

Borthar's Almanac

A Dungeon Crawl 1st Ed. AD&D

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Greshel's Lair

Volume 1

Background

Greshel was not always the master of the cave. There was a time when the tunnels lay quiet, carved by slow water and older things that no longer walked the surface. The crystals grew there long before goblins found them. They pushed up from the stone like teeth, catching what little light crept in and holding it deep inside. For years, the cave waited.

Greshel came as the smallest of a scavenging band. His tribe moved from place to place, living off scraps and what they could steal. He was not strong. He was not loud. Because of this, he learned to watch. While others fought over bones and rusted blades, Greshel studied shadows and listened to the ground beneath his feet.

One night, while the tribe slept near a dry ravine, Greshel slipped away. He had seen something strange earlier that day. A crack in the earth where cold air breathed out like a living thing. He followed it, crawling through tight stone until the tunnel opened into the cave that would become his home.

The crystals were the first thing he noticed. Tall, sharp, and silent.

They hummed in a way he could feel in his teeth. Greshel did not understand them, but he knew they were important. He broke off a small shard and held it close. It glowed faintly, and for the first time in his life, Greshel felt something close to ownership.

He returned to the tribe with the crystal. At first, they laughed. Then they fought over it. Blood was spilled over that single shard. Greshel watched again. He saw how the crystal changed them. Greed took hold. Fear followed. That was when he understood.

The cave was not just a shelter. It was power.



Greshel led them back, but he did not lead them as a follower. He guided them through the narrow paths, through the entrance

that could be defended, through

the tunnels that twisted and turned. He placed the strongest goblins at the front and the weakest behind. When they reached the main chamber, he showed them the crystals.

That night, the tribe turned on itself. Greshel had expected this. While they fought, he slipped into the side tunnels. He set traps with loose stone and hidden pits. He blocked passages and carved new ones. By the time the fighting ended, only a few goblins remained. Those that survived did not challenge him. They had seen what the cave could do.

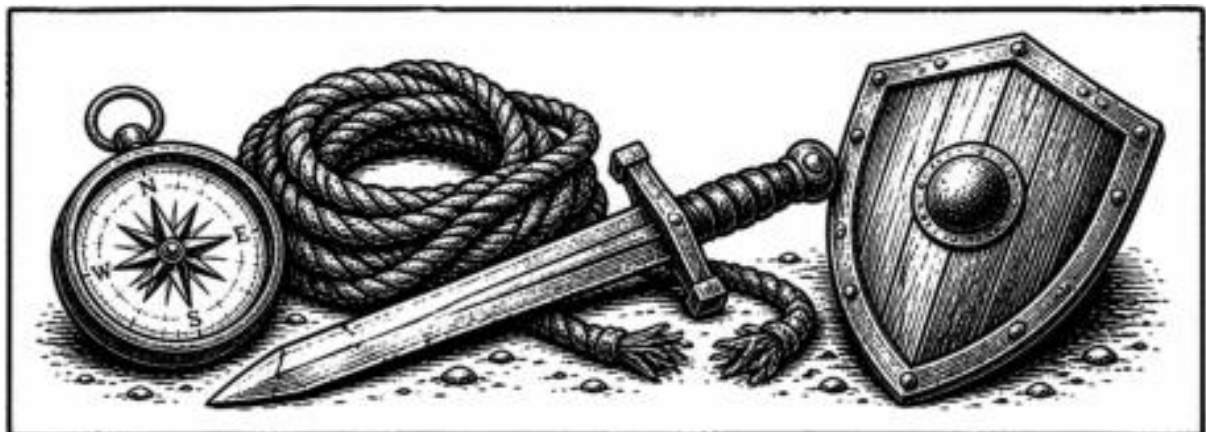
They called him Greshel of the Lair. Over time, the cave changed them all. The crystals spread deeper into the rock. Some began to glow brighter. Others cracked and whispered.

The goblins grew more protective, more violent. They stopped leaving the cave unless forced. Food was dragged inside. Bones piled up. Fires burned low and constant. Greshel grew stronger in ways that were not easy to see. He knew every path, every shadow.

He could hear movement from the entrance while standing in the deepest chamber. He placed guards where they mattered most and let the outer tunnels feel empty. That meant intruders would walk right into the heart of the lair.

At the center of it all sat the cart. It had once belonged to surface dwellers. Broken, abandoned, and dragged into the cave piece by piece. Greshel rebuilt it. He filled it with the largest crystals, stacking them high. He did not trade them. He did not share them. They were his. The goblins believed the crystals spoke to him. That they chose him. Greshel never said this was true. He never said it was false.

Now the cave waits again, but it is no longer empty. The entrance is watched. The tunnels are set. The crystals grow. And in the deepest chamber, Greshel stands with dagger in hand, ready to defend what is his.



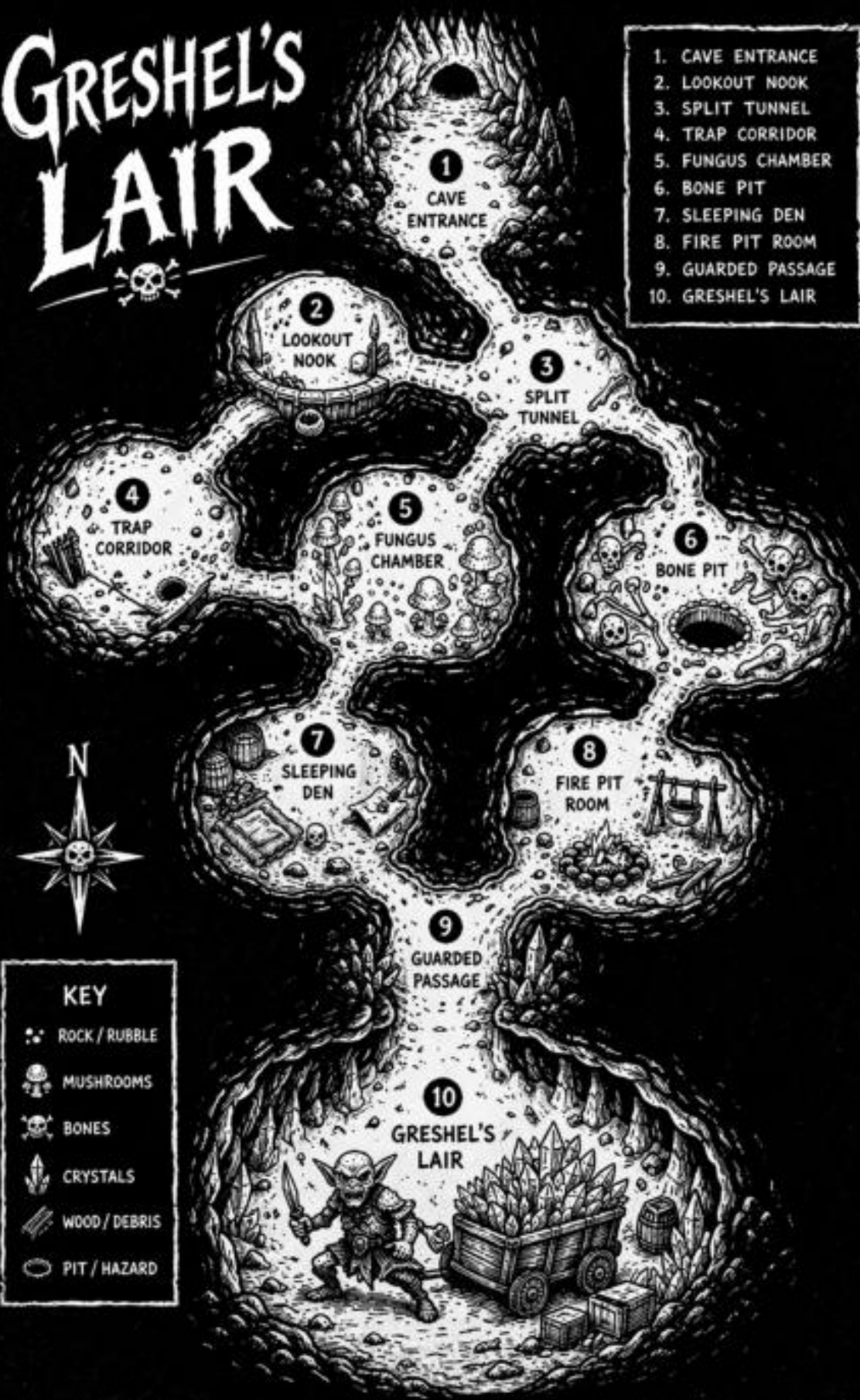
GRESHEL'S LAIR

1. CAVE ENTRANCE
2. LOOKOUT NOOK
3. SPLIT TUNNEL
4. TRAP CORRIDOR
5. FUNGUS CHAMBER
6. BONE PIT
7. SLEEPING DEN
8. FIRE PIT ROOM
9. GUARDED PASSAGE
10. GRESHEL'S LAIR



KEY

- ROCK / RUBBLE
- MUSHROOMS
- BONES
- CRYSTALS
- WOOD / DEBRIS
- PIT / HAZARD



Map Legend

1. Cave Entrance - Narrow opening with sharp rocks. Footprints and drag marks. Easy ambush point.
2. Lookout Nook - Small elevated ledge. Goblin watcher post. Gives advantage on anyone entering.
3. Split Tunnel - Fork in the cave. One path smells damp, the other smells like smoke.
4. Trap Corridor - Loose stones and a simple tripwire. Drops rocks from above.
5. Fungus Chamber - Glowing mushrooms. Dim light source. Some are edible, some are not.
6. Bone Pit - Old remains of animals and unlucky travelers. Hidden hole covered by debris.
7. Sleeping Den - Crude bedding. Scraps, cloth, and bones. Signs of multiple goblins.
8. Fire Pit Room - Charred ground. Cooking area. Smoke stains on the ceiling.
9. Guarded Passage - Tight choke point. Crystals start appearing in the walls here.
10. Greshel's Lair - Main chamber. Cart full of crystals. Greshel stands here ready to defend.



Monsters of Greshel's Lair

1. Goblins (Core Inhabitants)

Frequency: Common

No. Appearing: 6-18

AC: 6

Move: 9"

HD: 1-1

Attacks: 1 (weapon)

Damage: 1-6 or by weapon

Special: -1 to hit in sunlight

Notes: These are Greshel's tribe. They use ambush, numbers, and terrain.

2. Goblin Guards (Veterans)

Frequency: Uncommon

No. Appearing: 2-6

AC: 5

Move: 9"

HD: 1+1

Attacks: 1

Damage: 1-8 (better weapons)

Notes: Found near Rooms 2, 9, and 10. More disciplined.

3. Greshel (Goblin Leader)

Frequency: Unique

No. Appearing: 1

AC: 4

Move: 9"

HD: 3

Attacks: 1

Damage: 1-8 (dagger or short sword)

Special: +1 to hit, high morale

Notes: Cunning, trap-aware, never fights fair.

4. Giant Rats

Frequency: Common

No. Appearing: 5-20

AC: 7

Move: 12"

HD: ½

Attacks: 1

Damage: 1-3

Special: Disease chance

Notes: Found in Bone Pit and tunnels.

5. Giant Centipedes

Frequency: Uncommon

No. Appearing: 2-12

AC: 9

Move: 15"

HD: $\frac{1}{4}$

Attacks: 1

Damage: Nil

Special: Poison (save or become ill)

Notes: Lurk in damp cracks and fungus areas.

6. Piercers

Frequency: Rare

No. Appearing: 1-6

AC: 3

Move: 1"

HD: 1-4

Attacks: 1 (drop)

Damage: 2-12 depending on size

Notes: Hang from ceilings in narrow tunnels.



7. Rot Grubs

Frequency: Uncommon

No. Appearing: 1-6

AC: 9

Move: 1"

HD: 1 hp each

Attacks: 1

Damage: Special

Special: Burrow into flesh, fatal if untreated

Notes: Found in rotting debris and corpses.

8. Violet Fungus

Frequency: Rare

No. Appearing: 1-4
AC: 7
Move: 0"
HD: 3
Attacks: 1-4 tentacles
Damage: 1-4 each
Notes: Mistaken for harmless cave growth.

9. Shriekers
Frequency: Uncommon
No. Appearing: 1-8
AC: 7
Move: 0"
HD: 3
Attacks: None
Special: Loud shriek alerts goblins
Notes: Natural alarm system in fungus chamber.

10. Crystal Ooze
(Use Grey Ooze Stats)
Frequency: Rare
No. Appearing: 1
AC: 8
Move: 1"
HD: 3+3
Attacks: 1
Damage: 2-16
Special: Dissolves metal
Notes: Reskinned as a crystal-coated ooze feeding on mineral growth.



Encounter Check Rules
Check every 2 turns (20 minutes exploration)
Encounter chance: 1 in 6. Surprise applies normally
Light sources increase chance of being noticed

Optional Flavor Rolls

Roll 1d6 after monster is determined:

1. Arguing over loot
2. Eating or distracted
3. Setting or resetting traps
4. Moving treasure or supplies
5. Hunting another creature
6. On alert, expecting intruders

Random Monster Encounter Table

d12 Monster Chart

Roll 1d12 when checking for encounters.

1. 2-12 Goblins - Scrappers moving between rooms, often carrying loot or food.
2. 4-16 Goblins + 1 Guard - Patrol group. Guard directs ambush tactics.
3. 1-6 Goblins (Sneaking) - Attempt surprise. Hide in shadows or behind rock.
4. 6-18 Giant Rats - Swarm behavior. Will retreat if half are killed.
5. 2-12 Giant Centipedes - Drop from walls or crawl from cracks.



1. 1-4 Rot Grubs (in corpse or debris) - Triggered when disturbed.
2. 1-6 Piercers - Above ceiling. Roll surprise normally.
3. 1-6 Shriekers - No attack. Alert all goblins within 2-3 rooms.
4. 1-4 Violet Fungi - Slow but deadly if approached.

5. 1 Crystal Ooze - Moves slowly. Blends into mineral ground.
6. 2-8 Goblins + 1-2 Guards - Defensive group near deeper tunnels.
7. Greshel + 2-6 Elite Goblins - Only encountered in or near Room 10.

Random Treasure Table

Roll 1d20 when treasure is found.

d20 Loot Chart

1. 12 cp, 8 sp in a torn pouch
2. 25 sp, 3 gp scattered in dirt
3. 1d4 crude goblin daggers (poor quality)
4. Small bone charm necklace (worth 5 gp)
5. Pouch with 10 gp and a cracked gem (10 gp value)
6. Rusty helm with hidden 15 sp inside
7. 1d6 arrows + 1 arrow with silver tip
8. Worn boots with 5 gp tucked in sole
9. Small sack of mixed coins (30 cp, 20 sp, 6 gp)
10. Crystal shard (counts as gem, 25 gp value)
11. Tin ring with strange marking (worth 10 gp)
12. 1d3 minor gems (10 gp each)
13. Old map fragment (leads to another dungeon)
14. Potion (roll randomly, 1st ed table suggested)
15. Short sword +1 (goblin-sized but usable)
16. Scroll (1-2 spells, low level magic-user)
17. Gem cluster (50 gp total value)
18. Locked box with 40 gp and 1 gem (20 gp)
19. Potion + small gem (30 gp value)
20. Greshel's Cache: 120 gp, 60 sp, 3 gems (25 gp each), and one magic item (roll or choose)

Optional Flavor

Add-On (Roll 1d6)

1. Hidden under bones
2. Buried in loose stone
3. Inside a corpse
4. Tied to goblin belt
5. Locked in crude chest
6. Mixed with crystal growth

Dungeon Tone Notes

Most loot is low value, scattered, and dirty. Crystals act as stand-in gems. Magic is rare but present. Best treasure sits in Room 10 with Greshel

The crystals in Greshel's Lair are not common stones. They grow deep in the cave where the earth feels different, almost alive. Each piece holds a faint inner glow, like light trapped inside ice. That glow is what gives them value.

To a simple buyer, a small shard might be worth 10 to 25 gold pieces. Larger, clean crystals can reach 50 gold pieces or more, especially if they are unbroken and clear. A full cluster, like the ones Greshel guards, can be worth 100 gold pieces or higher, depending on size and quality. Merchants and collectors prize them for their rarity, but most do not understand their deeper use.

Magic users see more than just beauty. These crystals can be used as spell components, focusing energy in rituals or enhancing low-level enchantments. Some believe they store arcane power, slowly building it over time while buried in the earth. Because of this, a wizard may pay double or even triple their normal value if the crystal shows strong resonance.

At the same time, there is risk in handling them. Crystals taken too quickly or broken carelessly sometimes lose their glow. Others give off a faint hum that unsettles those who carry them for too long. In rare cases, they react to magic nearby, pulsing or cracking without warning. Because of this, most traders treat them with caution, even while paying well.

Greshel does not trade them. He does not weigh their value in gold. To him, the crystals are power, territory, and proof that the cave belongs to him. The largest pieces in his cart are not just treasure. They are the heart of his lair.

In game terms, these crystals work well as both currency and story tools. They can replace standard gems, act as quest items, or become unstable magical objects. Their value is not fixed, and that means the Dungeon Master can adjust it based on who is buying

and what the players choose to do with them.



Credits :
From the
imagination
of Borthar
Armageddon
for his love
of the game.
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