

DM David's Side Trek: The Giant Ship

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

Chapter 3 of the *Dungeons & Dragons* adventure *Storm King's Thunder* encourages characters to roam the **Savage Frontier**, completing quests and facing warring giants.

Although this side trek expands on the suggested encounter for **Helms Hold** (p.91), you can also plant a hook at any time the characters travel the coast.

This episode aims to bring problem solving, role-playing, and more flavor to it might otherwise be a routine battle.

Background

Frost giants raid the Sword Coast searching for **Artus Cimber**, bearer of the *Ring of Winter*. Although they have pillaged down the coast, their search has failed.

Egof Rimebeard, captain of one the giants' mountainous raiding ships, hatches a scheme. His plunder includes a mound of books, scrolls, and papers stolen from settlements and merchants. Rimebeard knows the small folk use papers to record tales of their heroes—folk like Artus Cimber. Perhaps one of the stolen pages tells where to find Cimber and the *Ring of Winter*.

Rimebeard's scheme suffers one problem: None of the giants can read the small folks' markings. So he orders his giants to capture small folk to decipher the writing. The youngest small folk prove easiest to catch and carry. So now, as the giants plunder, they fill their bags with kids.

HOOKS

In Helm's Hold

Zara Dalcour tells the characters that frost giants have attacked and plundered homesteads and caravans along the **High Road**. Many members of the **Gilded Eye** traveled south to face this evil. Just yesterday, more bad tidings reached the monastery. Children have disappeared from fishing villages, forrester camps, and farms. Until now, the Giants only attacked those who stood in the way of their plunder. Could Giants be to blame for these disappearances? What purpose could the kidnappings serve? Can the children be saved? Zara asks the characters to investigate.

Near the coast

Traveling the coast, the characters spot a **frost giant** 250 feet away with the sack slung over his shoulder. Red stains color the bottom of the sack.

DC20 Wisdom (Perception): The sack thrashes, revealing living contents.

If the characters approach, the sack's movement becomes obvious.

See the topic, *Lone frost giant*.

If characters avoid the giant

The characters meet **Barluna**, a mother from a fishing village. Her two dogs cavort around the characters. She searches for her two children, Gummer and Rond, who disappeared last evening as they walked home from market. She fears that they may have taken a shortcut along the coastal cliffs. When she walked that path, she spotted frost giants and fled. She pleads for the characters to investigate.

LONE FROST GIANT

Giant's bag

A lone **frost giant** walks the countryside near the coast. His sack bulges and squirms. Red stains the bottom of the sack.

If the characters stop to watch, they hear a child hollering. The giant pauses, shakes the bag, and then walks on.

Agmund, the hungry giant

The frost giant **Agmund** belongs to raiders from a ship anchored off shore. When he got hungry, he split away from his group so that he could eat the captive children in his bag. Agmund has orders to deliver the children alive, but he figures that after he eats, he can find more.

If the characters follow from a distance

Agmund walks a mile until he reaches dead tree. He ties the bag to a high limb, breaks off some other branches, and uses them to build a fire.

If the characters confront the giant

Agmund demands to be left alone. He enjoys smashing small folk, but likes fighting with a full belly.

If the characters attack, Agmund fights to the death.

In the sack

The sack contains a hambone, a bale of cloth, loose berries, and three, uninjured children ages 11, 9, and 8. Berry juice stains the kids red.

That morning, the giant grabbed the children as they picked berries. Since then, they have tumbled in his bag.

Baily, the oldest child, says that yesterday he saw sails towering like mountains in the sky over the sea. He has seen many ships at sea, but never one so huge. Baily offers to lead the characters to the bay where he spotted the ship.

None of the children belong to Barluna, but they know their way home.

THE SHIP IN THE BAY

View from the shore

When the characters travel to the coast, they spot the kidnapper's ship.

The land meets sea at a bay flanked by hundred-foot cliffs. Waves crash over the rocks and the air smells of rotting seaweed. A monstrous **ship**, its sails furled, floats 360 feet off shore. Two **giants** stand atop the deck, one by the front mast and one by the main.

The bulwark around the deck rises to the giants' knees. A **woman** stands near a giant-sized **ballista** on the forcastle deck. Only giant-sized creatures can

operate the weapon. A **sack** dangles 70 feet above the deck, hanging from a boom attached to the front mast. Despite a lack of wind, the sack swings from its rope.

Wisdom (Perception) checks

DC15: The **woman** looks like a teenaged human. She wears buckskin and fur, and carries a staff draped with flowers.

DC20: The **sack** hangs from a **rope** that leads across the beam, down the front mast, and into the hand of the **giant** at the mast. The contents of the sack thrash and squirm.

Fishing boat

No smaller boats are visible near the ship or in the bay. If the characters walk to the ends of the bay, they find a fishing boat hidden in the rocks. The boat carries 7.

On the ship's deck

Giants. Two **frost giants** named **Solvi** and **Dondur** stand watch on the ship's deck. **Rimebeard** stands just below the deck.

Sack. At the front, Dondur holds the **rope** that keeps the sack aloft. The length of rope falls coils at Dondur's feet. If Dondur releases the rope and no one intervenes, then at the same initiative count on the next turn, the sack lands in the sea. The sack holds Barluna's children, **Gummer** and **Rond**. The giants are punishing them for attempting to climb the bulwark to swim to shore.

Ballista. Only giant-sized creatures can operate the ballista.

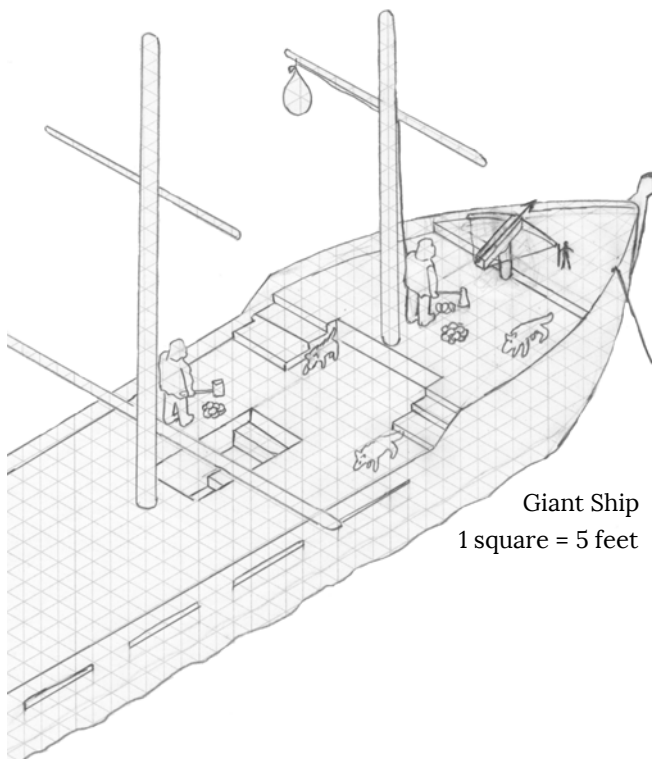
Bolt. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120/480 feet. one target. *Hit:* 44 (8d8).

Woman. The teenaged girl at the front of the ship is named **Diora**. Although she's a gifted **druid** captured from a community of forrester's, she could not escape the giants. They have seen her magic and so prefer to keep her in view. As long as the other children remain in peril, she follows the giants' orders.

Bulwark. The ship's bulwark—the wall around the deck—stands 5-feet off the deck and 20 feet from the sea.

Winter wolves. Three **winter wolves** rest by the bulwarks. They cannot be seen from the shore, but if the characters fly up, they'll see one wolf on the far side of the deck. The wolves' keen senses give them advantage on checks to notice invisible characters who stray within 20 feet.

Punt. One giant-sized punt boat floats tethered to far side of the ship, out of sight from the shore.



Climbing aboard the ship

Climbing the side requires a **DC15 Strength (Athletics)** check. An anchor rope drops from the bow into the water. Climbing this rope requires a **DC10 check**.

Tactics

Giants

If the giants spot anyone approaching the ship, Solvi fires the ballista at them. Donder stands on the rope that suspends the sack, and then throws rocks.

When attackers reach the ship, Rimebeard climbs to the deck and joins the battle.

Winter wolves

Until characters come in range of frost breath, the wolves remain hidden behind the ship's bulwark.

Diora

The druid Diora has no interest in fighting, so when the attackers reach the deck, she skips her first turn. When the giants threaten to kill hostages unless she fights, she joins the defense of the ship. Diora never strays more than 30 feet from the coil at Donder's feet.

Once the characters defeat a giant, a successful **DC15 Charisma (Persuasion)** check will convince Diora to turn her attacks on the other giants.

The rope suspending the sack

If Donder takes damage, he releases the rope. Diora will spend her next turn rushing to the coil at his feet and grabbing the rope. The rope hoists her up 40 feet while the sack gently lands on the deck.

The ship's hold contains the following plunder:

- 1 ton of foodstuffs and a 12 barrels of cheap ale of little value
- 12 casks of expensive brandy worth 300 gp each
- 10,000 gp in mixed coins
- Three art objects worth 750 gp each, including a puzzle ball sculpted from solid ivory, a golden torc, and tiny box containing a diorama of a floating city.

RETURNING GIANTS

Giant punt

When the characters reach the bay, one giant punt is away, transferring giants up the coast. An hour before nightfall, one punt will circle into the bay and reach the ship by dark. The boat carries 4 giants.

None of the returning giants have captives.

Giants on shore

If the characters capture or destroy both punts, the 10 remaining giants will gather and then swim to retake their ship.

Only giant-sized creatures can sail the ship.

UNDER THE DECK

Captive children

Below deck, the characters find 6 children picking through a 10-foot mound of papers, scrolls, and books. They look like they face the worst homework of their lives. Some of the kids cannot read, but the giants cowed them into faking.

If rescued, Diora knows the coast well enough to see that all the children reach their homes.

Treasure

Most of books and scrolls cover mundane topics, but a set of 3 rare tomes showing colorful fish will sell for 1200 gp as a set. The gold leaf decorating their covers make them easy to spot.

Most of the papers consist of merchant and town records. None of it has value to anyone but its owners.

