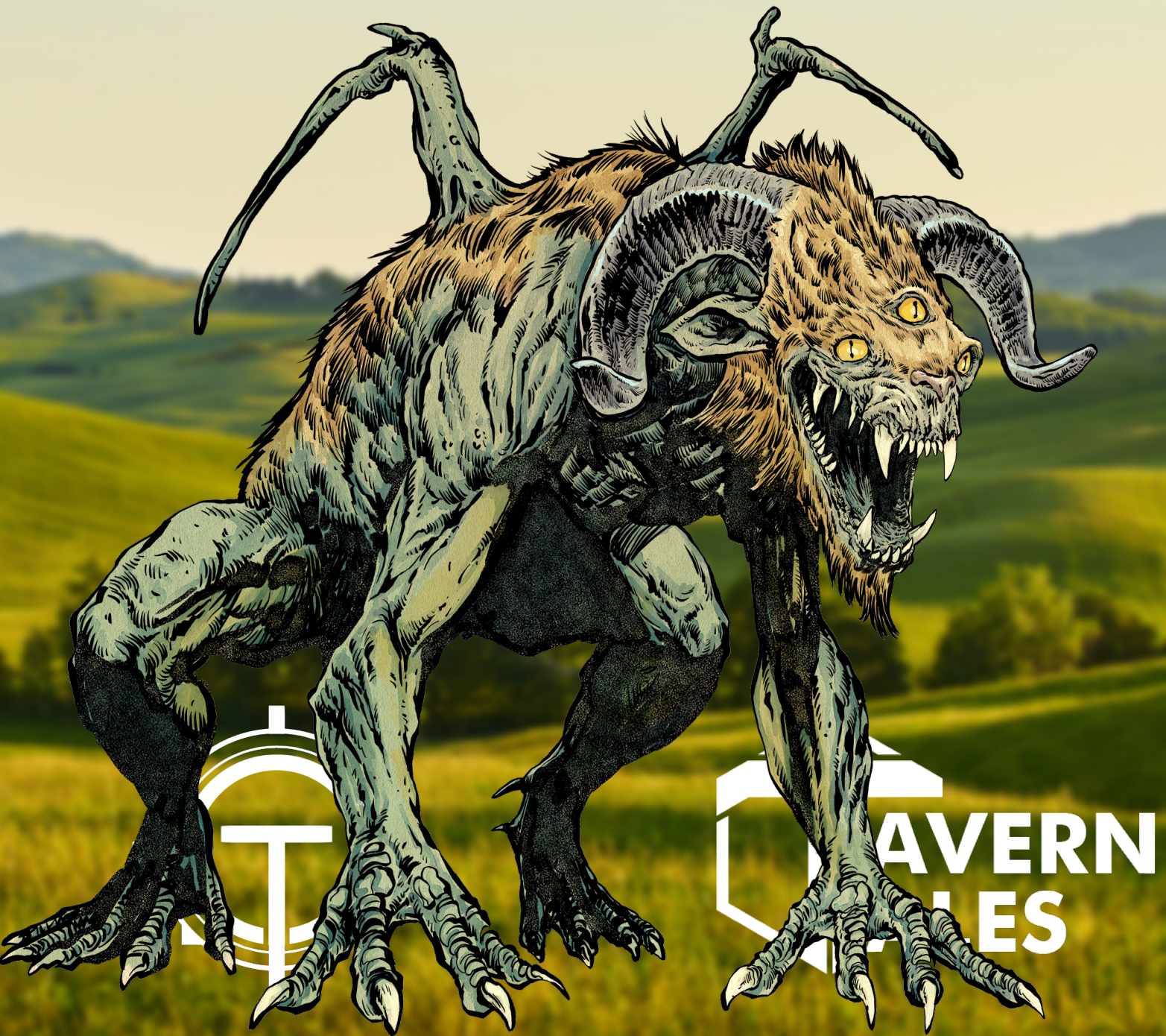


CHIMERA CHAOS

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 4TH TO 6TH LEVEL



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CHIMERA CHAOS IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for three to six characters of 4th to 6th level, optimized for a party of four 5th-level characters. A vagrant band of bugbears has lost control of their pet chimera, which now rampages through a local village and its surrounding countryside, sowing destruction and fear. Heroes must intervene, but if they do, they'll have to confront not only the chimera, but the bugbears, who would very much like to bring the creature back under their control on their own terms, regardless of the chimera's interests. Can the party assert their will and bring calm to the village? If not, either the chimera or the bugbears themselves will be sure to continue the chaos.

BACKGROUND

A humble yet prosperous hamlet, Brackenridge has thrived under the protection of its vigilant militia and the blessings of fertile farmlands. Its inhabitants lead simple lives, marked by an enduring sense of community and resilience against the occasional brigand or beast. However, peace has been shattered with the arrival of a beast previously unfamiliar to the community—a vicious chimera.

This chimera, named Gravalux, had been under the control of a nomadic bugbear band known as the Red Claws, led by the cunning Grishnak. The Red Claws captured Gravalux some months ago, attempting to tame the beast through force and fear. For a time, the chimera served them reluctantly, its violent nature barely restrained by the bugbears' threats and occasional offerings. The chimera's origins are shrouded in mystery; the bugbears themselves believe either it was the twisted creation of a mad wizard, or perhaps a spawn of the chaotic planes. Regardless, Gravalux's presence has always been a harbinger of destruction from which the Red Claws are eager to profit from.

Recently, the delicate balance of control snapped. Nearly two days ago, Gravalux broke free from its captors, its pent-up rage unleashed upon Brackenridge. The beast first rampaged through its surrounding farmsteads, slaughtering and consuming livestock. The next day, it advanced toward the village proper, killing a merchant on the old stone bridge at dawn, and then rampaged past the village's guard house, killing several defenders who valiantly attempted to bring it to heel. Now, it has made its temporary lair atop a village windmill, a towering sentinel of chaos casting a shadow over the trembling populace.

Adding to the villagers' plight, the Red Claws are now approaching Brackenridge, having relentlessly pursued Gravalux ever since the creature escaped. Determined to bring the chimera back under their command, they see

the chaos as an opportunity to reclaim their lost weapon. However, their intentions are far from benevolent, and they aren't likely to be friendly to those who stand in their way.

With Brackenridge on the brink of annihilation, villagers have sent a desperate plea for heroes. Yet, the threat is twofold: the party must not only confront the rampaging Gravalux but also contend with the bugbears who will stop at nothing to regain control of their quarry. As tensions rise and the body count climbs, the stage is set for a showdown that may determine the fate of Brackenridge and its beleaguered inhabitants.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are numerous reasons the party may be compelled to assist Brackenridge in controlling the chimera and confronting the Red Claws. A few of these reasons are outlined below:

Beast Bounty. News of the chimera's rampage has spread rapidly, reaching the ears of a wealthy noble whose estates lie just beyond Brackenridge. Fearing that Gravalux will eventually wander into his lands, the noble offers a substantial bounty of 1000 gp to any adventurers who can slay the beast and bring proof of its demise, such as its head.

Gruesome Discovery. While traveling, the party stumbles upon the carcasses of slaughtered livestock near Brackenridge. The scene is violent, with deep claw marks and scorch marks indicating the presence of a powerful and dangerous creature. Intrigued and concerned, the adventurers decide to investigate further, leading them to the troubled village and the unfolding crisis with Gravalux and the Red Claws.

Red Claws' Reprisal. A merchant with ties to Brackenridge has learned of the Red Claws' impending arrival and fears for the safety of the village. He hires the party to intercept the bugbears before they can reach Brackenridge, offering 800 gp and valuable information about a hidden cache of treasures once owned by the bugbears.

Disrupted Shipment. A local guild of traders hires the party to investigate why their expected shipment of grain has not arrived on schedule from Brackenridge. Expecting that something is amiss, they offer 100 gp for ensuring the safe passage of goods and discovering the source of the disruption, which turns out to be Gravalux's recent attacks on the village and its surroundings.

BRIDGE TO BRACKENRIDGE

This adventure assumes that the party begins outside of Brackenridge, and its action starts as the party nears the

THE BRIDGE



village traveling via the Tornpine Road, when they come across the bridge into the village which crosses the Highbank River. Read aloud the following:

The sound of rushing water fills the air as you crest a small hill, and the span of a stone bridge stretches out across a river before you. The structure itself is sturdy, with well-worn cobblestones forming the pathway across. On either side, the riverbanks slope gently down to the water, dotted with sparse trees and rocky outcroppings. Beyond are fields and farms, and a denser smattering of structures forming the village center can be seen on the horizon. A wagon lies on its side near the far end of the bridge, barrels and crates spilling their contents across the cobblestones. Five bugbears stand on the bridge, their broad backs turned to you as they seem to rummage through the scattered goods. Oblivious to your approach, distant sounds are carried on the wind of the bugbears' grunting and growling in their guttural language.

The wagon belonged to a local merchant who was attacked by the chimera and forced to flee into the village in search of help. The bugbears are members of the nomadic Red Claw Band, who stopped to investigate the overturned cart while

the rest of their numbers continued into Brackenridge in pursuit of Gravalux. Distracted by their investigation of the cart, a successful DC 12 (Dexterity) Stealth check is sufficient to either sneak past the bugbears entirely by crossing the river under the bridge, or get close enough to engage in combat with the potential benefit of surprise. Of course, if the party wants to play it the safest, they could take a wide berth around the bridge and circle back to the village, avoiding the bugbears entirely. If they notice the party, the bugbears size them up and attack shortly after unless the party either makes a successful DC 15 Charisma or Athletics (Intimidation) check or a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to begin a conversation. A character who speaks Goblin makes these checks with advantage.

In conversation, the bugbears share the following information with the party:

- They are members of the Red Claw band. They go where they please, and take what they can. They answer to anybody.
- Their pet chimera recently got loose, and appears to have torn through this nearby village. They seek to re-capture it.

- If the party doesn't get in their way, the Red Claws are likely to leave them alone. They usually prefer easier prey, but aren't afraid of mixing it up if they need to.

If the party explains that they also have an interest in addressing the chimera situation, the bugbears are quick to tell them to stay out of it. However, a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check is sufficient to convince the bugbears to accept the party's help in recapturing the chimera. If the party does not intend to let the bugbears live at the end of the adventure or let them keep the chimera, this Persuasion check should be a Deception check instead.

If combat breaks out, the bugbears fight viciously, but not to the death, attempting to retreat toward the village and the rest of their band when three of their number have been slain. There are four **bugbears** plus a bugbear brute named Throkk, who uses **bugbear** statistics but has 40 hit points and a two attack multiattack with its morningstar.

Treasure: Bugbear Loot. The bugbears collectively carry the following loot, should the party slay them or otherwise find a way to get their hands on their belongings:

- A cumulative 26 gp across various coin purses
- A potion of healing
- A map detailing the bugbears' search pattern for Gravalux
- Various mundane supplies, include rations, tools, etc.

Treasure: Wagon Loot. If the characters dispatch the bugbears, they're free to take the wagon's provisions for themselves. The wagon mostly carries apples and potatoes, but also a small wooden strongbox, which can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Inside the box is a cumulative 47 gp. If the party has allied with the bugbears, the bugbears insist anything in the wagon now belongs to them, because they showed up first. They are not willing to negotiate this point, and the alliance terminates if the party is not willing to concede.

THE SEARCH CONTINUES

Regardless of whether or not the party is now traveling with members of the Red Claw band, their pursuit of the chimera will take them across the bridge and along the main road into Brackenridge, where after a few minutes they'll come across another site of carnage. Gravalux, however, is nowhere in sight. Read aloud:

As you follow the road into the village proper and step toward a thoroughfare, your eyes are immediately drawn to the dark stains of blood that mar the cobblestones. The bodies of two armored guards lie motionless on the ground, their once-gleaming mail now tarnished with grime and gore. A gruesome trail of blood leads from their corpses to the closed doors of a nearby guardhouse. Five bugbears are huddled near the door, their muscular forms straining as they attempt to break it down with their weapons.

After terrifying the merchant on the bridge, Gravalux continued toward Brackenridge where it encountered a force of the local guard. The guard put up a valiant effort, but quickly realized they were no match for the creature after two of their number were slain. They retreated hastily into the small stable adjoining the guard house, barring the door behind them. Gravalux, then growing disinterested, continued into the village. The bugbears showed up shortly thereafter, and after surveying the scene and noticing the blood trail leading into the stable, have decided to "question" any survivors. The remaining guards, of course, have no intention of opening their doors for a band of bugbear bandits.

These bugbears are the rest of the Red Claw band pursuing Gravalux. They are led by Zarak, a towering brute distinguished by his scarred face and the intricate bone jewelry adorning his leather armor. Zarak wields a hefty bloodstained ax and commands his band with an iron fist. His cold, calculating eyes seem to miss nothing. Unlike Throkk, whose more amicable nature makes him open to negotiations, Zarak is, by default, aggressively hostile to the party. There are a total of four **bugbears** plus Zarak, a **bugbear** with 55 hit points, AC 18, and a two-attack multiattack with an ax instead of a morningstar (slashing instead of piercing damage).

If the party arrives alone: Zarak and the rest of the band are immediately hostile. They can be convinced to negotiate and potentially ally with the party under the same conditions



described in the first encounter, featuring Throkk, if a character makes a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Zarak cannot be intimidated (even a single attempt means immediate violence), and if he learns that the party came into conflict with the other members of his band at the bridge, diplomacy is no longer an option and Zarak and his companions attack. They fight brutally and attack downed characters, but retreat either if three of their number or Zarak have been slain, whichever comes first.

If the party arrives with Throkk: Zarak and the rest of the band are inquisitive and suspicious, but eventually let their guards down when it becomes clear that the party are temporary allies. Zarak explains that as long as the party follows his orders, they'll have no problems. He goes on to explain that they "just want to talk" to the remaining guards holed up inside the stable. A character who makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check can infer that these marauding bugbears are likely to kill whoever they find inside once they outlive their usefulness. Zarak can be convinced to abandon his harassment of the survivors with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Otherwise, the door is broken through after about a minute or so, and he and his companions converge on the occupants for some violent questioning. Their investigation into the missing chimera is a thin veneer of justification for their eagerness for violence. If the party asks Zarak how the bugbears plan to recapture the chimera, Zarak explains that since it can't fly, they can surround it, and then coax it into submission with draconic command words and its favorite treats while Zarak fits it with a collar and chain.

Captain Ribirna and Guard Ian. Holed up inside the stable attached to the guard house are the two survivors of Gravalux's attack, Captain Ribirna and Ian Hebunteve. Ribirna is a handsome man in his late thirties, with a thick, neat mustache and a thick head of brown hair. Despite his wounds, he remains stoic and composed, determined to protect his village to the last breath. Ian is younger, with a round, ruddy face and a high-pitched voice. He is anxious but resolute, doing his best to stay calm under the dire circumstances. Ribirna fought valiantly, but was gravely injured. Ian managed to drag him into the stable and has been attempting to provide first aid to Ribirna's wounds. If the men hear the sounds of adventurers arriving outside, they shout for help. If questioned, Ribirna can explain the fight and say that the beast continued along the main road, deeper into the village. If Ribirna is helped with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check or by receiving at least 10 points of healing, he will be fit enough to assist the party in dealing with the chimera along with Ian. He will not, however, ally with the bugbears under any circumstances. Should the party ally with the bugbears while convincing them to leave Ribirna and Ian alone, Ribirna scorns the party and remains for the time being in the stable to recover. Ribirna is a **veteran** while Ian uses **guard** statistics.

Treasure: Zarak's Belongings. If the party slays Zarak or otherwise finds a way to take from his person, they find that



Captain Ribirna

Zarak carries a coin purse containing six gems worth 25 gp each, another pouch containing several dense patties, as well as a rolled piece of parchment upon which is a list of several words written in Draconic script. The patties are made from dried blood and fat, a favorite of Gravalux.

TRACKING DOWN GRAVALUX

After the encounter at the guard house, tracking down Gravalux is a relatively simple matter. If the party got information from or now travels with the guards, they continue along the road into Brackenridge, following the direction that Gravalux was seen to be heading. Furthermore, recent rainfall has made for muddy ground, and a character with a passive Perception of 12 or higher notices tracks near the guard house. A character who makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check can follow these tracks successfully to catch up with the chimera. Finally, a chimera moving through the village is hard to miss—though most of the villagers have holed up in their homes to take shelter from the beast, knocking on a few doors and asking some simple questions quickly reveals that the chimera has taken up perch atop a windmill on the other side of the village.

When the party arrives at the sight of the windmill, read aloud:

As you approach the towering windmill, the massive form of the chimera comes into view, perched menacingly atop the structure. The chimera's three eyes survey the village below with a mix of rage and hunger. Its form looks to be an amalgamation of lion, goat, and lizard. The beast's powerful, muscular body is tense, its claws gripping the wooden beams of the windmill, causing them to creak under its weight. The remains of a sheep are sprawled beside it, entrails smeared down the sides of the windmill, a grisly testament to its recent meal. The chimera occasionally exhales small jets of flame, and its

THE GAURD HOUSE



tongue flicks in and out of its mouth, tasting the air. Its gaze then fixes upon you, and it shifts its weight as if in anticipation of a fight.

Depending on how the party has approached the adventure, the encounter with Gravalux may be resolved in several ways:

If the party is allied with the bugbears, Zarak and his companions encircle the windmill and the chimera. Zarak then takes the blood patties and the list of command words out of his pocket and begins trying to soothe Gravalux by barking one of the draconic command words and waving a patty in the direction of the beast. Two successful DC 18 Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks need to be made by Zarak—one to get Gravalux to tentatively clamber halfway down the windmill, and another to bring the beast close enough for Zarak to fit it with the collar and chain. Since Zarak uses the command words and the patties, he makes these checks with advantage. A single failure of either check, however, and Gravalux remains agitated. In this case, the bugbears resort to violence and begin pelting the beast with javelins to force it off its perch. When Gravalux comes to ground and attacks, the bugbears (possibly with the party's

help) attempt to incapacitate the chimera so that it can be fitted with the collar.

If the party arrives without the bugbears, how they decide to deal with Gravalux is up to them. If they are accompanied by Ribirna and Ian, the two guards follow their lead. If the party has access to Zarak's command words and the blood patties, they can coax Gravalux down from the windmill under the same conditions. Alternatively, a character who speaks Draconic and who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check can order Gravalux to leave the village alone—permanently. In this case, Gravalux retreats without a fight. However, beasts being beasts, Gravalux will inevitably cause more chaos in some other nearby settlement soon enough.

Gravalux uses **chimera** statistics, with the following modifications:

- Its wings are withered and thus it has no flying speed.
- It has AC 16.
- **New Ability: Fear Ray.** The chimera targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be

THE WINDMILL



frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

AFTERMATH

Should the party kill Gravalux, the immediate threat to Brackenridge is lifted. The villagers offer their heartfelt thanks, and the surviving members of the local guard, including Captain Ribirna and Ian, pledge their unwavering gratitude and support to the party. The bugbears, if still alive, slink away into the shadows, their ambitions thwarted and their numbers diminished.

If Gravalux remains alive, either because the party retreated or negotiated a peaceful resolution, the chimera's presence continues to loom over the region. Should the party have used Draconic to drive the chimera away, Gravalux will eventually resurface, bringing destruction to another unsuspecting settlement. The villagers of Brackenridge, while spared, live in fear of the beast's return or hearing news of its rampage elsewhere.

Siding with the bugbears and helping them to recapture Gravalux brings a tenuous peace to Brackenridge. However, the villagers and surviving guards are uneasy, knowing that the beast is still out there, under the control of the ruthless Red Claws. The bugbears may uphold their end of the bargain, but their presence and future intentions will always cast a shadow over the village. If the party decides to betray the bugbears after dealing with Gravalux, they will earn the enmity of the Red Claws, who will likely seek revenge in the future.

The party may seek to tame the chimera and keep it for themselves. This is a bad idea—Gravalux is a monster, naturally inclined to violence. It escaped once from the bugbears, and will inevitably escape again from whoever else tries to coerce it into fighting for them.

REFERENCES

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 (“SRD 5.1”) by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

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