



GREENSKIN GORGE

4 Difficulty
2 Complexity

A standalone encounter for five adventurers

By Corwin Riddle

Greenskin Gorge is a standalone encounter designed for five characters between levels 4 to 6. A canyon full of goblins, orcs, and trolls is infamous for its many ambushes—few that enter the gorge escape without a hostile incident. A nearby merchant outpost has had enough of the harassment, and tries to enlist the PCs to help in an ironic turn of events: using the gorge’s many hiding spots to set an ambush for a convoy of goblins as they return from raiding a nearby caravan.

BACKGROUND

Named for its prolific population of orcs and goblins, Greenskin Gorge has long been a menace to any travelers or merchants brave, or foolish, enough to attempt the dangerous passage; most will gladly sacrifice an extra two days to follow the safer path around the craggy cliffs. Inside the gorge, steep cliffs overlook a loud, winding stream; each turn is a perfect opportunity to set an ambush, and the monsters lie in wait. There are, however, those who willingly enter the gorge, disregarding the many skulls, corpses, and bloody graffiti left as a warning near the entrance.

Those who emerge on the other side of the mountain have no shortage of stories to tell: hordes of countless goblins, orcs of unmatched ferocity, and ravenous trolls of enormous size. But regardless of their separate experiences, each survivor will agree on, and emphasize, one immutable fact: Greenskin Gorge belongs to the monsters within, and once you enter the canyon—so do you.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

Greenskin Gorge can be used as a standalone encounter, or as the basis of an entire adventure. The characters can stumble upon the passage during their travels, enter it as a shortcut to a nearby location, or be sent there with one of the following hooks:

HOOK 1: CLEARING THE WAY

Despite its many dangers, merchants often choose to hire protection and brave the gorge; time is money, and the shortcut yields a considerable profit if successful. One such merchant, a clever and methodical Halfling named Humeth, has recently acquired a large, and lucrative, shipping contract, but if he doesn’t make excellent time on his journey, he’ll lose a good deal of his perishable goods. Humeth doesn’t need an escort, he’s already hired a group of local mercenaries to guard his caravan; however, he doesn’t want to waste any time within the gorge fighting off the inevitable ambushes—the monsters within might not be a particularly dangerous threat to his band of fighters, but they’re still capable of slowing him down, and possibly damaging his merchandise.

Humeth doesn’t like to leave such things up to fate, and asks the PCs to enter Greenskin Gorge ahead of him to draw out any potential ambushes and quell the goblin numbers, reducing the likelihood of his entourage having to stop and fight them off.

Quest XP: 200 XP and 250 gp for killing 15+ goblins.

HOOK 2: CAVALCADES AND AMBUSCADES

An elven ranger named Liris was hired by a nearby outpost to track the goblin patrols, and has just returned from the gorge with valuable information: a troublesome hobgoblin named Ok’tar, known to lead many of the goblin raiding parties, has just now been sighted repairing a caravan of some now-deceased merchants—clearly intending to transport the goods to the caves further down the canyon. However, there’s only one particular passage that will accommodate such a large caravan, and it leads into a bottleneck surrounded by high ground—a spot used by Ok’tar many times to ambush travelers.

The monsters are complacent once inside the gorge, roaming carelessly along its roads; Liris wants to send a message, surprising the unsuspecting goblins on their way through the canyon, ambushing their caravan. Liris wants the PCs to head to the specified location, hide, and ambush Ok’tar and his convoy as they approach. It’s not necessary to kill ev-

ery goblin there, but Liris wants you to return with Ok'thar's head, which he intends to put on a spike near the entrance of Greenskin Gorge.

Quest XP: 400 XP and 500 gp for killing Ok'thar.

SPECIAL FEATURE

This encounter has a unique feature:

STAGING THE CONVOY

The PCs will most likely determine the start of the encounter by springing from their hiding places as the convoy and its goblins pass by. Cut out the caravan (Cutout C1), and place it and the other goblins along the road, moving east.

To determine the caravan location, you can ask your players to tell you at what point the caravan needs to reach before they attack—saving you setup time and having to move the caravan and all the goblins square by square.

GETTING STARTED

Regardless of why the PCs enter the gorge, read this when they first approach the entrance:

As you approach the rocky crags of the gorge, the menacing nature of the passage becomes clear; crude wooden signs display graphic pictures of dead humans, drawn in blood, and the ground is covered in rusty, broken weapons and pieces of armor—some still containing the bones of its wearer. A steady stream of water leads into the gorge, which is surrounded on both sides by steep, uneven cliffs.

AREA: THE BOTTLENECK

Read this when the PCs reach the bottleneck:

The passage suddenly narrows, creating a bottleneck in the terrain—perfect for ambushing unsuspecting travelers. Several areas of the cliff jut out at an angle, obstructing vision from below. There are also a few patches of small bushes, thick enough to conceal a creature hiding inside.

The stream itself is dried up, but many large rocks nearby could easily block sight of someone taking cover behind them. As you look around, you can make out voices nearing you—high-pitched growls and yelps. You can also hear the loud creaks of wooden wheels rolling over the rough terrain. The goblins will be here soon.

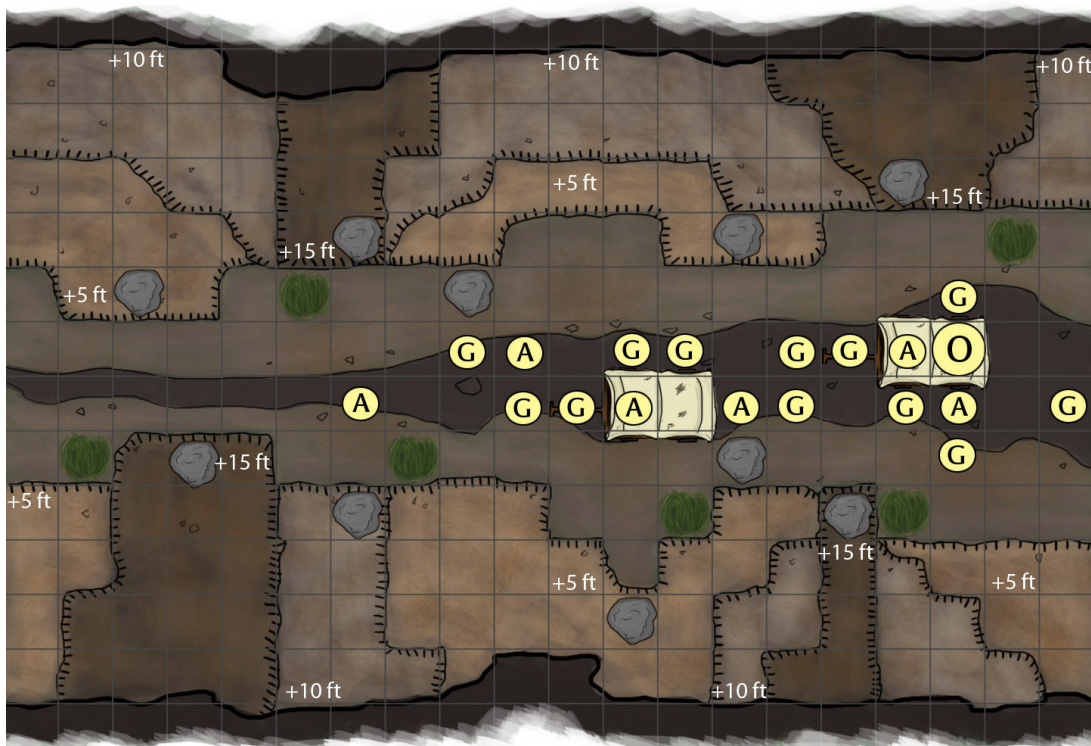
Perception, Nature (DC 8): The bushes look like they would provide total concealment from passersby if hiding inside; the same for hiding behind rocks, and lying prone on top of any cliff higher than 5' tall.

Perception, Nature (DC 12): Perched on the edges of the cliffs are a number of large boulders, which look like they could be dislodged by a strong push.

SETUP

The convoy and goblins move east, 1 square at a time, stopping when the first PC attacks or becomes visible.

- 1 Ok'thar (O)
- 6 Goblin Ambushers (A)
- 12 Goblin Fighters (G)



FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: There is no ceiling, although several areas of the ground are 5, 10, and 15 feet higher than the ground. Each height is indicated on the map (previous page).

Illumination: The area is well-lit by a midday sun.

Hiding Spots: The PCs can hide within any green bushes, behind any boulders, or on top of a cliff (if prone).

Boulders: Marked as giant gray rocks. These rocks can be used for cover, or pushed off the cliffs with a **DC 12 Athletics** check, falling to an adjacent lower-level square; any creature in that square takes damage depending on the distance:

5 feet: 2d6 + 10 damage

10 feet: 3d6 + 10 damage

15 feet: 4d6 + 10 damage

TACTICS

- The caravan and its goblins will continue moving 1 square at a time along the path, heading east. When the PCs emerge and start attacking, the goblins all panic and begin to spread out and flank the visible PCs. Several goblins can be hiding inside the caravan.
- The goblin ambushers will attempt to attack any PCs on the cliffs, while the goblin fighters will divide their attention between climbing up to attack the PCs on the cliff and swarming the PCs down below.
- Several goblin fighters will stay to protect Ok'thar, who will take advantage of *Hobgoblin Tactics* to hit and run, staying near the caravan and using it as cover from ranged PCs.
- Ok'thar and the ambushers will try to avoid the area directly beneath the giant boulders, but the goblin fighters are not intelligent and will carelessly enter those squares.
- The goblins will keep fighting as long as Ok'thar is alive, but if he dies, the goblins will attempt to retreat when there are 5 or less goblins alive.

Goblin Fighter		Level 3 Minion	
Small natural humanoid (goblin)		XP 38	
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +2; low-light vision		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.			
AC 19; Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 14			
Speed 5			
Ⓢ Spear (standard; at-will) • Weapon +8 vs AC; 6 damage (7 if the goblin fighter has combat advantage against the target)			
Goblin Tactics (immediate reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will) The goblin shifts 1 square.			
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Goblin	
Skills Endurance +13, Thievery +13			
Str 12	Dex 15	Wis 10	
Con 9	Int 7	Cha 7	
Equipment Leather Armor, Spear			

PLAYER STRATEGY

The PCs can choose when to pop out and attack the convoy, as long as they stay undetected. Assuming they take no actions, they need only to be out of plain line of sight. The PCs do not all have to enter the fight at that time, but any doing so will engage in a surprise round. Any PCs can continue to hide if they want to emerge at a more advantageous time to surprise or flank an enemy. The PCs can drop the boulders right away, or wait to position goblins beneath them. There are many goblin fighters, but they're very weak and lack any ranged attack, making it easy to cut them down.

CONCLUSION

The remaining goblins fight or flee, depending on their options. Inside the caravan the PCs will find a level 7 magical weapon and 1,000 gp in various gems and art pieces. Upon returning to the merchant outpost, they will be rewarded for whichever quests they completed.

Ok'thar		Level 5 Elite Brute	
Medium natural humanoid (hobgoblin)		XP 250	
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +5; low-light vision		
HP 100; Bloodied 50			
AC 17; Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 17			
Speed 6			
Ⓢ Scimitar (standard; at-will) • Weapon +8 vs AC; 2d6 + 4 damage (crit 2d6 + 14)			
Ⓣ Double Strike (standard; requires combat advantage against the target; at-will) • Weapon Ok'thar makes two scimitar attacks			
Hobgoblin Tactics (immediate reaction, when Ok'thar lands a melee attack; at-will) Ok'thar shifts 1 square.			
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Goblin	
Skills Endurance +13, Thievery +13			
Str 20	Dex 12	Wis 16	
Con 20	Int 10	Cha 12	
Equipment Leather Armor, Scimitar			

Goblin Ambusher		Level 4 Skirmisher	
Small natural humanoid (goblin)		XP 175	
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +4; low-light vision		
HP 55; Bloodied 27			
AC 20; Fortitude 16, Reflex 18, Will 15			
Speed 6			
Ⓢ Short Sword (standard; at-will) • Weapon +9 vs AC; 1d6 + 4 damage			
Ⓣ Shortbow (standard; at-will) • Weapon Ranged 15/30; +9 vs AC; 1d8 + 4 damage			
Ⓜ Mobile Ranged Attack (standard; at-will) The goblin ambusher can move up to half its speed; at any point during that movement it makes one ranged attack without provoking an opportunity attack			
Goblin Tactics (immediate reaction, when missed by a melee attack; at-will) The goblin shifts 1 square.			
Alignment Evil		Languages Common, Goblin	
Skills Endurance +13, Thievery +13			
Str 16	Dex 19	Wis 14	
Con 15	Int 10	Cha 10	
Equipment Leather Armor, Short sword, Shortbow, Arrow x40			

ADJUSTMENTS

If you like this encounter but aren't sure you can fit it into your current campaign, you can adjust and scale it to accommodate your adventure. Here are some suggestions:

We don't have five players:

If you have less than 5 players, use fewer goblins, or consider making all of the goblins minions. If you have more than 5 players, make more of the goblins ambushers instead of minions, and add more.

We're not the right level:

The goblins are based off of the goblin archer and goblin cutter templates, found in the Monster Builder.

It's too hard for my PCs, they keep wiping:

Your PCs should have an easy time with this encounter, especially since only 6 of the goblins have a ranged attack and the PCs get to set up, attack from elevation, and get a surprise round. But if they need some help, have the goblins act scared and stupid, confused by what's going on.

It's too easy for my PCs, they're breezing through:

If the PCs are well-positioned, it's going to be difficult to challenge them, but try swarming the most vulnerable PCs with the minions. You can also add goblins throughout the fight, having the

I don't to move 20 miniatures and a bunch of cutouts one by one while the PCs wait to attack:

Who does? Just ask your players where they'd like to ambush the convoy, then place it at that point. Perhaps the players are hiding and can't get a good look at exactly where the goblins are.

We don't like the theme/characters/combat hook:

If you don't like parts of the adventure, but enjoy even one of the ideas - steal it and dump the rest.

We'd rather play a full adventure than a one encounter:

Greenskin Gorge could have all sorts of other encounters, before or after the players ambush Ok'thar and his convoy. Here are some possibilities:

Hook 1:

The players discover a strange cave entrance, with dead orcs and goblins surrounding the area. Inside is a group of trolls that have just arrived in the gorge, taking over a large part.

Hook 2:

A clan of orcs is in the middle of a power struggle, raiding and murdering each other for leadership and control of their camp. The PCs discover the conflict in mid-battle.

Hook 3:

The PCs stumble upon a merchant under siege from another ambush of goblins and hobgoblins, and must defend the caravan and keep the merchants alive until his reinforcements arrive.



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Cutout C1



1 2
3 4 ↑



Here's a to-scale map, just print, cut out, and rotate the pieces. They go together like this (the arrows all face NORTH):