


# **PATHFINDER**<sup>®</sup> **ADVENTURE PATH**<sup>™</sup>

## **REIGN OF WINTER**

ADVENTURE PATH  PART 3 OF 6

# **MAIDEN, MOTHER, CRONE**

# PATHFINDER

## ADVENTURE PATH™

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## REIGN OF WINTER



## LAND OF PLAGUE AND RUINS

**B**y this point in the Reign of Winter Adventure Path, the PCs are in possession of the legendary *Dancing Hut of Baba Yaga*, and while they might not yet have complete control over the wondrous artifact, they can certainly use it to travel to interesting and exotic locales—like Iobaria, the setting for this month’s adventure, “Maiden, Mother, Crone.” But what is Iobaria, and why go there?

As we were outlining the Reign of Winter Adventure Path, we knew we wanted the *Dancing Hut* to take the PCs to a number of new locations, each time getting farther and farther away from the “core” campaign setting of the Inner Sea region. We wanted to start in Irrisen, or at least get the PCs there quickly, but once the hut was in their hands, the whole Great Beyond would be open to them. So where should they go? We thought we might take them to another planet, and then maybe on to one of the Outer Planes, or somewhere even more exotic (there’s a guy named Rasputin from a place

called Earth who kept popping up in our brainstorming sessions), but we needed an intermediary step before we left Golarion behind—something still connected to the Inner Sea to ease the PCs into their new roles as extraplanetary travelers. I immediately thought of Iobaria.

Little has been said about Iobaria up to now, beyond a relatively brief mention in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* and a gazetteer in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #33: The Varnhold Vanishing*—hardly surprising, given that Iobaria lies in the continent of Casmaron, beyond the bounds of the Inner Sea region. But Iobaria’s not that far away, and it still retains cultural connections to the realms of Avistan. Ulfen explorers from the Lands of Linnorm Kings were the first to “discover” Iobaria, Mendev was settled by Iobarian exiles, and Iobaria lies just off the map to the east of the nation of Brevoy. All of which made Iobaria a perfect locale for the Reign of Winter Adventure Path.



Truth be told, something about Iobaria had always intrigued me. I studied Russian in college (though I've forgotten most of it other than how to read and write in Cyrillic), as well as Russian history, and to me, Iobaria always seemed to be the most Russian-inspired land on Golarion, evoking the Russia of the Dark Ages and Slavic fairy tales, with deep, snow-covered forests, icy rivers, and scary monsters in the woods right outside your door. Add in a few more details from the gazetteer in "The Varnhold Vanishing," such as the massive stone maiden, matron, and crone carvings of Artrosa and the cyclopean watchtower of Hask-Ultharan with its ties to the demon lord Kostchtchie—who already had a history with Baba Yaga—and it soon became clear that if there was anywhere on Golarion where Baba Yaga would appear (other than Irriren, of course), it would be Iobaria.

But "Maiden, Mother, Crone" is not my first visit to Iobaria. In fact, I was so impressed with the Iobaria gazetteer in "The Varnhold Vanishing" that when I started an office Kingmaker game, I decided to set it not in the Stolen Lands of the River Kingdoms, but just a little farther east, in the unknown wilderness of Iobaria. Sadly, like the fallen empire of Iobaria itself, my "Kingmaker: Iobaria" game did not survive long. One of the advantages of the Adventure Path format is that it gives you just about everything you need to run an entire campaign, but once you start changing things, particularly something as drastic as the Adventure Path's assumed setting, the workload increases dramatically. It soon became apparent that I had bitten off more than I could chew, so the campaign came to an end before the PCs ever got to face the Stag Lord in "Stolen Land."

Nevertheless, we still had a lot of fun with the game, and my coworkers came up with a memorable cast of characters, like James Jacobs's cleric of Desna, Echo Sidra, with her fear of open graves and propensity for repeatedly poisoning herself; Crystal Frasier's halfling druid Z (and her elk animal companion Zachariah), a constant source of comic relief; and Sara Marie's witch, Bribri, who taught the group the valuable lesson that just because you've been killed by zombies doesn't mean you're really dead, when she reanimated as a zombie herself and had to be put down for good by her former allies.

But most importantly, I learned that I wanted to do more with Iobaria—and so here we are. Tim Hitchcock did an amazing job of bringing the three linked dungeons of Artrosa to life, and he and Adam Daigle added some more detail to the lands of Iobaria with their gazetteer of the Dvezda Marches. The Reign of Winter marches on, and Iobaria will be left behind when the *Dancing Hut* travels to its next destination, but I'd love to go back there someday and learn some more of its secrets.

As usual, we'd love to hear what you think about this latest foray to far-off lands. Stop by the messageboards on [paizo.com](http://paizo.com) to tell us your opinion, and let us know if you'd

## ON THE COVER

This month's cover gives us the centaur Vsevolod, priest of the demon lord Kostchtchie. He leads the army of frost giants and demons invading Baba Yaga's statue-dungeon of Artrosa in search of the treasures and secrets of the Queen of Witches—and the PCs must get past him to claim one of the keys they need to take the *Dancing Hut* to its next destination.

like to see more of Iobaria or other remote locales. And get ready to leave Golarion behind, because the PCs are about to find themselves on the distant world of Triaxus in "The Frozen Stars," the next installment of the Reign of Winter Adventure Path!

## LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

In "Maiden, Mother, Crone," for the first time in the Reign of Winter Adventure Path the PCs are taken away from the Inner Sea region to the land of Iobaria, where the "Common" tongue of Taldane is spoken rarely, if at all. As the campaign progresses and the PCs venture into even more far-flung locales, the chance of meeting characters with whom the PCs share a language drops even further.

The PCs can of course learn new languages by putting additional ranks into the Linguistics skill, and spells such as *comprehend languages* and *tongues* can remove most language barriers, but there may be times in the campaign where the PCs encounter a new language and have not yet put that extra rank into Linguistics, or don't have a spellcaster with *comprehend languages* prepared. In these cases, you might want to consider implementing a house rule allowing a PC to use the Linguistics skill to understand unfamiliar spoken languages as well as written languages. Use the same DCs as for deciphering written text: DC 20 for simple ideas, DC 25 for everyday speech, and DC 30 or higher for intricate or complex concepts. Alternatively, the PCs can attempt a DC 20 Sense Motive check to get an idea of what someone is saying at a more emotional level by reading body language and facial expressions, though only the most general concepts, rather than specific information, can be gleaned in this way. In both of these cases, however, the PCs should get only a basic understanding of what is said. To have a true conversation, a PC still needs to learn the language or use magic to communicate.

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