

# HOBGOBLIN BLOCKADE

*AN ADVENTURE FOR 2ND TO 4TH LEVEL CHARACTERS*



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## AN ADVENTURE FOR 2ND TO 4TH LEVEL CHARACTERS



HOBGOBLIN BLOCKADE IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for **three to six characters of 2nd to 4th level**, optimized for a party of **four 3rd level characters**. A powerful goblin clan has overtaken the outpost that provides the only access through the

northern country of Naizari to the desert of Marahk to the south. Trade has ground to a standstill, and many fear the clan's continued expansion. Can the party defeat the vicious goblin clan and retake the outpost? This adventure is set in the Siothas campaign setting, but can easily be placed in any campaign that features a fortified outpost protecting a narrow pass connecting two locations.

## BACKGROUND

Rubbleholde Retreat had been occupied by the Brotherhood of the White Rose, a mercenary company under service to the king, for the past eight years. The Brotherhood was contracted to build as well as to defend the outpost in the middle of the narrow Gransano Valley to regulate trade between the cities of Naizari and those of the Murakh desert and to blockade the goblinoid hordes that lurked in the surrounding mountains, preventing raids on relatively defenseless border settlements. Until recently, this initiative was successful — goblin raids had ceased, and traders felt empowered on the road through the valley, which was made safer by patrolling members of the Brotherhood. Weeks ago, however, Rubbleholde Retreat fell to the forces of the Sawblade Clan, a force of goblinoids that tamed a flock of griffons to aid them in an aerial assault of the outpost. Much of the Brotherhood of the White Rose was slaughtered, and the few remaining members were forced to flee the outpost. If the outpost is not retaken, the Sawblade Clan threatens to expand their territory into Naizari lands.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are a number of reasons the party may be interested in driving off the Sawblade Clan and retaking Rubbleholde Retreat. A few of these reasons are outlined below.

**Rumors of Frost Brand.** A magical sword known as *frost brand* was supposed to be kept by the Brotherhood of the White Rose at Rubbleholde Retreat. It was not recovered during the goblinoid onslaught. Presumably, the Sawblade Clan has taken it for themselves, and it may still remain in the hands of one of the clan members at the outpost.

**A Baron's Appeal.** A local noble with the support of the king has put out an open call for a band of mercenaries or adventurers to drive off the goblins from Rubbleholde Retreat. They are offering 400 gp for the task, with an additional 1gp provided for each goblinoid thumb brought back as proof of their defeat.

**Missing Hostages.** A noble has received a letter from the Sawblade Clan that makes clear that a Brotherhood member captured in the attack is being held hostage by the clan, injured but alive as a potential bargaining chip. The noble has no desire to negotiate with beasts — they want the adventurers help to bring the men back alive.

## GENERAL FEATURES

Rubbleholde Retreat is a two-story keep of grey limestone that blocks the only accessible road through the Gransano Valley. It is flanked by steep cliffs to the north and south. It is normally occupied by twelve trained mercenary members who are stationed there for months at a time before a rotation. Unless stated otherwise, its features are described as follows:

**Ceilings, Walls, and Floors.** The outpost is constructed of hewn grey limestone. Exterior walls are 3 feet thick, interior walls are 1 foot thick. Ceilings are 10 feet high. The outpost's exterior walls can be scaled with a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Battlements.** The battlements comprise the second story of the outpost. The parapet is four feet high and slotted with gaps to allow for arrows to be fired at advancing troops.

**Doors.** Doors are made from oak and reinforced with iron bands. They have AC 15 and 25 hit points. Locked doors can be opened with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Light.** The interior of the outpost is well-lit by wall-mounted torches throughout the building.

**Main Gates.** Thick gates of iron and wood provide the main access through the outpost. They can be opened using the crank wheels inside the lower level of the outpost. The gates cannot be picked, and can only be broken open using a battering ram or similar force.

**Ballistae.** Six ballistae are positioned atop the battlements facing east and west. The ballistae have AC 15 and 50 hit points. It takes one action to load the weapon, one action to aim it, and one action to fire it. Bolt. Ranged weapon attack: +6 to hit, range 120/480 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d10) piercing damage).

## APPROACHING THE RETREAT

Rubbleholde Retreat was obviously designed to be difficult to assault. Unless the party plans to somehow pose as diplomats or emissaries and lie their way into the outpost, sneaking inside is the only realistic option. Characters looking to make a stealthy approach would be wise to wait for the cover of darkness or heavy rain, else they risk being spotted immediately as they approach by the **goblin** scouts posted atop the battlements (areas B1 and B2). A successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check is required to reach the walls of the outpost unnoticed. Upon a failed check, the goblin lookouts

atop the battlements will notice the characters' advance and quickly sound the alarm.

The following locations are keyed to the map of Rubbleholde Retreat.

## B1. WEST BATTLEMENTS

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Empty buckets and heavy stones line the length of the battlements. Embrasures and murder holes provide access for defenders to drop stones and fire arrows. Three ballistae and their ammunition face the west. To the south, ladders ascend to a ledge on the surrounding cliff face.

**Encounter: Goblin Lookouts.** Three **goblins** man the west battlements at all times, keeping watch for attackers. They work in 8 hour shifts before rotating. If combat breaks out atop the west battlements, the goblins atop the east battlements are quickly alerted and join the fray.

**Trapdoors.** Trapdoors in the west battlements lead to area 3 below. They are unlocked.

## B2. EAST BATTLEMENTS

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Empty buckets and heavy stones line the length of the battlements. Embrasures and murder holes provide access for defenders to drop stones and fire arrows. Three ballistae and their ammunition face the east. To the south, ladders ascend to a ledge on the surrounding cliff face.

**Encounter: Chained Griffons.** Two **griffons** are chained to this battlement with long iron leashes, allowing them to move no farther than 20 feet while restrained. They are trained by the clan to attack any non-goblinoid creature that crosses their path. The key to their leashes is hung on the wall nearby. The griffons are disciplined and can only be distracted by a combination of a source of meat as well as a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

**Encounter: Goblin Lookouts.** Three **goblins** man the west battlements at all times, keeping watch for attackers. They work in 8 hour shifts before rotating. If combat breaks out atop the east battlements, the goblins atop the east battlements are quickly alerted and join the fray, releasing the griffons to aid them if necessary.

**War Horn.** A large war horn is mounted to the wall near the southern end of the battlements. If the goblins atop the battlements sense they will be overpowered by the party, one of them rushes to blow the horn, which immediately alerts all occupants of the outpost.

**Trapdoors.** Trapdoors in the east battlements lead to areas 3 and 9 below. They are unlocked.

## B3. FORGE

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The north section of the battlement is used as a smithy. Anvils, blacksmith's tools, tanning rack, and workbench

surround a forge carved out of the surrounding cliff. Ladders to the east and west ascend to narrow cliff ledge lookout points above. A trapdoor has been cut into the stone near the forge.

**Encounter: Magma Mephits.** Upon closer inspection, the interior of the forge glows with soft red light, and it gives off a radiating heat that can be felt a few feet away. The forge has not been in use since the Sawblade Clan's assault on the Retreat and is now being squatted by a pair of **magma mephits**. When discovered, the mephits initially screech at the party and demand to be left alone. If the party presses for information, the mephits realize that the party does not belong to the Sawblade Clan and can be coaxed to share the following information:

- The mephits have occupied this forge for the past week.
- The mephits and the goblinoids are mostly indifferent towards each other.
- A big red goblin holds a big, cold sword. The mephits do not like the big cold sword at all.
- The mephits would like the party to take the big cold sword away from the outpost.
- The big red goblin lairs somewhere downstairs.

## B4. SIGNAL TOWER

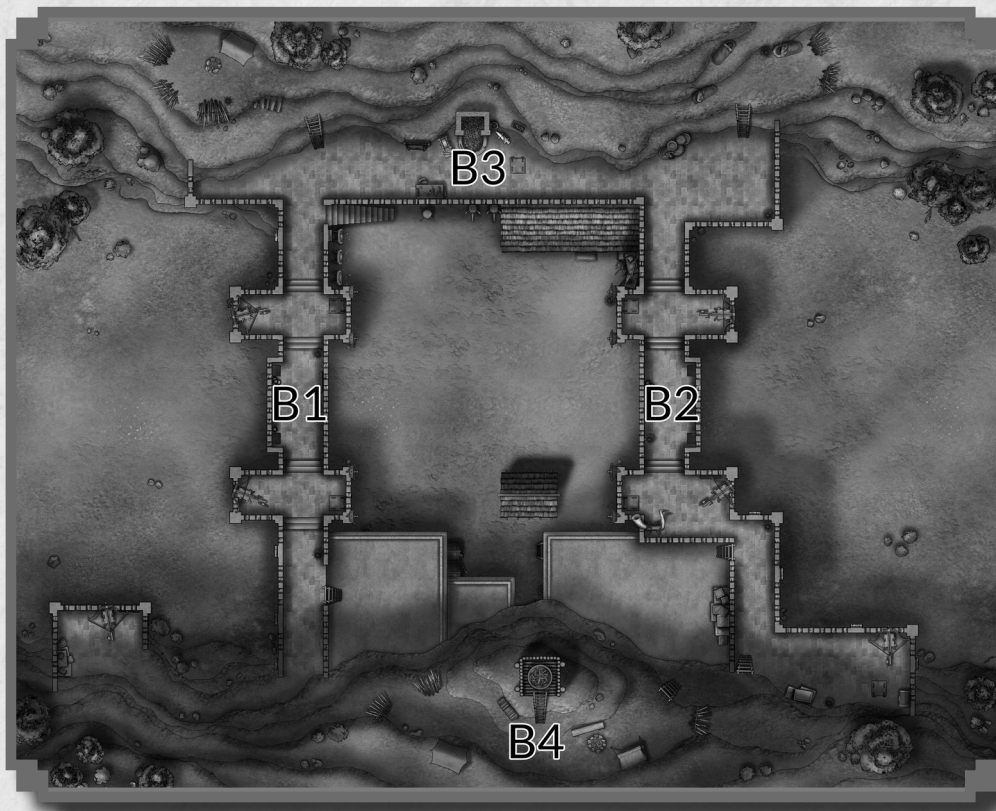
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Ladders rise to an unlit wooden beacon perched atop a narrow ledge in the cliff face.

If the war horn is sounded, a member of the Sawblade Clan will attempt to also light the beacon, which sends a thick pillar of black smoke into the air. 1d4 hours after the signal is lit, a Sawblade reinforcement party arrives at the outpost, consisting of ten **goblins**, four **bugbears**, eight **hobgoblins**, and three **griffons**.



# RUBBLEHOLDE RETREAT



## I. COURTYARD

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The walls of the outpost surround a mostly empty dirt courtyard. Archery targets line the east wall. A stone well sits in the middle of the courtyard, beside which a number of corpses have been piled, attracting a cloud of flies and filling the air with the foul stench of decay. Dog kennels line the southern end. A stone staircase to the north ascends to the battlements. Doors exit in all directions.

The corpses in the middle of the courtyard are what remain of the outpost's defenders. There are twelve in total, each wearing pieces of armor and beginning to rot in the sun. Members of the Sawblade clan have picked the corpses clean of any valuables.

**Encounter: Kennel Wolves.** The courtyard's kennels have been repurposed to hold four **wolves** loyal to the Sawblade Clan. The wolves begin barking viciously at any character that comes within 30 feet of the kennels. If the barking continues for more than 3 rounds, any goblins atop the battlements begin to investigate. The wolves can be calmed with meat or a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. The kennels are locked, though the keys are attached to a keyring hanging on the wall nearby.

## 2. STABLES

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The three stalls of this stable contain nothing other than dirty straw and drinking troughs. The outpost's horses escaped during the Brotherhood's retreat from the Sawblade assault.

## 3. CRANK WHEEL CHAMBERS

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Each of these chambers is filled with a large wooden crank wheel that opens part of the gates. The main gates are composed of two doors each, and each door is opened with a corresponding crank wheel. The crank wheels do not require a check to operate.

In each of these chambers, a door exits to the courtyard and a ladder ascends to the battlements (areas B1 and B2).

## 4. DORMITORY

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The smell of sweat and body odour in this room is overpowering. Nine filth-covered bunk beds line the east and west walls. Cabinets and storage chests have been rummaged through, their contents dumped and scattered across the floor. Stools surround two wooden tables in the middle of the room that are chipped and dented.

**Encounter: Sawblade Members.** Two **goblins**, three **hobgoblins**, and a **bugbear** can be found in this room. They spend most of their time sleeping, sparring with each other, and drinking ale from the outpost's stores. The bugbear is the leader of this small subgroup within the clan; he barks orders to the others in combat and is the last to retreat or

surrender if things go south. The goblins, meanwhile, flee at the first sign of hardship against experienced adventurers.

## 5. PRIVY

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This room is divided into four small stalls, each with a holed bench and chamber pot. Each stall is overflowing with goblinoid waste which obscures the bench and chamber pot beneath and spills onto the floor. The smell is nauseating and characters within 10 feet of the stalls must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw to avoid vomiting.

**Treasure: Swallowed Ring.** A character who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a piece of jewelry lodged near the top of one of the waste piles. Upon closer inspection, the piece is a gold ring. It is worth 75 gp.

## 6. MESS

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This mess hall is lined with communal tables that fill most of the space. On a wooden stage in the east end of the room, a larger table of rich cherry wood is surrounded by four chairs. Behind it, a banner depicting a white rose is riddled with arrows, as if it was used for target practice. Empty ale kegs are scattered about and the floor is sticky with spillage.

**Encounter: Sawblade Members.** Three **goblins** and four **hobgoblins** spend much of their time in this room, drinking their fair share of the ale stores and practicing their marksmanship on the banner in the room. One hobgoblin named Rex considers himself the leader of this subgroup; he is blind in one eye and wields a morningstar that he looted from a Brotherhood corpse. The group fights until it is clear they are disadvantaged, at which point they attempt to flee to other sections of the outpost to gather whatever reinforcements they can muster.



## 7. PANTRY

The shelves of this pantry are a mess with spilled sacks and crates. Various foodstuffs such as grains and flour cover the floor, and many containers are empty.

**Encounter: Drunken Goblin.** A **goblin** named Zict spends much of his time in this room, as he often drinks to the point of unconsciousness and prefers the relative solitude that the pantry provides. When encountered by the party, there is a 50% chance he is in a deep, drunken sleep. Otherwise, he is so drunk that he does not acknowledge the party as enemies. He smells foul and his legs are usually covered with his own urine.

## 8. KITCHEN

This kitchen is a mess. Spice racks and shelves along the walls are in disarray. A stovetop against the south wall is cluttered with pans and splattered with foodstuff. Atop a wooden countertop are assorted knives and utensils. A hearth in the east wall sits cold and empty.

There is nothing of value to be found in this kitchen. The Sawblade members have used it infrequently to cook meals.

## 9. SOUTHEAST CORRIDOR

Two bucklers, as well as a few barrels and crates holding spare ammunition line the west wall of this corridor. The corridor bends to the south at its eastern end, where bows and quivers lie on a shelf near the south wall and a ladder ascends to a trapdoor in the ceiling.

The trapdoor leads to the east battlements (Area B1).

## 10. HOLDING CELLS

A stone staircase descends 10 feet into a small dungeon. A narrow hallway leads to four iron doors to the north, south, and west.

The north and south cells are locked; the key to their doors can be found attached to a ring hanging on the wall at the bottom of the staircase. The east cells are open.

**North Cell.** The body of a young man is slumped against the north wall of this cell. He is wearing half-plate armor and a tattered tabard depicting a white rose. His midsection is stained with blood. A DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check of the body confirms that the man died recently, likely from internal injuries within the last 24 hours.

**South Cell.** Locked inside this cell is Connor Redthorp, the acting commander of the Brotherhood of the White Rose (LG male human **guard**) who is being held captive by the Sawblade clan. Connor is in his mid-thirties, he has rugged good looks and a scar across his right cheek. The goblinoids

occasionally pester him for information and are keeping him alive for potential hostage negotiations. Connor has 5 hit points remaining. If Connor receives at least 5 additional hit points worth of healing, he is willing to join the characters in clearing the outpost of any remaining Sawblade clan members. If no weapon can be provided to him by the party, he suggests they retrieve one from the armory nearby (area 11). He can tell the party that *frost brand*, the magical sword kept at the Retreat, is now wielded by a hobgoblin named Dagrec, the leader of the entire group at the outpost. He can also tell give the party details of the Sawblade's attack, including the fact that they managed to kill the commander of the Brotherhood, Arthur Greymane.

**East Cells.** These two cells are open and empty.

## II. OFFICER'S QUARTERS

This room is in disarray. The bed has been slashed open, spilling feathers across the room. The drawers of a wardrobe and a desk have been pulled out, and pieces of clothing and scraps of parchment litter the floor.

Members of the Sawblade clan rummaged through this officer's quarters in search of anything valuable. They took small a few small pieces of jewelry for themselves and left everything else. Characters who search the room find a small charcoal drawing of a young girl amongst the other scattered documents, many of which relate to mundane operations of the outpost.

## 12. COMMANDER'S QUARTERS

This room is in surprisingly good condition. A king-sized bed, mahogany wardrobe, and long bookshelf fill most of the chamber. Against the east wall is a large desk of polished cherry wood, atop which lies an area map scrawled in charcoal. A shining suit of plate armor engraved with a rose on its breastplate and an empty wall-mounted sword rack line the north wall.

**Encounter: Dagrec and Second-in-Command.** Dagrec, the leader of this Sawblade company, as well as his second in command, Kol, spend much of their time in the commander's quarters of the outpost studying their map on the desk, discussing their next moves, and receiving words from scouts in the area. Occasionally, Dagrec may direct Kol to handle any infighting that has broken out within the outpost. Dagrec wears a suit of grey plate spattered with dried blood; he leaves it dirty to remind his inferiors of what he is capable of. If he is bested in combat, he offers information regarding other Sawblade activities in exchange for his life. Kol and Dagrec are both **hobgoblins**, though Dagrec has the following modifications:

- He has 32 hit points.
- He wields the sword *frost brand*, which he took from the outpost.

**Treasure: Equipment of the White Rose.** After Dagrec and Kol have been dealt with, the party may decide to take *frost brand* for themselves. They may also choose to take the suit of plate armor on the wall, which is in good condition and is Medium-sized. If Connor is with the party, he tells them that as acting commander of the Brotherhood, the party should accept the sword (and plate, if they want it) as thanks for their rescue of Rubbleholde Retreat.

**Secret Door.** A secret door in the north wall can be noticed with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. It opens into a secret tunnel that burrows into the surrounding mountains and exits back into the valley to the west.

### 13. ARMORY

Racks of weapons line the walls and fill the middle of the room. Shields and leather breastplates are stacked in the northwest corner. Open crates hold old bows and arrows.

The Sawblade clan has picked through parts of this armory to replenish their weapons stores, though there is still plenty of mundane weaponry remaining, including five longswords, four shortswords, four shortbows, two halberds, two medium-sized sets of studded leather, four bucklers, and almost a hundred arrows.

### AFTERMATH

Once the Sawblade Clan has been killed or driven off from Rubbleholde Retreat, the Brotherhood of the White Rose can begin the process of rebuilding their numbers and re-establishing themselves at the outpost. If the party rescued Connor, he tells them that he can send word on his own to the surrounding settlements of the victory. If the party was offered reward by a local baron, they are compensated fairly for their efforts upon their return. If the party received information on other Sawblade activity from Dagrec, the nature of their activities or if Dagrec is telling the truth is left to GM discretion. The Sawblade may present a further campaign threat or gradually disperse as a key member of their leadership has been slain.

### Frost Brand's Story

The sword *frost brand* has belonged to the Brotherhood of the White Rose for over 50 years. As the story goes, the late commander Argus Balley found himself lost on a snowy mountaintop while pursuing a yeti that had been threatening local settlements. Hungry and near-freezing to death, Argus met a mysterious spirit that promised to guide him to safety. Reinvigorated by the spirit's magic, Argus found and slew the yeti. The spirit and the light of the sword then guided Argus back down the mountain to safety. After Argus's death many years later, the Brotherhood mounted his sword as a symbol of perseverance and good fortune.



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