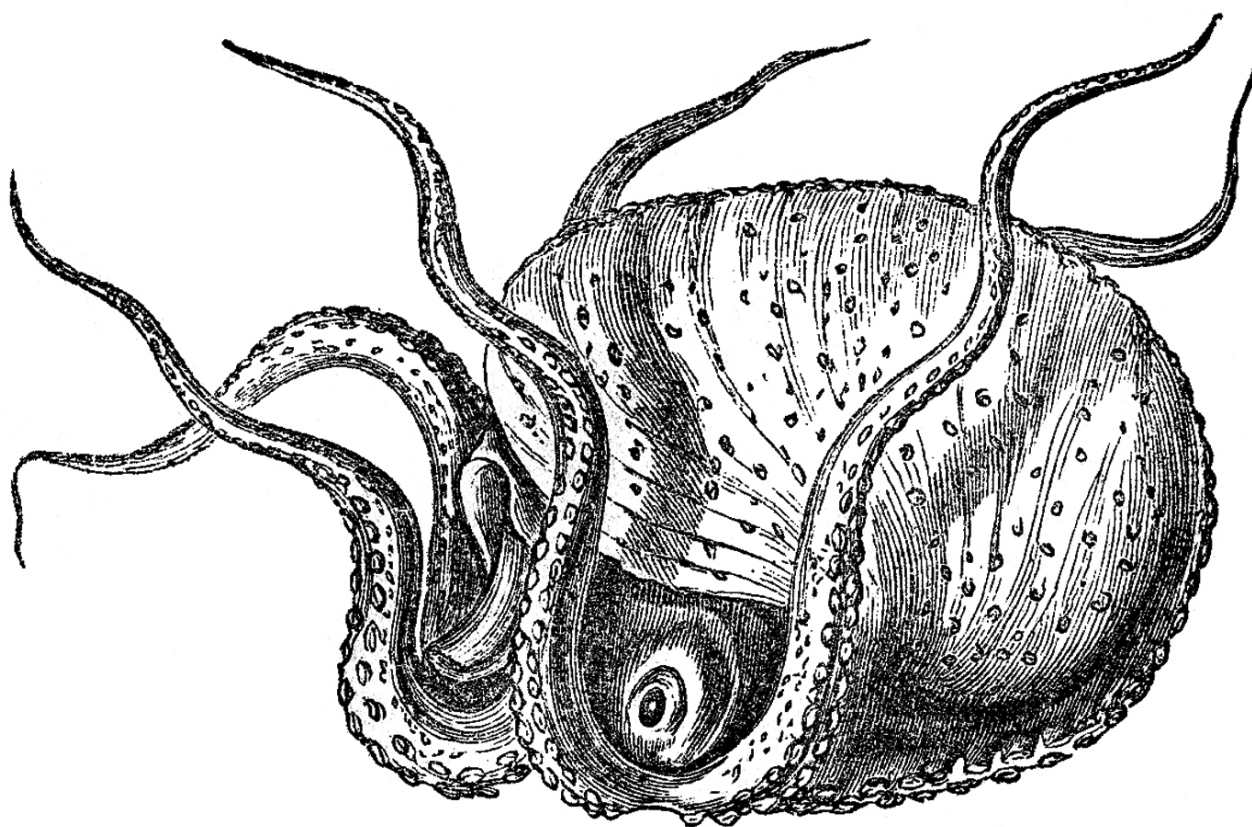
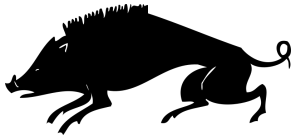




ESCAPE FROM GRONCHO'S LAIR

An OSR adventure for low-level characters
by
Stuart P. Keating



Background

In 2012 Erik Tenkar (of Tenkar's Tavern fame) held a design-a-dungeon contest featuring a map from the supremely talented Dyson Logos. This is my entry.

Most adventures involve getting to the absolute bottom of a dungeon, blithely swinging hammers and swords through warriors and civilians, pillaging and looting along the way.

This adventure inverts the traditional model: The adventurers easily run through a surprisingly unpopulated goblin warren and then get struck with amnesia at the very bottom. They know their identities, skills and class abilities but have no idea what's happened over the past several days. Players must fight their way out of the dungeon through increasingly threatening encounters, culminating in a "boss" battle as they hit the surface.

This dungeon is designed to be system agnostic, but would be ideal for an old-school system played by a group of players familiar with new-school RPG systems. This adventure is designed for level 1 or 2 characters and would work well as a kickoff adventure for a campaign, since you don't have to awkwardly handwaive that "so you're all in a room" thing that usually happens at the start of a campaign.

the setup

Groncho is a goblin war chief. He lives in an underground complex that originally served as a dwarven mining outpost before Calamity

Struck (TM). Groncho likes to raid the surrounding villages for slaves and food and treasure. In fact, that's what he's doing when your players (hired by a local mayor? racial hatred against goblins? simply out for plunder? Your call) showed up to kill him, disperse his followers and steal all of his stuff. Timing really is everything.

The players fight their way through the goblin women and children (and the skeleton guard force left behind) and find their way to Groncho's nasty goblin boudoir. Where they encounter a chest. A trapped chest. Everyone in the party falls prey to a poison that causes short term amnesia, and comes to deep in Groncho's lair, with no recollection of having got there. And that's how the adventure starts!

Note: You know how to stat up goblins and hobgoblins and dogs. I haven't done it for you. Goblins might have shitty leather armor and daggers or short swords. Hobgoblins will have better armor and axes or maces.

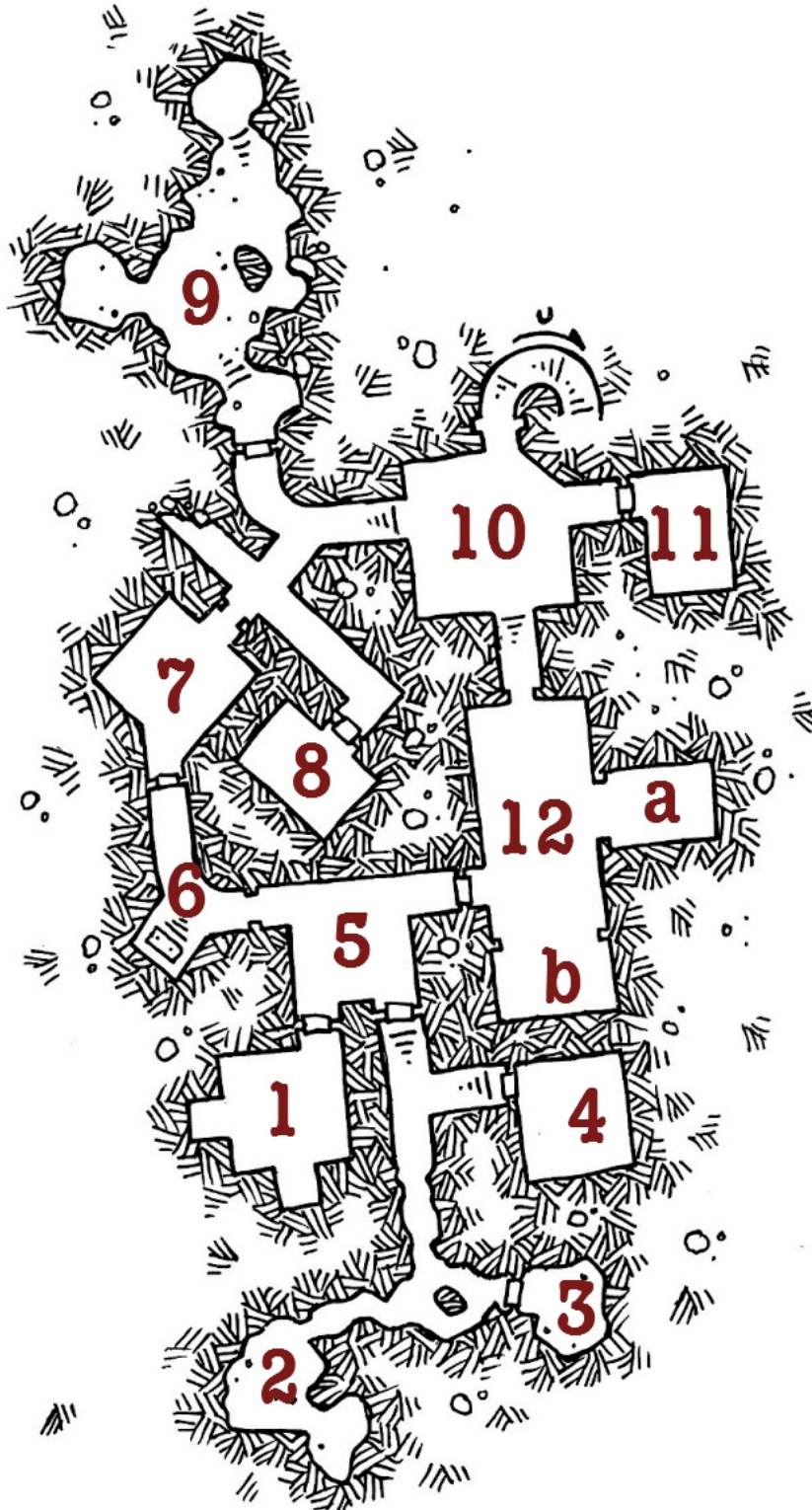
RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Every in-game hour roll a d6.

On a 1 roll on this chart.

1. Dire weasel
2. Hobgoblin mercenary, hostile but willing to barter
3. 1d4 scouts with 1d4 goblin dogs
4. 1d3 undead goblins from Area 10
5. Goblin civilians, won't fight but will attempt to steal things and generally be a nuisance.
6. Random improvised trap (DM is encouraged to be creative) that does 1d2 damage (physical or stat) on an easy reflex save.

GRONCHO'S LAIR



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1: the sleepers awaken

The swirling green fog slowly abates, revealing a somewhat ransacked room, 20' on a side. There's an open chest on the southern wall, which appears to have been the source of the fog. In front of the chest are the smoldering remains of a halfling in a dark cloak. You're pretty sure it's Karl, your trap-checker/mapper. You can't seem to remember anything from the past few days, the last thing you recall is preparing to raid the den of an infamous gang of goblinoid bandits. A voice croaks f you "The Master's not going to like this!" As the smoke clears, the players are standing a few feet away from the smoldering ruins of a chest. The only things in the chest that weren't ruined by the trap are a bottle of cheap wine and 37 gold pieces. The room contains a wardrobe, an actual bed (a rarity for goblinoids) piled high wigh filthy hides and furs, a table and a cage, upon which rests a hideous, featherless parrot--the source of the croaking voice.

Upon further questioning, you can learn from the "parrot" that the Master is none other than Groncho, a goblin bandit chief of small notoriety. He left a few days ago to raid a nearby village and should be back aaaaany moment now.

Truly inspired questioning will reveal (in a roundabout way) that the parrot was a failed polymorph attempt involving a bat, a goblin and some feathers by Plerth, the gang's shaman.

2: chamber of smells

As the corridor turns from carved stone to rough-hewn cavern walls,

you are hammered about the sinuses with a truly putrid stench.

Inside the room is a giant filthy pile of goblin refuse. Entering the room requires a fort save. Any serious digging requires a further fort save. Digging around for several turns yields some rats and 2000 copper pieces.

3: adventurers tomb

You discover a dusty door recessed into the hewn-stone walls. It doesn't appear to have opened in a long time.

This door is locked from the inside, and can be unlocked with a relatively easy lockpick check, but it's barricaded from the other side. Breaking the barricade requires passing a significant strength check. Dwarves will recognize a faint dwarven dweomer radiating from the door/room.

If the players manage to open the door, read the following: *This room, evidently a bedchamber for a high-ranking denizen, has clearly been abandoned for many years, perhaps several centuries. A layer of dust covers everything in the room. Everything except a 6' circle in the middle of the room, which contains a dessicated dwarf corpse!*

Shelagh was a dwarven adventurer who came to the dwarvenhome hoping to claim it as her own. Unfortunately some foul beast from the depths of the mines was stalking this level of the complex and Shelagh ended up trapped in this room. Knowing she couldn't get out and unwilling to let her

familial treasure fall into unclean hands, she barricaded the room and took her own life.

Arrayed around Shelagh are the following items: MW dwarven mail, ornate dagger worth 50gp, MW dwarven axe, bag containing 2d100gp worth of small gems, bag containing d100gp, pen made from quill of black roc, apparently used to write will (radiates magic), pack contains random adventuring gear (DMs choice).

Clutched in the corpse's mummified fingers and prominently visible is a piece of parchment. Reading this parchment (which magically transforms into whatever language the reader speaks natively) reveals it to be Shelagh's last will and testament (written with the quill of obiesiance in the dwarf's own blood).disposing of the good arrayed around her and her share of her clanhoard to her family, located in a mountainhome some 3 weeks distant.

Should the players take BOTH the will and treasure, "nothing" happens (in fact, secretly re-roll all failed trap checks--the dwarf's spirit assumes they're executing her will and is helping them get out of the dungeon). Delivering the treasure will result in friendship with the dwarf's clan and a minor boon (DM's choice) from the clan's deity.

However, should the players take the treasure and NOT the will (or publicly discuss stealing the stuff, or equip the armor or wield the axe, etc), the dwarf corpse animates!

SHELAGH'S CORPSE

STATS: 1 slam attack for d3, can magically animate ornate dagger for 1d4 slashing thrice per day, 1HD+4. Bludgeoning damage does half, piercing damage only inflicts 1 damage.

Should the players defeat the dwarf corpse, the dwarf's spirit is permanently bound to the caverns until her stuff is delivered. Secretly re-roll all successful trap rolls at a -2 penalty and take the lower result--the dwarf's ghost is actively working against the players.

4: Ransacked storeroom

This room has been torn apart! Smashed barrels and crates are strewn about the room, rocks have pried out of the wall, someone smashed several flagstones in the floor, even the torch sconces have been ripped off the wall! Who would do such a thing?

Discarded inside the room are several ten-foot poles, a couple of chickens and a bound goblin. If you ungag the goblin he starts shrieking that the reavers are back, drawing goblin scouting party with dogs in 1d4 turns.

5: audience chamber

Yet more carnage. This large room smells of blood and steel. The center of the room is a riot of paper and splintered wood, and there's a dead hobgoblin in tattered leather armor near each exit. In the southern portion of the room rests a large throne with four armrests. It appears to be made of trash.

There's a 1 in 3 chance of 1d3 goblin scouts w/ goblin dogs.

The players already looted the guards as well as this room, although they missed a hidden compartment on the throne, which contains a spell of magic missile, cast at second level. Groncho had his mage prepare these for the (not infrequent) occasions where he had to publicly execute a minion.

Smashed remains of large oaken table lie in the middle of the room, with discarded maps of the region littered about.

Note: Goblins encrypt their maps using words that overlay (and modify) geographic features and symbols with varying contextualized meaning that can only be learned through years of study.

6: weeping statue.

An ancient 8' tall statue of a Dwarven maiden rests in the corner of this hallway. Threads of mica and semiprecious ore marble the stone. The statue appears to be quietly weeping, with the "tears" collecting in a large basin near her feet. It seems like the goblins use this as a fresh water source, since many crudly made buckets are jumbled around the area.

A cursory inspection reveals to coin-shaped imprints where her eyes are, and a closer inspection reveals a slot in the statue's throat that seems like it could accommodate the blade of a dagger. The statue is an ancient dwarven failsafe, to be used in case the keep was ever threatened from the mines below.

Activating the statue: Players can activate the statue by inserting a gold piece into each eye and then

the dagger into the throat slot. Each action produces larger amounts of water from the statue and groaning noises from the surrounding rock, providing fair warning to the players of the consequences of their actions.

If the statue is destroyed or "activated", it crumbles and the pieces explode outward, propelled by a torrent of water as the pool from **Area 26** drains into the hallway. Everyone within the hallway takes 2d6 impact/crushing damage from being swept down the hallway and must make a somewhat difficult fortitude save or fall unconscious.

Unconscious characters will drown in d6 rounds if not pulled out of the water.

If statue is destroyed: Second floor of dungeon is flooded with 2 feet of water, pond creature in **Area 26** suffocates in d20 rounds. A relatively easy climb check will gain you access to the drained pond in **Area 26**.

7: pointing the finger

This was evidently a training room, where very young goblins would fight dummies young goblins would fight roosters and weasels. It looks like you disrupted some sort of defensive training conducted by a bunch of elderly goblins. By slaughtering all of them. Some goblins from the raiding party are taking the opportunity to loot the corpses you left behind, (assuming no adventurer alive would actually pick up all that poorly-made leather armor). The goblins all look up when you enter. The largest

goblin, a scrawny dark-green goblin with notched ears, levels a bloody finger at the largest in the party and demands to know if you were responsible for this.

These goblins, known as Magg's Meatheads, are infamous for their hatred for authority. The only reason they're kept around is that they're considered too inept to be a threat to Groncho. These guys really hated goblin training, were always picked last for trashball, and didn't get much loot from the raid, since they were assigned to guard the donkeys. In short, they're thrilled that the trainers are dead and that there's plenty of loot to be had in this room.

If the party admits to murdering the trainers (which they most certainly did), the goblins hoot with delight and thank the party. They offer to create a diversion through Area 10.

If the party says no, the goblins will attempt to frame you for the murders (so that they can steal the stuff unhindered). They start loudly calling for reinforcement, drawing goblin scouts and the two hobgoblins in **Area 12a** within 1d4 turns.

8: goblin armory.

This room is full of empty racks, with a scattering of armor and arms in various states of disrepair. Also there's a slime just hanging out and digesting some leather armor. It appears to have fallen from an open trapdoor in the ceiling.

There's some minor treasure (a few gems) in the bottom of one of the arrow barrels, and two potions of

Cure Light Wounds in glass flasks in the crawlspace that was containing the slime.

9: Rank abattoir

Something stirs among the corpses you left littering the floor in this old prison, but it's too dark to see anything for certain.

The movement among the corpses is 3 *Carion Crawlers* enjoying the spoils of your earlier exploration.

This area is usually used as a holding cell for prisoners. No treasure in the room, but this would be an excellent place for a plot hook left by a long-deceased prisoner.

10: careful with that talisman, eugene!

As you enter what appears to be a large assembly hall or staging area, you see a scene of pure chaos. A goblin in bronze mail is running around shrieking, a strange talisman around his neck glowing with malevolent energy. The dead goblins sprawled around the floor are reanimating one by one and are chasing after the goblin with surprising agility. Several other goblins are erecting and hiding behind makeshift barricades and fighting for their lives.

Note: If the goblins in Area 7 agreed to help you, they will rush into the fray, giving you a chance to climb the stairs to Area 13.

Goblin zombies are like regular zombies, except smaller, faster, and more likely to poison or sicken you with their bite. There are 1d8 goblin zombies currently reanimated and 2d8 unanimated goblin corpses.

There are 6 goblin scouts, including the one with the talisman. Every round there's a 1 in 3 chance of the talisman raising another dead character.

The talisman can be destroyed or kept in a lead-lined coffer to negate its effects, otherwise it consistently (1 in 3/minute) raises dead within a 25' radius. This talisman could be very valuable to the right sort of wizard, although they might just take it rather than pay for it.

If undamaged (and if the goblin zombies get to him his armor will be torn to shreds), the goblin's bronze mail is worth 25gp to a goblinoid or 50gp to a collector, since it's made from a collection of priceless bronze plates looted from a church.

11: cleric's quarters.

This door, bearing an inscription of Maglubiyet, is locked. There's a pick jammed into the lock, meaning it can't be opened. Turns out Karl wasn't actually that great of a rogue.

The cleric's room is unmolested, and contains a small bedroll, a table with two chairs, a greasy, smoky lantern and a shelf of goblin books. A loose rock in wall conceals 24 silver pieces, a gem worth 1d30 gp, a silvered dagger, and a holy symbol of Maglubiyet.

12: goblin Barracks:

This area is evidently where many of the goblins sleep, and evidently the scene of a great battle. Smashed furniture covers much of the floor, and congealed goblinoid blood covers most of the ceiling. Of note is the alcove to the south, where

goblin women and children have erected a massive barrier from scrap wood, and the alcove to the east, where several hobgoblins are drinking and dicing.

a. 4 Hobgoblins drinking heavily and playing dice. These mercenaries were sent to lead the goblin scouts to find the interlopers, but decided that the goblins could do just fine on their own. The hobgoblins are drunk, so they suffer a -2 (or equivalent) to hit, but hit at +2 (or equivalent) damage. They're wearing studded leather armor and carry scimitars.

b. Goblin women and children huddled behind barricade. They're terrified of the party. One has a wand of wonder and will use it on the party if they try to break down the barricades.

13: trapped stairs.

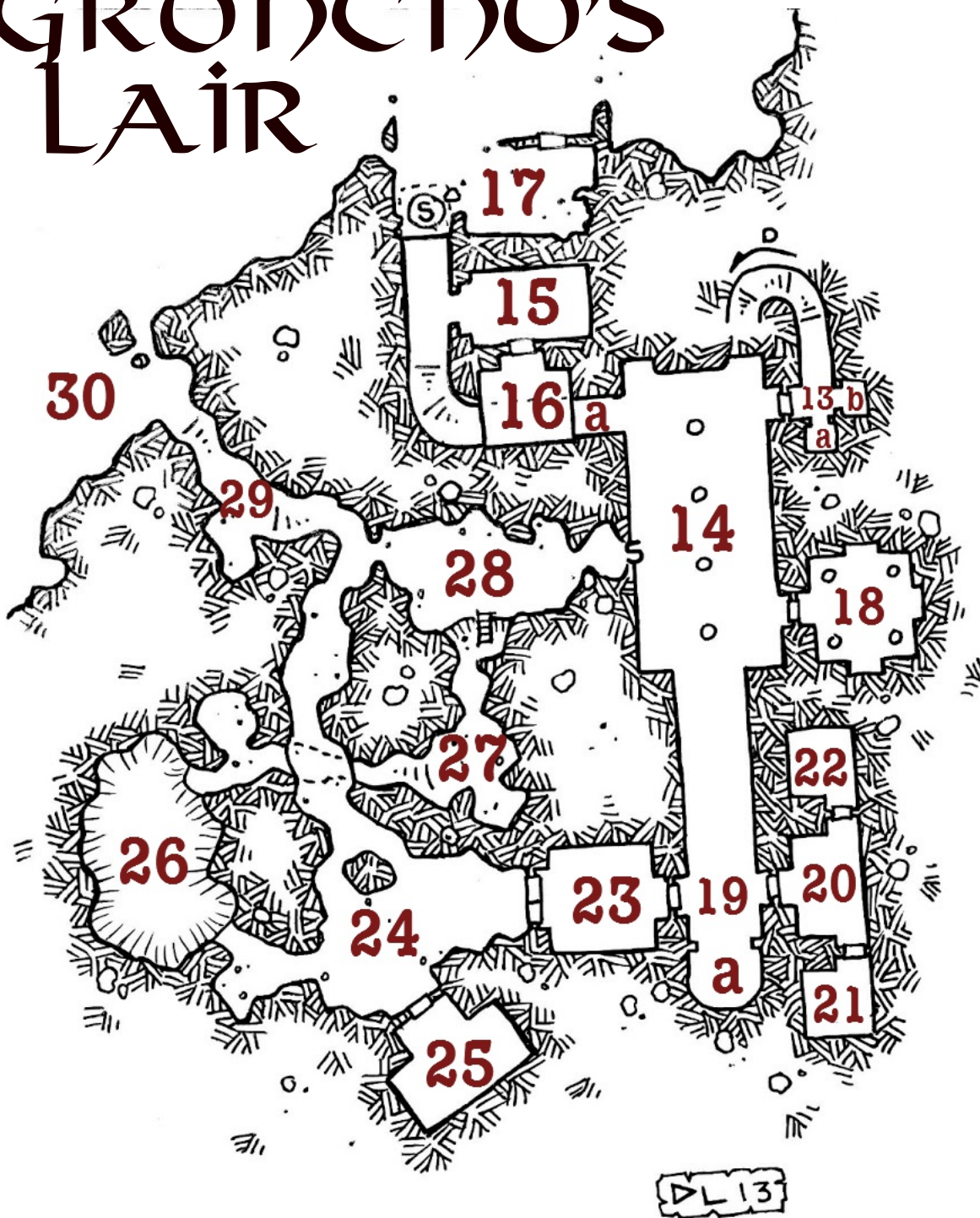
The stairs ascend in a lazy spiral to the upper level of the complex. You hear some faint arguments from the floor above, but in order to see anything you'll have to climb at least halfway up the stairs.

Goblins at (a) are set up to roll kegs down the stairs. Characters must make a reflex save or take 1d3 impact damage from being clobbered. The goblins will get to roll at least one keg down the stairs per player, unless they're all engaged in combat or dead. The kegs will either explode on contact with the players or contact with the bottom of the stairs.

These goblins ("Trorg's Trappers") are exceedingly crafty and have developed a series of nasty surprises inside the kegs.

The kegs have the following in them

GRONCHO'S LAIR



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(roll d6):

1. Bad brandy mixed with pitch and pine tar. Unlike lantern oil, it's basically napalm. Hope those goblins don't have flaming arrows! (They do).
2. Gray ooze. Will attack party.
3. Goblin shit. Why are the goblins shitting in barrels? And why are they storing it? -2 to any charisma-based checks and any rolls to avoid detection until the players are all cleaned up.
4. Lantern oil. Not napalm, but definitely flammable. Will make things very greasy. -2 to any agility rolls while attempting to climb the stairs.
5. Sand. Extra d3 impact from the weight. Negates any previous grease effect.
6. The goblins hastily threw everything at hand into the barrels for their defense, meaning this barrel contains garbage, food scraps, the occasional goblin child, and treasure. Party gains d20 gp worth of valuable items.

14: common area:

This room clearly served as a common room for the goblin complex, although now it's more of a "carnage room." There's lots of flipped over tables and dead goblins. It's clear that many goblins have returned to the complex, you can hear lots of shouting in the corridors ahead.

There's not much treasure in here, but there's certainly some danger! There's a portcullis that can be dropped at the south end of the room and the goblins also keep a few grey oozes in special barrels, ready to deploy. Should the goblins drop the portcullis, the archers at 19 will move forward and shoot anyone attempting to lift the grate.

Note: The mechanism to the secret door that leads to **Area 28** is easily found, but it only works when the

portcullis is down--another Dwarven failsafe.

a. Flickering firelight lights the hallway from above. You hear a female goblin angrily cursing in the distance. The murderholes in the ceiling have been disguised as fissures in the rocks, but an excellent or careful search would detect their purpose. See **Area 16** for the boiling oil trap.

15: plerth's lab:

*This chamber appears to have served as a library and workspace for a magic user before it was ransacked and looted *cough cough*. Presumably it served as a library and workspace for the extremely angry goblin wearing feathers embedded in her skull. "That's mine! YOU DID THIS!" she shrieks, pointing at a small piece of jewelry worn by a party member.*

Plerth, the goblin shaman, is extremely mad that her workshop and library have been ransacked. Plerth immediately notices one of the objects looted from her room on the party. Plerth is an innovative scholar in goblin magic, and has developed a strange polymorph spell, which she can cast three times/day (if you use Vancian casting).

Affected player must make a fort save or gain goblinoid features, resulting in the usual minuses to personality and charisma checks, enmity of elves and orcs, and general expulsion from polite society. If successfully cast again on same player, they fully gain goblin form but retain their personality and allegiances. Third

time? FULL GOBLIN. Must make will save to avoid being hostile to adventuring party, player is a fully a goblin but retains their skills, spells and abilities.

The party already looted Plerth's lab, but she's carrying a wand of *Magic Missile* (8 charges), spell components worth 100 gp, and a scroll with the spells *Zone of Truth* and *Identify* on it twice (for interrogating prisoners.

PLERTH THE ANGRY SHAMAN

STATS: 3HD+4 (16hp) AC 14 (+2 size, +2 goblin magic aura). ATK dagger +2 (1d4+poison, -2 STR). Spells: Sleep (2/day), Goblinmorph (3/day), Bane (1/day), Hold person (2/day). Caster level 3.

TACTICS: She'll attempt to turn the strongest looking character into a goblin, then cast sleep on anyone who looks like they can use magic. She'll use her wand of *Magic Missile* and *Hold Person* if anyone gets close. Her shouting will draw the goblins in **Area 16** in one turn, they will immediately engage in melee with the players, screening the shaman. Plerth is enraged beyond reason and will fight to the death.

16: Boiling oil trap!

Several goblins, heavily scarred and wearing nothing but loincloths are toiling in this hot, sooty, greasy room. The fires in the corners give off a hellish glare, and acrid fumes emerge from the giant kettles on top of each fire.

Goblins hastily set up kettles of pitch and oil and started heating it to pour through the murder holes in the floor (onto the hallway at **Area 14a**).

Roll 1d6.

1. The goblins fuck up and scald themselves for 2d6 damage.
- 2-3. The goblins pour the oil but it's not yet warm. Everyone's covered in grease. And flammable.
- 4-5. The oil is very hot--2d6 damage plus grease.
- 6 The oil is magically superheated, players must make an easy save v. death (DC 15). If they pass, they take 2d6 damage and are covered in grease.

The goblins will then of course throw torches down the murderholes. Any fire in the corridor will burn for at least an hour.

17: secret exit:

Even the goblins don't know about this door--A very difficult search check will find the door. The exit leads you to the remains of your pre-delve camp. You left some supplies here, including 1d4 rations per person and a small cache of minor healing potions. The party can sneak away from here without fighting through the rest of the complex.

18: chapel of maglubiyet

You open the bronze-banded doors into a thoroughly desecrated temple to Maglubiyet, the filthy goblinoid deity. Praying at the wrecked altar are a Cleric in goblinoid plate mail and four muscular flagellant acolytes. They appear to be simultaneously praising their raiding success and lamenting the destruction of their place of worship.

Oax the Cleric his four devoted acolytes are very upset at the desecration of their temple and will fly into a frenzied state should the players make their presence known, taking a -4 to AC, but gaining an

attack and a +2 to hit. Oax is wearing masterwork goblin plate mail and carrying a masterwork goblin warhammer, a ritual dagger (1d4, poisoned) and a golden chain of office worth 100 gp.

His acolytes each carry a small pouch of spores that allow goblins to fly into a bloodlust. It makes nongoblins sneeze compulsively for an hour or so.

OAX THE DEVOTED CLERIC

STATS: HD3+4: 16hp. AC 16 (+2 size/dex, +4 plate) ATK hammer +2 (1d6+2) Spells known: Cure light wounds(4/day), Cure medium wounds (1/day), Bless (2/day).

TACTICS: Oax will immediately cast *Bless* on himself and his acolytes and then wade right into battle. He'll attempt to flank any character fighting with an acolyte, and cast his healing spells as needed. He has combat casting.

GOBLIN FLAGELLATORS (4)

STATS: 2HD: 8hp. AC 11 (+1 dex) ATK whip with several barbed heads (1d6+2, critical hit disfigures [ruins armor, -1 charisma/personality])

TACTICS: Fly into frenzy, bathe in blood of foes.

19: arrow hallway

This hallway is heavily covered by 8 goblin archers in area 19a, who have flipped over tables from 18 to use as cover. Frontal assault should be nearly suicidal for a low-level character, since it will take two full rounds of combat to clear the wreckage obstructing the hallway. The goblins will break if their number falls to half, fleeing the caves and quitting the gang.

20: kitchen

Goblins preparing to slaughter a cow, a goat and a pair of dogs who are all alive and in a state of panic. The cooks are not at all interested in fighting the party. Dogs would make decent wardog companions if tamed.

21: "pantry"

Supreme foul food closet. No real treasure to speak of, unless you're into rotting carcasses and garbage. Roll on the encounter table.

22: chef's quarters.

The tribe's chef fancies himself a gentleman of letters and has a volume of regional history hidden in his bed. The only other treasure are some razor-sharp knives that he saves for special carving occasions.

23: grand entrance (or exit)

Apparently you freed some prisoners from Area 9, and they made their way up to this once-grand entrance. replete with defaced dwarven carvings and vaulted ceilings. Not that they can admire the ancient handiwork of the dwarves who lived here, since they got smashed into a jelly. Presumably by the massive maul being wielded by the enormous bugbear standing before the gates. The bugbear stomps on one of the dead prisoner's skulls, crushing it. He roars a challenge. Maybe you should've sent them with an escort...

The bugbear has no treasure, but the dead prisoners have the 1d100 copper pieces the party gave them to make it back to society.

24: entry cave

This large cavern has torches burning in iron sconces, illuminating the well-trod floor and a truly impressive crystalline stalagmite. You can feel a very slight breeze from the North. You must be near the surface!

Roll on the encounter table. The stalagmite will collapse if it's dealt 10 hitpoints of damage or if the DM thinks it funny/dramatic/etc. Anyone hit by the stalagmite will die, reflex save for a broken limb (roll for which) instead. The crystal is worthless unless you have a good idea for it.

25: goblin kennels

An unspeakably foul stench and an almost demonic howling emanates from this chamber. Inside you find a one-eyed goblin in a heavy leather smock with a hook for a hand snapping a whip at a pack of vicious, slaving goblin dogs. The floor is slick (and disgusting) with animal waste,

There are 2d6 goblin dogs accompanying the kennelmaster. He politely inquires as to the nature of your intrusion deep into their living space and then attacks, using his dogs as a screen as he attempts to trip or disarm players with his whip. If engaged in melee he gets two attacks, one with a rusty short sword and one with his hook (1d2, critical hit removes eyeball).

26: cistern.

Can be drained by demolishing the statue at **Area 6**. There's a Minor Unspeakable Creature here, (if you really need a description it's covered in teeth and has the look and consistency of a gigantic

human liver). It attacks with toothed tentacles. When you show up, terrified goblin at the North end of the lake attempts to rile up monster w/ 10' pole while two shortbow archers provide cover. Monster will arrive in 3 rounds and attack on the 4th, while the goblins flee--the one with the pole to **Area 30** to notify Groncho, the other two first to **Area 28** to warn the quartermaster and then to **Area 29** to serve as scouts. Note: Players can't kill the creature save for draining the pool.

THE LIVERTOOTH HORROR

STATS (tentacle): 2HD+2 (10hp) AC 13 (+2 dex, +1 tooth armor) ATK 1d3 tentacles +3 (1d4+1), creature has 10 tentacles total. Creature will asphyxiate (is that what happens to fish out of water?) in 1d20 rounds if pool is drained via Area 6.

TACTICS: Creature is riled up! It will lash out violently and then attempt to grapple at +4. A grappled character will be pulled underwater in a round and will drown 1d6 rounds after that. and then drown player characters.

27: careful as you go

A series of tripwires in this smoky passage serve as the trigger for rolling boulder trap in **Area 28**--hitting any of them will set it off. They can be discovered with a moderate search check and they untrap easily--although successfully untrapping releases the boulder anyway (goblin technology is notoriously fickle). The players can make reflex saves to avoid the wires.

28: it's a trap!

Goblin quartermaster and 1d4 other non-combat types here. They

don't really want to fight (they're here to attack you from behind should you engage in combat with the master). They've set up a makeshift rolling boulder trap, constructed out of a cart, a bunch of rocks, some explosives and a lot of sharpened wooden stakes. Players can run from it (reasonable reflex save), if they fail to outrun it they can try to roll out of the way or under the cart on a moderately difficult reflex save. Should players fail both rolls, they take 1d10+2 damage from crushing, spikes, flames, pathos, etc. The quartermaster and other goblins have crossbows and will shoot at downed characters but will flee the cave if any combat gets close.

29: advance scouts

You can see daylight up ahead and hear birds chirping! The path steady climbs towards the light. Suddenly you hear a "twang" and a crossbow bolt flies at you!

There are two scouts here. They are obscured by the sun streaming in behind them. They cover each other in retreat-- one will fire a crossbow at players and one will walk backwards while reloading. After three turns of this they'll be out of the cave. Should one get seriously injured, they both break and run to warn Groncho.

30: just walk away

You blink in the bright sunlight. Arrayed before you is a line of crossbowmen and a pair of well-armored hobgoblins. They're all dwarfed (or goblined) by the massive boar standing in front of them. The boars tusks are caked with gore, as are the boots and legs

of the rider. As your gaze travels upward you note the scars, the trophy belt of humanoid ears, the tremendous paunch, the spare set of arms, and four hands holding hand crossbows. As you meet the hateful, red gaze of Groncho, his mouth opens into a broken, black grin. "Welcome to my humble home!" he cackles, unloading his crossbows at you.

Groncho waits outside with valuable captives and plunder. He sits astride a boar. His fat, scarred body is notable most for the extra set of arms, located right below his first set. He is accompanied by the half the archers from **Area 19**, the scouts from **Area 29**, and two hobgoblin mercenaries (treat as low-level fighters in studded leather armor).

GRONCHO (THE BAD GUY)

STATS: 6HD+4 28hp) AC 15 (-1dex +4 chain, +2 bucklers) Atk 4x hand crossbow -4 (1d6 no crit) or 2x short sword -1 (1d6+3).

TACTICS: Groncho's first attack is a volley of four crossbow bolts, which he then hands back to his goblin assistants (there are two, 6hp, AC10, bite attack +1 1d2), who ride behind him on the boar. They will reload the crossbows in two turns and then spend one turn handing them back, meaning Groncho can use his crossbow attacks every three rounds. In the meantime he has the boar charge the players (reflex save to avoid) and attacks with two masterwork short swords. Goblin assistants can also pour potions of Cure Light Wounds into an open wound on Groncho's neck, allowing him to consume them without

taking an action. Any ranged attack on Groncho that misses has a 25% chance to hit one of his assistants. Each assistant slain removes two of his crossbow attacks.

BERTHILDE THE BOAR

STATS: 6HD+8 (32hp) AC 13 (-1 size, +2 natural, +2 hide armor) ATK charge (2d6, reflex to avoid), trample +6 (2d6+6, prone creatures only, reflex save for half), gore +4 (1d8).

TACTICS: Berthilde will obey her master, but when she drops below 12hp Groncho loses control of Berthilde (33% chance attacking players, 33% chance attacking goblins, 33% chance running amok) and must make a reflex save to avoid being flung from Berthilde's back. If Groncho falls off he and his assistants are each trampled (no save) by Berthilde, who then flees for the forest.

THE REST OF THE GANG

STATS: The goblins have an assortment of ranged and melee weapons, most are wearing leather armor in poor condition. The hobgoblins are wearing human-sized studded leather armor and have masterwork axes that they stole from a dwarven caravan. The goblins will shoot every round if they have shortbows or every third if they have crossbows--they'll stagger so some are shooting every round. They each have a 10% chance of hitting Groncho (30% Groncho, 50% Berthilde, 10% each assistant). The hobgoblins will circle the melee and keep players close to Berthilde. They'll attack any magic users they can. They're mercenaries, so they've each got satchels with 1d100 gp worth of coin, gems, etc) Everyone

flees if Groncho dies, the hobgoblins break and flee if they're reduced to 25% health.

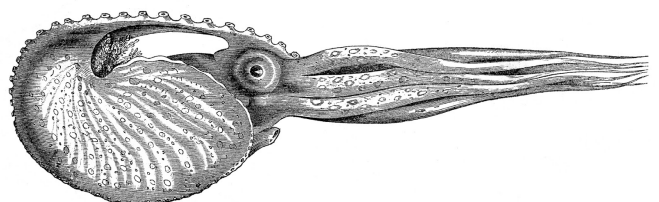
denouement

Groncho's treasure carts contain a bunch of livestock, some iron and wood implements worth 100gp collectively, 1d20 human prisoners, 5d100 silver coins and the gold and silver service of the local chapel, worth 250gp if sold or a minor boon of the chapel's deity if returned.

Groncho himself carries 4 potions of Cure Light Wounds, several signed contracts with human mercenary companies (plot hooks if you need them, valuable as blackmail), a pouch containing 4d100gp worth of coin and gem, an eyeball shaped ruby on a golden chain (actually an Eye of Infravision, replacing an eye with it grants the wearer darkvision out to 30' and allows wearer to cast detect secret door as a 3rd level caster 1/day) worth 400gp to a collector or 1000gp to the right magician.

If the villagers and their goods are returned to their hamlet (Spalth, 20 miles away) they will receive an official thanks from the local baron, perhaps earning patronage for future adventures. Regardless, the players have earned the enmity of Magubliyet.

the end.



Author, editor, layout: Stuart P. Keating

Playtesters: You know who you are and forever have my thanks.

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