

GREMLINS HEIST

Gremlins Heist is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for four characters with an **average party level (APL) of 3**, but includes adjustments to scale the adventure up to level 13. The characters must survive a night trapped in a gremlin-infested farmstead and stop the monstrous creatures from growing more powerful.

FOR THE GAMEMASTER

The Hofsteder Ranch is famous across the region for the quality of its mounts of both mundane and magical origin. Moreover, the Ranch's owner, an outlander known only as Wing, is well-known for his collection of rare and wondrous magical creatures.

Those interested in the care of magical creatures travel from all over the world to speak with and learn from Wing. Many travelers bring offerings of bizarre creatures to add to Wing's collection.

One such creature, known as a mogwai, has become Wing's favored pet, and the two have become inseparable. The mogwai's seemingly harmless exterior conceals a dark threat. Wing has learned to control this threat by adhering to three simple rules:

- Do not expose them to bright lights, or they will perish.
- Do not let them get wet, or they will multiply.
- Do not feed them after midnight, or they evolve into nasty, dangerous monsters called gremlins.

Backstory

As a bachelor, Wing hires half a dozen locals, each an expert in the care of magical creatures, to help him manage the Ranch. With local festivities, however, the Ranch is currently only staffed by Wing and his artless apprentice, Billy.

In an ill-fated attempt to impress his beau, Billy accidentally allowed Wing's mogwai to get wet and then set loose its offspring. The mogwai's strange powers have not only transformed them into dangerous creatures called gremlins, but these gremlins have, in turn, spawned dozens more of their kind, and these troublesome monsters now run amok all over the Ranch.

One of this new batch of gremlins has developed strange abilities and a keen and cunning intellect. Known only as Mo, the gremlin has quickly organized the monsters of the ranch and, worse still, has captured Wing and his pet mogwai, Gadget.

Forced into servitude, Wing is now detailing all he knows about gremlins and magic. Mo hopes to find a means that would allow the gremlins to survive in the sunlight. Able to multiply exponentially and with no weaknesses, the gremlins could quickly become a plague of terror.

Adventure Hook

The party starts the adventure on the road, far from civilization, on the outskirts of a backwater town whose name they don't know. Read or paraphrase the following:

Long past sunlight, you travel along an old, pitted road from one backwater town to another. Through the trees, you see the lights of a large ranch.

Tired, sore-footed, and hungry, you consider risking the owner's ire by approaching and requesting sanctuary.

The snap of a twig breaks the silence and is closely followed by high-pitched giggling. More giggling echoes out of the darkness around you, and you realize you're surrounded.

Encounter: Gremlin Attack. A pack of gremlins surrounds the party. Worse still, many more gremlins are approaching, so at the end of each round, describe the excited shrieks of these approaching creatures. The nature of this battle depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Hofsteder Road Encounter table below. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new creatures featured in the appendix.

HOFSTEDER ROAD ENCOUNTER

APL	Encounter
3–4	6 GREMLINS*
5–7	12 GREMLINS*
8–10	8 ELITE GREMLINS*
11–13	12 ELITE GREMLINS*

There's More of Them!

As the combat ends, or at the end of the third round, read or paraphrase the following:

The shrieks of excited bloodlust you've been hearing are getting closer, and through the darkness comes what appears to be an undulating carpet of dozens, if not hundreds, of the monstrous creatures.

The loud banging of a door being forcibly opened sounds from behind you, and light spills out of a grain silo on the ranch's edge. Silhouetted in the doorway is a tall, slim young man,

"Quickly!" he shouts, "In here!"

If the characters enter the silo, the man quickly slams shut the door and then secures it with a heavy iron bar. If a character remains outside, they are attacked by the oncoming gremlins. Use the Hofsteder Road Encounter from page 3, but each round adds the same number of gremlins to the combat.

Please Help Us

The young man is Billy, Wing's apprentice. Also present in the silo is Billy's dog (a **MASTIFF**). Billy is young and foolish, but he is also brave and honorable and quickly explains the situation to the party, admitting his part in the troubles. Specifically, Billy explains the three rules to the party. He will also ask the party to help him rescue Wing and his girlfriend Kate from the vile clutches of the gremlin leader, Mo. Billy doesn't know exactly where his friends are being kept and can't offer much as payment, but he knows that Wing will be able to provide a suitable reward. The reward's nature depends on the adventure level, as shown in the Wing's Reward table.

WING'S REWARD

APL	Encounter
3–4	A tan <i>bag of tricks</i>
5–7	A half-full <i>bag of beans</i>
8–10	A full <i>bag of beans</i>
11–13	A bag of magic jewels (an <i>ioun stone of protection</i> , a <i>gem of brightness</i> , and a <i>pearl of power</i>)

HOFSTEDER RANCH

Originally built as a farmstead for the Hofsteder family, the buildings and land were purchased by Wing some thirty years ago and repurposed into the current ranch.

General Features

Unless stated otherwise, the Hofsteder Ranch has the following features.

Architecture. The wooden buildings are sized for humans. At a significant cost, the buildings were reinforced with magic to deal with the livelier creatures kept there.

Snow. Recent snowfall has been heavy, and while pathways have been trodden between most buildings, the snow surrounding the ranch is two feet deep and considered difficult terrain unless wearing suitable footwear.

Illumination. A few oil lamps illuminate small areas of the yard, but most of the ranch is dark, and any read-aloud text assumes the characters have darkvision or a light source.

New Monsters. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new monsters featured at the end of this adventure.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the Hofsteder Ranch map on page 5.

1 – Grain Silo

This large, tall building stores the various foods for the creatures kept at the ranch. Currently awaiting delivery, the silo is almost empty, and a musty, slightly humid smell fills the space. The silo has two entrances, a large, stout door on the ground level that can be secured from the inside employing a heavy iron bar and a hatch halfway up the building that is used to fill the silo with grain and other foodstuffs. This hatch opens onto a short catwalk, 20 feet above the ground, that hugs the southern wall.

Hiding Out. If the characters ever need to rest, this silo is their best bet.

Where's Wing? Wing (CG human male **NOBLE**) is being held captive somewhere on the ranch. To ensure that the party is suitably exhausted when they finally face Mo, they will only find Wing in the third location they search. Once rescued, Wing will alert the party to Mo's dastardly plan. Proceed to The Glade section once Wing is with the party.

HOFSTEDER RANCH

1 square = 5 feet



2 – Yard

The ranch comprises half a dozen buildings of varying shapes and sizes. The yard is mostly free of snow and is surrounded by chest-height fencing.

Built to keep the animals in, it offers no protection or cover to the characters. Moreover, a growing number of gremlins occupy the yard. There are so many that fighting the gremlins here would be tantamount to suicide. Instead, whenever the party seeks to cross the yard from one building to another, they must succeed in a Skill Challenge to avoid detection.

A Skill Challenge simulates a task requiring more time and effort than a single ability check. In its simplest form, the characters make a series of ability checks to earn a required number of successes before accumulating a maximum number of failed checks—similar to how death saving throws work.

This skill challenge consists of the following elements:

- **Crossing the Yard.** If they succeed, the party travels from one building to another without alerting the gremlins.
- **Difficulty.** Primary skill checks related to this skill challenge are made against DC 10. Secondary and repeat checks are made against DC 15.
- **Complexity.** The characters must succeed in two ability checks to cross safely. If the characters suffer a failure, they alert a pack of gremlins.
- **Primary Checks.** When the characters partake in a skill challenge, they may commit any ability check they like to the skill challenge. Certain ability checks, however, lend themselves better to a successful outcome than others. The primary checks for this skill challenge are Dexterity (Stealth) to sneak past or (Sleight of Hand) to create a distraction, Strength (Athletics) to climb past, and Wisdom (Perception) to pick a safe route.
- **Secondary Checks.** Secondary checks represent

all the skills the characters may use to participate in a skill challenge that aren't considered primary checks. The main reason for the disparity between primary and secondary is that primary checks are a little more "obvious" in their function.

- **Consequences.** If the party fails a skill challenge, they encounter a pack of gremlins that they must subdue to proceed. The nature of this encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Hofsteder Yard Encounter table below. Moreover, if the characters make loud sounds during this encounter, they draw the attention of another pack of gremlins, and so on.

HOFSTEDER YARD ENCOUNTER

APL	Encounter
3–4	4 GREMLINS*
5–7	8 GREMLINS*
8–10	6 ELITE GREMLINS*
11–13	8 ELITE GREMLINS*

3 – Western Barn

This barn is one of two that contains creatures that are bred and sold as mounts. This barn includes the finest and most expensive horses, generally marketed to wealthy nobles.

Encounter: Gremlins. A pack of gremlins is gathered here, eating, drinking, and generally creating chaos. Moreover, they have drawn the horses (five RIDING HORSES) out of their stalls, painted them with lewd images, and strewn them with wreaths of holly and ivy. The nature of this battle depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area 3 Encounter table below.

AREA 3 ENCOUNTER

APL	Encounter
3–4	12 GREMLINS*
5–7	7 GREMLINS* and 5 ELITE GREMLINS*
8–10	11 ELITE GREMLINS*
11–13	11 ELITE GREMLINS* and 1 GREMLIN MAGE*

Wing's Here. If Wing is here, the party finds him in the center of the gathering of gremlins. Wing is stark naked, tied to a horse, and painted tip to tail with acid-green paint. The gremlins, meanwhile, are dancing around him, hooting and throwing food.

4 – Eastern Barn

This barn is one of two that contains creatures that are bred and sold as mounts. This barn includes monstrous creatures trained to become deadly mounts, usually only sold to adventurers.

Encounter: Gremlins and Animals. A small group of four GREMLINS have released these creatures from their stalls and are currently throwing rotten food at the creatures from the relative safety of the hay loft 20 feet above the ground. The beasts are being driven into a frenzy. The nature of these creatures depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area 4 Encounter table below.

AREA 4 ENCOUNTER

APL	Encounter
3–4	1 GIANT GOAT, 2 WOLVES, and 1 WORG
5–7	1 OWLBEAR, 2 WOLVES, and 1 TIGER
8–10	1 OWLBEAR, 2 WORGs, and 2 ANKHEGS
11–13	2 OWLBEARS, 1 HELL HOUND, 1 RED DRAGON WYRMLING (with its wings bound)

Wing's Here. If Wing is here, the party finds him in the hay loft with the gremlins. Wing is suspended from a roof brace, dangling precariously above the enraged beasts.

5 – Workshop and Tackle Storage

The ranch staff uses this small workshop to store, repair, and craft the many saddles and tack required for the mounts raised here.

Encounter: Bickering Gremlins. Two GREMLINS are here, fighting over a bullwhip they have found. When the party arrives, they can hear the crack of the whip from outside. If combat breaks out, one of the gremlins (determined randomly) wields the whip while the other throws tools from the workbench.

Wing's Here. If Wing is here, the gremlins have him tied to a heavy, wooden carpenter's horse. He is gagged and bound at both feet and wrists.

6 – The Ranch House

The ranch house is Wing's home and, when they're present, the bunkhouse for the rest of the staff. None of the doors in the ranch house have locks.

Encounters in the Ranch House. The gremlins have taken over the ranch house, and the monstrous little blighters occupy every room. To increase the challenge of the 8th and 11th-level versions, gremlins shriek in alarm whenever encountered, and the rest of the gremlins in the ranch house swarm to the location. If the characters trigger an alarm here, they will face all the Ranch House’s residents at once. For ease, the complete list of creatures is listed here, divided by the level of the adventure, as shown in the Ranch House Encounter table below.

RANCH HOUSE ENCOUNTER

APL	Encounter
3–4	No encounter
5–7	No encounter
8–10	1 LIGHTNING GREMLIN* , 1 BAT-WING GREMLIN* , 1 PLANT GREMLIN* , and 3 ELITE GREMLINS*
11–13	1 LIGHTNING GREMLIN* , 1 BAT-WING GREMLIN* , 1 PLANT GREMLIN* , and 5 ELITE GREMLINS*

Wing’s Here. If Wing is in the ranch house, he can be found in the kitchen. Wing is gagged and tied to the larder door, and the gremlins here are using him for target practice, throwing kitchen knives around him. Every time a projectile hits the door, the poor man lets out a muffled shriek.

6a – Bathroom

Wing is so obsessed with cleanliness that he has equipped this room with an extravagant bathtub, magically enhanced to always run with steaming hot water. A dressing table complete with dozens of unguents, ointments, and soaps stands opposite.

Encounter: Fancy Dame. Only a single **ELITE GREMLIN*** occupies this room. Dressing itself in fine robes and painting its face with whatever it could find, this gremlin resembles—in the broadest of terms—a fine lady. Disturbed from its ablutions, the gremlin will attack with savage fury.

Treasure. A few of Wing’s ointments act as healing salves. These items’ nature depends on the adventure level, as shown in the Area 6a Treasure table.

AREA 6A TREASURE

APL	Treasure
3–4	2 <i>potions of healing</i>
5–7	1 <i>potion of healing</i> and 1 <i>potion of greater healing</i>
8–10	2 <i>potions of greater healing</i>
11–13	2 <i>potions of superior healing</i>

6b – Billy’s Bedroom

This bedroom is usually a bunkhouse for any staff member staying at the ranch. As Wing’s apprentice, this is Billy’s permanent resident. The room is furnished with comfortable-looking bunkbeds, chests of drawers, and a table with four chairs.

Encounter. A single **MUTATED GREMLIN*** occupies this room. This gremlin has been mutated by consuming a magic potion, becoming a monster of elemental lightning.

Help Me! Kate, Billy’s girlfriend (LG human female **COMMONER**), is also here. When the troubles started, she sought refuge in Billy’s bedroom, only to become trapped by the presence of the mutant gremlin.

6c – Wing’s Bedroom

This comfortable and well-adorned bedroom belongs to Wing. When they first escaped, the gremlin Mo came here, capturing Wing and taking control of a small assortment of magic items that he used to mutate himself and his brethren. The room is a chaotic mess of clothes and broken furniture.

Encounter: Mutant Gremlins. Two more **MUTATED GREMLINS*** occupy this room. More magic items have mutated one of these gremlins to sprout bat-like wings, while the other has become some kind of plant-gremlin hybrid.



Treasure: Wing's Treasure. The gremlins have raided Wing's bedroom and tossed anything they consider boring. Some of these items could be useful to the party. These items' nature depends on the adventure level, as shown in the Area 6c Treasure table.

AREA 6C TREASURE

APL	Encounter
3-4	A <i>bag of beans</i> (with 1d4 beans remaining) and a <i>gem of brightness</i>
5-7	A bag containing 2 <i>beads of force</i> and an <i>immovable rod</i>
8-10	A bag containing 4 <i>beads of force</i> and an <i>iron bands of binding</i>
11-13	A bag containing 6 <i>beads of force</i> and a <i>cube of force</i>

6d – Kitchen

The gremlins have utterly ruined the kitchen. Food is squashed and trodden into the floor, and nothing remains in its usual tidy place.

Encounter: Gremlins. A pack of gremlins is causing merry chaos, making even more mess. The nature of this battle depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area 6d Encounter table below.

AREA 6D ENCOUNTER

APL	Encounter
3-4	2 GREMLINS*
5-7	4 GREMLINS*
8-10	2 ELITE GREMLINS*
11-13	4 ELITE GREMLINS*

6e – Outhouse

The outhouses are typically kept clean and tidy, but the vile gremlins have made a disgusting mess, smearing waste all over the small rooms.

Encounter: Outhouse Gremlin. One GREMLIN is present within the westernmost outhouse, writing swear words in the muck and sniggering gleefully to itself.

THE GLADE

The gremlin leader Mo is all too aware of his kind's greatest weakness, their aversion to sunlight. The despicable villain has a plan to counteract this and is nearing its completion.

While captured, Wing was forced to reveal all he knew about the mogwai, gremlins, and even more from his vast knowledge of magical creatures. Armed with this information, Mo has concocted a ritual that he believes will rid himself of his solar weakness.

With a pack of gremlin sycophants, Mo has headed deeper into the forest surrounding the ranch, to an ancient glade where he intends to sacrifice the mogwai Gadget to a dark fey power.

Once rescued, a desperate and panic-stricken Wing will explain all this and implore the party to stop Mo and recover his beloved Gadget. The glade is only a short walk from the ranch, and when the party arrives, read or paraphrase the following:

Moonlight washes over a large misty glade, revealing a circle of gremlins hooting and hollering in excitement. In the glade's center is a small lake, and on a tiny island in its middle stands the gremlin leader, Mo. A small, furry creature that shakes fearfully is pinned beneath the villain's clawed foot. As the gremlin boss turns in your direction, he raises a wicked-looking knife above his head.

Encounter: Mo. Mo, the gremlin leader, and a mutated gremlin with bat wings stands triumphantly over Wing's mogwai Gadget, believing his grand plan is almost complete. A pack of entranced gremlins is in a ring around the pool of water. The water makes this combat even more dangerous, although only Mo is clever enough to use the water tactically to multiply himself.

GLADE ENCOUNTER

APL	Encounter
3–4	12 GREMLINS* and Mo (an ELITE GREMLIN*)
5–7	8 GREMLINS*, 4 ELITE GREMLINS* and Mo (an ELITE GREMLIN* with 28 hp)
8–10	11 ELITE GREMLINS* and Mo (a GREMLIN CULT FANATIC)
11–13	11 ELITE GREMLINS* and Mo (a GREMLIN MAGE*)

When the party is spotted, the other gremlins launch themselves at them while Mo mutters gibberish and completes his dark ritual. The nature of this encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Glade Encounter table below.

If Mo is reduced to 0 hit points, read or paraphrase the following:

Mo stumbles to the pool's edge and reaches his clawed fingers towards the water with a cruel grin. But, just as the monstrous villain is about to reach his goal, a blazing arrow slams into his hand, igniting him in an explosion of flame and light. "Bad monster!" Quips Gadget, gripping a tiny bow.

With that, Mo is no more, and any remaining gremlins are destroyed when the light of the dawning sun washes over the forest.

AFTERMATH

If the adventurers managed to stop Mo, they will have saved the ranch and the surrounding region from a disaster of exponential magnitude. Sadly for their egos, however, with little evidence of their actions left over, few will ever learn of their heroics. Nonetheless, Wing and Billy will praise them for their skill and bravery and reward them as promised. If Kate survived the ordeal, she too will thank the adventurers and, while she can offer them no reward, she promises them a favor, should ever they need it.

In the event that Mo is successful, his enhanced gremlins multiply in staggering numbers. Unchecked by the sun's radiant light, they flood the region, causing mayhem and misery wherever they go, and the area will never be the same again. Ω

GREMLIN

Small monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +6

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Special Traits

Multiplies in Water. If the gremlin touches or starts its turn in water, it spontaneously sprouts and ejects 1d4 gremlin buds which land in unoccupied spaces within 10 feet of the gremlin. At the start of the gremlin's next turn, the buds grow into full-sized gremlins. The new gremlins roll initiative and act on their own turn.

Nimble Escape. The gremlin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Pack Tactics. The gremlin has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the gremlin's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The gremlin takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight or bright light, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 1 slashing damage.

Throw Object. Ranged Weapon Attack: +0 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. **Hit:** 1 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (depending on the type of object the gremlin throws, GM's discretion).

GREMLIN, ELITE

Small monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 20 (4d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Skills Stealth +7

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Special Traits

Multiplies in Water. If the gremlin touches or starts its turn in water, it spontaneously sprouts and ejects 1d4 gremlin buds which land in unoccupied spaces within 10 feet of the gremlin. At the start of the gremlin's next turn, the buds grow into full-sized gremlins. The new gremlins roll initiative and act on their own turn.

Nimble Escape. The gremlin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Pack Tactics. The gremlin has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the gremlin's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The gremlin takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight or bright light, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Throw Object. Ranged Weapon Attack: +1 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. **Hit:** 1 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (depending on the type of object the gremlin throws, GM's discretion).

Gremlin Mutations

Many of the gremlins featured in this adventure possess unique mutations. A mutated gremlin is an **ELITE GREMLIN** that has one of the following advantages (as determined in the text).

Bat-Winged Gremlin. The gremlin has a flying speed of 30 ft.

Plant-Gremlin Hybrid. The gremlin's type is plant, it has vulnerability to fire (in addition to radiant) and has the Regeneration Trait. The gremlin regains 1 hit point at the start of its turn. If the gremlin takes fire or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The gremlin dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Lightning Gremlin. The gremlin's type is elemental, it gains immunity to lightning damage, and its CR becomes 2 (450 XP). Additionally, the gremlin gains the Lightning Burst (Recharge 6) action. The gremlin creates an arc of electricity in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3d6 lightning damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.