

Cavern Crawls

#016



9th Level Dungeon

Laughing Menace

GrimPress

Cavern Crawls

5^e

#016 - Laughing Menace

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Cavern Crawls are Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition compatible supplements designed as a resource for game masters to use in their campaigns.

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Laughing Menace

9th Level Dungeon

Preamble

Laughing Menace is a 9th level adventure for a party of 5 players. In this *Cavern Crawl*, the party must confront a demon-hide gnoll that is using sacrifices to summon powerful allies.

Background

On the borderlands, a barony is one bad day away from a revolt. The subjects here are being stalked and abducted in the night. The baron has tried everything in his power, including midnight guard patrols. Yet, his populace is still being hunted on the fringes of civilization.

The baron's subjects are being abducted by a demon-worshipping pack of gnolls. The pack is led by the **demon-hide gnoll**, which is using the victims to summon powerful demonic allies from the abyss. Once the pack leader is satisfied with the number of demons under his control, he plans to launch a direct attack on the baron's realm.

Quest Hook

The party will be approached by border guards at an outpost. They will fill the adventurers in on the basic information about the situation, and request they report to the baron's keep. There the desperate leader will supply more details, and offers the party an abandoned tower for resolving the problem. The party will hear rumors that citizens living near an arid canyon have heard sinister laughter at night.

Big Bad Evil Guy

In this *Cavern Crawl*, the characters will meet a **demon-hide gnoll**, a CR 13 abyssal gnoll.

ROLEPLAYING THE DEMON-HIDE GNOLL

The demon-hide gnoll is a blood-thirsty agent of chaos. Its single minded focus is raising a demonic gnoll army large enough to take control of this region.

Magic Items

In this *Cavern Crawl*, the characters may find the following magic items:

- a *ring of the ram*
- a *necklace of prayer beads (curing)*
- a *maul of havoc*

MAUL OF HAVOC

Weapon (Maul), Very Rare (Requires Attunement)

This maul has a pulsing layer of flesh that will try to wrap around your hands as you grip the weapon. You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

This is a sentient weapon of chaotic alignment. It has an Intelligence of 9, a Wisdom of 16, and a Charisma of 12, and hearing and darkvision out to a range of 60 feet. It can understand and speak Abyssal, and communicates by shouting.

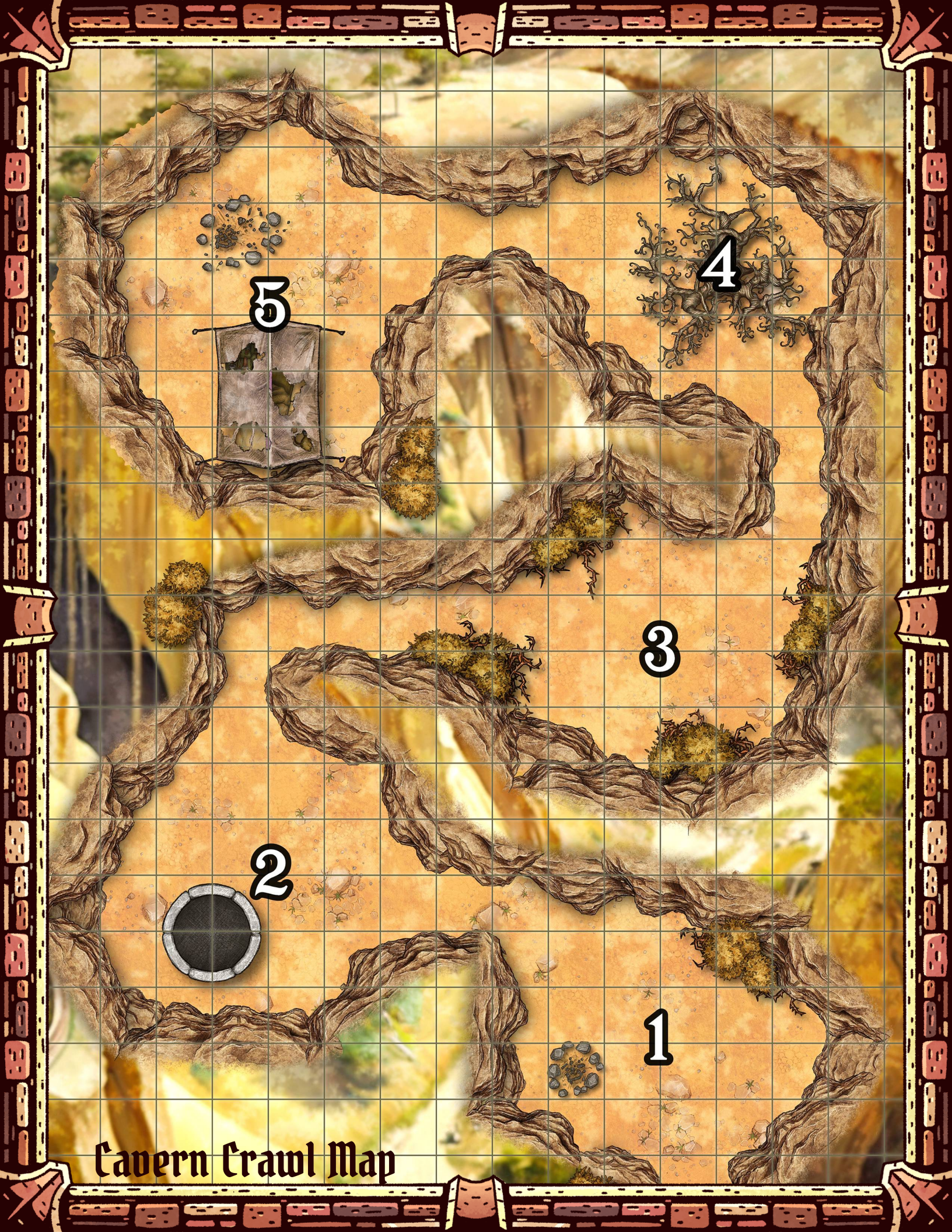
While attuned to the maul, you deal an extra 2d6 damage to targets with a lawful alignment. After being attuned this weapon for ten days, your alignment permanently changes to chaotic.



Maul of Havoc

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Cavern Crawl Introduction



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Cavern Crawl Map

A1: Camp Fire

Two **gnolls** tend a cooking fire. They're assigned here for guard duty but are distracted by hunger. The party can surprise the duo with a successful **DC 12 (Dexterity) Stealth check**. Read or paraphrase the following:

The smell of cooking meat whisks down the canyon. A pair of shaggy gnolls stand hypnotized by anticipation. You can hear their drool sizzling on the hot stones surrounding the fire.

These guards are more fearful of their master than anything that comes up through the canyon. They will fight to the last. The meat being cooked is rancid, and will cause the *poisoned* condition if consumed. **Roll Initiative!**

A2: Tranquil Well

An ancient well in this area holds a secret. It has been dry for a long time but thick, heavy vines cling to its wall. A dim source of light shines at the bottom. Read or paraphrase the following:

This area has an aura of tranquility. There are no signs of gnolls. You notice a well with vibrant green vines climbing out, the lush greenery refreshingly strange in this arid area.

The adventurers can climb down the well with a successful **DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**. At the bottom of the well they will find a *necklace of prayer beads* with four aquamarine beads of curing. When the necklace is disturbed, the vines instantly wilt. The climb out becomes more difficult, requiring a successful **DC 16 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**.

When climbing out of the well, loud yipping and cackling voices can be heard echoing down the canyon. With a successful **DC 15 (Wisdom) Perception check**, the party can make out at least a half dozen voices, some of which are yelling in Abyssal.

A3: Am-bushes

A couple **hyenas** are in this clearing fighting over a bone. Waiting to ambush the adventurers, 2x **hezrou** demons hide in the bushes. The lurking demons can be detected by a successful **DC 17 (Wisdom) Perception check**. Read or paraphrase the following:

Two mangy hyenas battle each other over a large bone. Their struggle stirs up the dust, making it more difficult to see. The hyenas abandon their quarrel, and cackle menacingly as you move into their territory.

Roll Initiative! The hezrou will launch their attack after the hyenas are slain or chased off. The demons wear gnoll faces and have bloody patches of fur clinging to their leathery forms.

A4: Gnarled Tree

A large, gnarled tree has bodies nailed to it. A pair of **giant hyenas** guard the tree. The tree is hollow and filled with blood. Read or paraphrase the following:

The large gnarled tree before you is flanked by massive, snarling hyenas. Dozens of humanoid-looking husks are nailed to the tree above a semi-enclosed cavity. Inside the tree hollow you see a gnoll frantically twisting and splashing in a pool of red liquid. It grows and changes before your eyes.

The gnoll becomes a **hezrou** and will leap out of the tree to join with the hyenas to fight the adventurers. **Roll Initiative!**

The humanoid forms nailed to the tree are villagers abducted by the gnolls. One still wears a *ring of the ram* on a withered finger.

Necklace of
Prayer Beads
(Curing)



A5: Ancient Campsite

The **demon-hide gnoll** and 2x **gnolls** are in this ancient campsite. They can be overheard having a conversation in Gnoll about the progress of transforming gnolls to hezrou. The boss isn't happy with the slow pace of the operation and grows restless for conquest. Read or paraphrase the following:

Loud crashes can be heard coming from the area ahead. Two gnolls cower away from a incensed demonic gnoll with glowing red eyes. It thrashes about the abandoned campsite, sending debris flying with its dark maul. The imposing figure locks eyes with you and lets loose a demonic, hyena-like laugh.

Roll Initiative! The demon-hide gnoll will charge forward, howling with exhilaration. It is out for blood and won't stop its attack until it or the adventurers are dead.

The *maul of havoc* will be enough proof for the baron to honor his bargain. So gratified is the baron that he will offer additional treasure (6,000 gp and 5x gems worth 750 gp each) with the deed to the tower. News of the adventurers' deeds will spread quickly, and they will be greeted as heroes by all in the barony.

The abandoned tower is in need of repair, but the adventurers should be able to find handy tradesmen to hire for the job. Although the immediate threat to the barony is dealt with, the tower's location in the wilds should offer many opportunities for future adventures.



Demon-Hide Gnoll

Medium Fiend, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 207 (18d12 + 90)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +7

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Abyssal, Gnoll

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +5

Magic Resistance. The demon-hide gnoll has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Maul of Havoc. The demon-hide gnoll's maul attacks are magical and do an extra 2d6 damage to creatures with a lawful alignment.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The demon-hide gnoll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its *maul of havoc*.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Maul of Havoc. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d6 + 7).

REACTIONS

Bristle. (5/Day) When the demon-hide gnoll is targeted with an attack, it can bristle its iron-like fur. This grants +3 AC against an attack that would hit it. If the attack still hits the demon-hide gnoll, the attacker must make a Dexterity saving throw. The attacker takes 10 (3d6) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

