attacks. She rarely uses spells for her legendary actions, unless she needs to quickly use *dispel magic*.

The guardian fights until slain; she carries no treasure. When the gynosphinx is slain, Stratus adds its input with mechanical detachment to life.

The guardian slumps to the ground, and you can't help but feel a pang of remorse to see something so majestic put to the sword. Stratus breaks the tension of the moment, commenting on the affair devoid of any sympathy.

"How interesting," it says, "I recall no record of a guardian expiring in any olëk sanctum. This is a most noteworthy event. The Voice of the Storm has been informed. He's requested me to invite you to the Pinnacle. Please, place both halves of the crest you bear upon the dais, and stand upon it when you are ready."

The end of the combat leads directly to the party activating the dais in this area with the silver crest (see *Higher Still*).





Higher Still

The party can activate the dais in the center of the room by placing both halves of the *silver crest* into the depression carved into its center. Upon standing on the dais, it magically detaches from the floor, rising above to the Pinnacle at Area G.

You stand upon the dais, and after a few curious moments, you feel it lift from the ground, carrying you and your comrades into what is left of the sky, towards a small cloud overhead.

No Rest for the Weary

If the party attempts to take a long rest before taking the dais to confront Grarir, the overlord will send his minions after them. You can read the following aloud to the party:

Just as you begin to feel calm, a menacing voice resounds throughout the area. "WHERE ARE THE WORMS WHO SEEK TO CHALLENGE ME? HOW DARE THEY KEEP ME WAITING. FIND THEM! BRING ME THEIR SKULLS."

If forces of hobgoblins remain in the sanctum, they seek out the party to the best of their ability. If all the hobgoblins have been slain, a **random patrol** (see *Exploration*) arrives within an hour in Area B and begins looking for them.



Halves of the silver crest



Area G: Highsquall Pinnacle

When the party is ready to challenge Grarir Rutbane, they must stand on the activated dais in Area B. Doing so causes the dais to rise from there to the last portion of Highsquall Apex: it's Pinnacle.

When the party enters this area for the first time, you can read the following aloud to the players.

The dais lifts you to a single cloud. There sits a terrace made of marble, without walls and any decoration. In the shade of its roof is a hobgoblin, gazing down at the maelstrom ravaging the countryside so far beneath you, like an artist admiring his work.

He turns to meet you as the dais lands and you find your feet, pointing his longsword at you. Lightning crackles about the blade, making the air hum. When he speaks, you know his title, Voice of the Storm is appropriate.

"WITNESS THE BEAUTY OF IT ALL. I WILL SCRUB THE LAND CLEAN OF MY ENEMIES, AND FORM A NEW LEGION TO PLANT MY BANNERS UPON THEIR CORPSES"

The hobgoblin's words echo and rebound like thunder, as if spoken from all around you at ear-shattering volume.

"THERE'S JUST ONE STAIN LEFT TO BE RID OF"

The wind picks up, causing your hair and loose vestments to dance in different directions. The wind gives way to swirling creatures, coming in from all sides of the terrace. With that, the hobgoblin moves toward you!

Hostile Creatures: the Overlord ★★★★★

Grarir Rutbane, Voice of the Storm (**Appendix A**) 8,400 XP
3 air weirds* (**Appendix A**) 2,100 XP

*The air weirds are not present when the party arrives. They are summoned before combat begins.



Dais

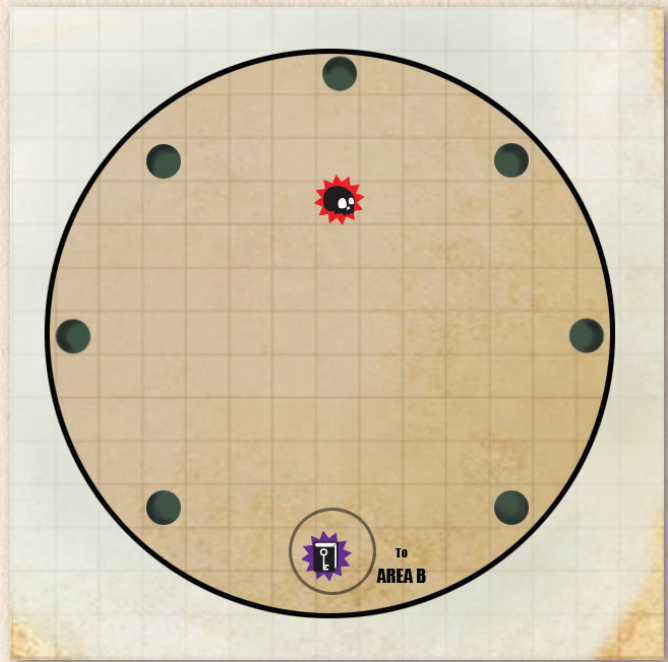
The dais that carries the party to this area from Area B lands here. The party can return to Area B by standing on the dais for 1 minute. Doing so causes it to carry them down to the lower part of Highsquall Apex.



Combat

Grarir stands by the north side of the terrace (marked by the combat icon on the area map). The air weirds arrive on the ledges in different directions in an effort to surround the party. Given the circumstances, neither the party nor Grarir or his forces can be surprised.

If Grarir acts before the majority of the party members, he'll use his first action to attack them with his *lightning blast* attack, hoping to impose disadvantage on different characters' attacks. If forced into melee, Grarir makes keen use of his *parry* reaction, hammering party members with his *multiattack*.



If Grarir is surrounded, or if he has one or more targets near the ledge of terrace, he'll use his *wind rush* to clear space around him and then fly to a safe spot.

The air weirds attack different party members, trying to restrain as many targets for Grarir as possible. They also allow the hobgoblin to make the most of his *martial advantage* feature.

Grarir and the air weirds fight until slain. If Grarir is killed, the air weirds dissipate in quick whips of wind, trailing out all directions of the terrace.

Grarir's Death

Once Grarir is slain, you can read the following aloud to the players.

In one instant, the whipping wind stops. Your hair and clothes fall lifelessly into place, just as the hobgoblin falls to his knees. In his death gurgle, you hear the sound of rolling thunder, and with his final breath a light breeze brushes your face.

"This is most unorthodox," Stratus says. "I suppose I shall have to appoint a new Voice of the Storm. Would one of you be willing to serve?"

The party may decide to elect one member to become the new Voice, although Stratus has disappointing news.

"Very well! However, I am unable to bestow such an honor for another 326,310 light cycles. I would be honored to share your company in the meantime."

The time Stratus mentions is nearly 900 years, which would likely far exceed the party members' life spans.

When Grarir dies, his maelstrom begins to dissipate, breaking up and giving way to a beautiful, sunny day over the course of an hour.





Grarir Rutbane

Wrapping Up the Dungeon

As things are drawing to an end, refer to this information for anything left to wrap up in the dungeon:

Adventure Hooks

- The party should be able to fulfill their adventure hooks by defeating Grarir Rutbane and bringing to an end the colossal storm he's summoned.
- The party can use the activated dais to return to the surface. The magic rune on the mountain peak, which propelled the party to Highsquall Apex, becomes dormant for a period of 894 years (the same time period required before Stratus can appoint a new Voice of the Storm).
- If the party was offered a reward for bringing an end to Grarir's storm, it can be awarded to them now or role-played as part of a different adventure.

Remaining Monsters

- If the cyclopes in Area A survive their encounter with the party, they withdraw from what's left of the hobgoblin legion, and return to a life of isolation.
- If any hobgoblins from Highsquall Apex survive the events of *Silver Linings*, they eventually return to the surface and install a new overlord to rebuild the legion. The process takes time however, and the hobgoblins shouldn't be an immediate threat to the party for some time.

Experience Points

- You can award each player 4,300 XP for defeating Grarir Rutbane and completing their adventure hooks. This includes experience for solving both puzzles in Highsquall Apex necessary to confront the hobgoblin overlord.
- You can award each player 1,150 XP if the party was able to overcome the trap in Area F.

Appendix A: New Monsters & NPCs

AIR ELEMENTAL, GREATER

Huge elemental, neutral

Armor Class: 17
Hit Points: 142 (15d12 + 45)
Speed: 30 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	25 (+7)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws: Dex +10, Wis +4
Damage Resistances: lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities: poison
Condition Immunities: exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses: darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 11
Languages: Auran
Challenge: 8 (3,900 XP)

Air Form. The elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Actions

Multiattack. The elemental makes two slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Whirlwind (Recharge 4—6). Each creature in the elemental's space must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, a target takes 20 (3d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage and is flung up to 20 feet away from the elemental in a random direction and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes an object, such as a wall or floor, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take the same damage and be knocked prone.
If the saving throw is successful, the target takes half the bludgeoning damage and isn't flung away or knocked prone.

AIR SENTRY

Medium elemental, neutral

Armor Class: 15
Hit Points: 78 (12d8 + 24)
Speed: 0 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Damage Resistances: lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities: poison
Condition Immunities: exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses: blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages: Auran
Challenge: 5 (1,800 XP)

Air Form. The air sentry can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Innate Spellcasting. The air sentry's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components.

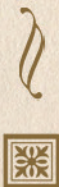
At will: *mage hand*, *ray of frost*
1/day each: *fog cloud*, *gust of wind*

Transparent. Even while the air sentry is in plain sight, it takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot an air sentry that has neither moved nor attacked. A creature that tries to enter the air sentry's space while unaware of it is surprised by the air sentry.

Actions

Multiattack. The air sentry makes two slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.



AIR WEIRD

Large elemental, neutral

Armor Class: 13

Hit Points: 58 (9d10 + 9)

Speed: 0 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances: lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities: poison

Condition Immunities: exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses: blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages: understands Auran but doesn't speak

Challenge: 3 (700 XP)

Air Bound. The air weird dies if it leaves the air to which it is bound or if that air is destroyed.

Air Form. The air weird can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Actions

Smother. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* The creature is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and at risk of suffocating, and the air weird can't smother another target. In addition, at the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

GRARIR RUTBANE, VOICE OF THE STORM

Medium humanoid (hobgoblin), lawful evil

Armor Class: 18 (plate)

Hit Points: 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws: Con +8, Int +6, Wis +6, Cha +8

Damage Resistances: bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities: lightning, thunder

Senses: truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages: Auran, Common, Goblin

Challenge: 12 (8,400 XP)

Magic Resistance. Grarir has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Martial Advantage. Once per turn, Grarir can deal an extra 14 (4d6) damage to a creature he hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of an ally of Grarir that isn't incapacitated.

Storm's Weapons. Grarir's weapon attacks are magical and deal an extra 9 (2d8) lightning damage on a hit (included in the attacks).

Actions

Multiattack. Grarir uses Wind Rush if able and then makes three attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 9 (2d8) lightning damage.

Lightning Blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 50/200 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d8) lightning damage and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on its attack rolls for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Wind Rush (Recharge 5-6). Each creature within 5 feet of Grarir is pushed up to 10 feet directly away from him. Grarir then moves up to 10 feet.

Reactions

Parry. Grarir adds 4 to his AC against one melee attack that would hit him. To do so, Grarir must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

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