

Clan Crackhelm

Having forgotten the arts of working metal, shearing and/or grooming beards, and donning britches, the dwarves of Clan Crackhelm live out their brief, violent lives entirely *au naturel*.

- Hunted by hobgoblins as game animals.
- Prone to suicidal feats of derring-do.
- Speak mostly monosyllabic dwarvish.
- Go bare-naked save for beards

Wild Dwarves

Husky, hirsute demihumans who dwell in caves.

AC 6 [13], **HD** 2+2 (16hp), **Att** 1 x stone handaxe (1d6-1) or stone spear (1d6-1) or heavy rock (1d4), **THACO** 19 [0], **MV** 60' (20') / 90' (30') on all fours, **SV** D8 W9 P10 B13 S12 (D1), **ML** 8 (10 with leader), **AL** Neutral, **XP** 35, **NA** 1d6 (5d8) **TT** L x10, **Items** 1d6 contents of beard (see below).

- **Hate hobgoblins.** Normally attack on sight.
- **Beard for all occasions.** Thickness provides protection against attack and elements. May pull extra weapons or random items from beard on 4-in-6 (see table).

1d4	What emerges from the whisky depths
1	Food. 1d4: 1) live salmon; 2) burnt rat-on-stick; 3) hard-boiled owlbear egg; 4) raw cave oysters.
2	Pretty rock. 1d6: 1) gold nugget; 2) rare gem; 3) gallstone; 4) ioun stone; 5) pebble; 6) dwarf knucklebones.
3	Beloved pet. 1d4: 1) rock (roll above); 2) psionic cave rat; 3) trained cave locust; 4) distraught gnome.
4	A surprise! 1d4: 1) a lock of elvish hair; 2) potion of growth; 3) drum made from hobgoblin skull; 4) dead bat.

Wild dwarf NPCs:

- Gloi** (brunette; loveable; steals food; attachment issues).
- Dwal** (black-bearded; grumpy; perpetual allergies).
- Boff** (ginger; berserker rage; Yosemite Sam voice/temper).

Hobgoblins of the Tribe of the Punctured Aorta

Translated from the goblin *Rugga zul Lugmuk'Splukk!*, the tribe acquired its name through members' skill at peppering targets with enough arrows to guarantee death. Each tribesmember tries to live a hobgoblin's best life: open steppe, a swift dire wolf, to slit your enemies' throats while they sleep, and equal opportunity hearing of the lamentations.

- Hold biweekly raids upon Fort Dearth.
- Live off the fat of the land (and wild dwarves)
- Daydream of conquests beyond the valley.

Hobgoblin Raiders

Heftily, unpleasent goblins just looking for a good time.

AC 6 [13], **HD** 1+1, (5hp), **Att** 1 x spear (1d6), 2 x shortbow (1d6). **THACO** 18 [+1], **MV** 90' (30'). **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (1), **ML** 8, **AL** Chaotic, **XP** 15, **NA** 1d6 (4d6) plus wolves. **TT** D.

- **Conceived on wolfback:** Gain +2 to hit and damage while riding a dire wolf.
- **Dire wolves.** Rides a dire wolf they have raised since infancy. If either dies, other mourns/howls for 1d3 rds., attacks killer relentlessly (+2 att./dmg, -2 AC)

Encounters (random)

Roll below to ruin the PCs' day (or lives):

2d4	Results (unless you want to ignore them)
2	Roll twice and tell PCs to pray to Ye Gods!
3	Owlbear (1d3-1; scraggly, screech owl subspecies of the valley). Roll 1d3: 1) molting; 2) eating live dwarf; 3) guarding nest. (1-in-6 chance, it's the Night Hooter [3b.]).
4	Prospectors (1d4; wiry; easily befuddled; territorial). Roll 1d3: 1) arguing over a claim; 2) digging vigorously into an absurdly deep hole; 3) drunk, cursing the earth.
5	Wild dwarves. Roll 1d4: 1) drunk on fermented owlbear milk, 2) staring at bare rockface, 3) clacking two stones together with great intensity, 4) itching (for a fight).
6	Wolves (3d3; scraggly valley breed, of doubtful pedigree). Roll 1d3: 1) stalking wild dwarf; 2) scratching; 3) licking self vigorously.
7	Hobgoblins. Roll 1d4: 1) hunting wild dwarf, 2) gathered around makeshift wolf-fighting pit; 3) Encamped.
8	Rival murder hobos (2d4 adventurers +2d3 hirelings; well-armed; flexible ethics; 3-in-6 chance of 1d3 magic-users). Roll 1d3: 1) maimed, defeated; 2) eager, well-stocked; 3) arguing over course of action or onverthinking simple problem/puzzle (you know what I mean).

Developments (also random)

Roll anytime below to get the proverbial boulder tumbling (used to generate "plots" if that's your thing):

1d8	Results (may vary)
1	Hobgoblins raid Fort Dearth [1.] (in-and-out; snatch beefiest of citizenry; swipe lager & lederhosen).
2	Hobgoblins hold racing/dwarf hunting competition in Brokenoggin Gorge [4] (who captures fattest dwarf and returns first is declared winner; lots of backstabbing).
3	Prospectors discover gold in Brokenoggin Gorge [4] (leading to comical skirmishes with wild dwarves that turn into full-blown violent colonialist oppression in 2d3 days).
4	Night Hooter climbs over walls of Fort Dearth [1.] (gets into garbage; eats pets/kids; Burli goes full Cap'n Ahab on the owlbear, pursuing it with doomed mob into the night).
5	Wild Dwarves revolt in Fort Dearth [1.] (demand equality under the lack of law; rolling battles in the streets between dwarves, prospectors, miscreants; if successful, wild dwarf crowns self king and rules as a vengeful despot).
6	Rival murder hobos discover dwarf treasure vault (return to Fort Dearth [1.] ; poor financial planning skills result in hyperinflation).
7	Another Hobgoblin tribe invades the valley (Clan of the Flanged Mace-Acquired Traumatic Brain Injury; incites war with the Tribe of the Punctured Aorta; collateral damage inevitable).
8	A squadron of progressive-minded paladins march into the valley (rile up sympathy for the plight of the wild dwarves; chaotically aligned valley-dwellers (wild dwarves included) rally together against paladins; massacres ensue).

Requires *Old-School Essentials Core Rules*.

Valley of the Cracked Helm

Union of Hirelings, Menchmen, & Hangers-on
Written & illustrated by Billy Longino. (www.uhhgames.com)



Once a paradise at the heart of dwarfdom, the **Valley of the Cracked Helm** has lain forgotten for ages, lost to the vagaries of natural disasters, goblin invasions, and generational benders. Over the years since, its name has invoked only shame—furtive, deep-seated dwarven shame—for the valley is where the **wild dwarves** dwell...

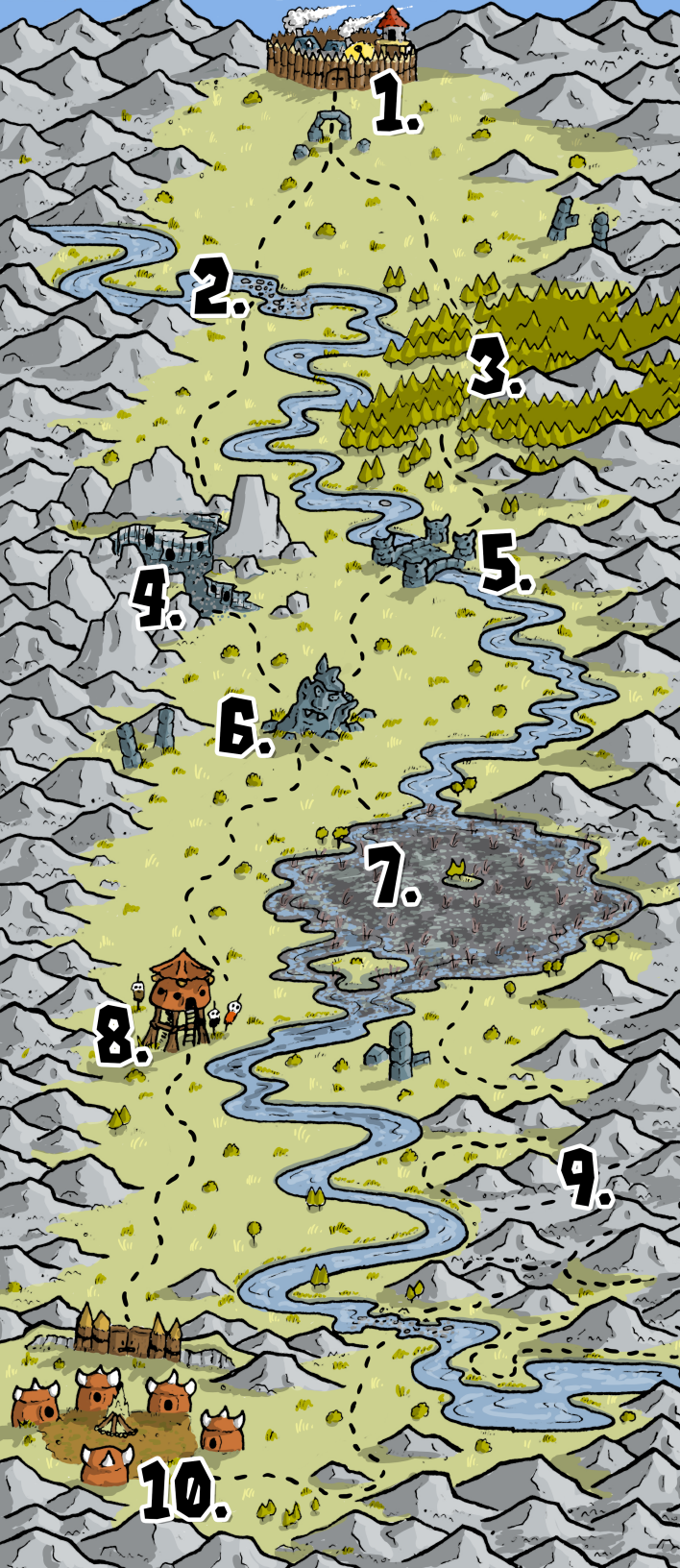
Littered with ruins of the obligatory lost dwarven civilization, the valley has drawn hobgoblin squatters, prospectors, treasure-hunters, murder hobos, and other chaotic ne'er-do-wells to its hidden dales—in turn attracting heroes and their lawful-minded ilk. Will the wild dwarves survive? Remain oppressed? Or might they rise up, refusing to be collateral in the cosmic conflict between the forces of arbitrary, nine-point Weltanschauungen (which are conveniently forgotten by players and referees alike for the sake of expediency several sessions in).

(This pointcrawl scenario can be dropped into any classic fantasy campaign allowing gratuitous dwarven nudity. More setting than adventure, it encourages/requires referees to improvise or develop content further to fit their own needs. Low-level PCs may need to be lucky or clever to survive.)

1d6 reans the PCs may've come to the valley:

1. **THEY'S** (allegedly) **GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS!!!**
2. Dwarf PC must hold rites at The Grudgerock.
3. To satisfy savior complex and liberate the wild dwarves!
4. To deal with hobgoblins of Tribe of the Punctured Aorta.
5. Capture a wild dwarf for wizard's menagerie in the city.
6. Just crawling through another hex (i.e., totally lost).

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What to Find in the Valley

Travel along ranger paths between points takes 2 hours (if sober). Random encounters happen on a 2-in-6 chance per hour. Going off the beaten path results in referee improvisation.

1. Fort Dearth

Far-flung frontier outpost rife with intrepid ne'er-do-wells

1a: Village Proper

Muddy streets (at least 25% feces). **Wild dwarves** (live on the streets; fight over scraps; treated like pests). **Few houses** (prospectors; desperate merchants; itinerant hirelings).

1b: The Verboten Owlbear Tavern

Alpine kitsch (carved wood features; stuffed dead things; owlbear rug by fireplace; staff wears lederhosen). **Burli Shinkickerstein** (dwarf; tends bar; owlbear hunter; lost left arm to the **Night Hooter** in *The Wooded Encroachment* [3], becomes anxious/despondent if brought up).

- **Cracked Helm Lager** (overpriced swill; resulting urine attracts owlbears and wild dwarves; locally sourced).
- **Rival murder hobos** (see Random Encounters).

1c: Rangers' Tower

Lookout (2-in-6 chance of hobgoblins making obscene gestures beyond walls but within bowshot). **Equipment** (at double price).

- **Guides for hire** (know more than PCs and remind them often; 10 gold a week; lower random encounter to 1-in-6; lost only a 1-in-6 in *The Wooded Encroachment* [3,] and *Levee 19 Marsh* [7], 3-in-6 in *Hidden Hill Paths* [9]).

2. Soggy Beard Ford

Boulder-strewn crossing over Skullspout River

Getting Across

Rapids (Str checks: 3 successes to cross. 3 failures carried downstream, 1d8 dmg). **Bones** (of dwarves among river stones).

- **Leaping salmon** (THACO 19 [0], 1d3 dmg, if hit succeed Dex check or suffer failure for crossing Rapids).

3. The Wooded Encroachment

Spillover of abhorrent trees from the next valley over

3a: Dreaded, Dark Woods! (trans. from Dwarvish)

Forest depths (serene; quiet; shaded). **Whimsical woodland critters** (playful; attracted by song). **Sylvan paths** (winding; nonsensical; lost on 3-in-6). **Owlbears** (lots of owlbears).

3b: Predations of the Night Hooter

Legendary owlbear (10 HD; mite-ridden; heavily scarred).

- **Hoots in the night** (screeching; carry for miles; woodland critters go silent; Save vs. Spells or suffer *cause fear*).
- **Nest** (dank cave; moldy; 1d3 eggs; huge, mottled red, worth 2d3 gems in trade with wild dwarves).

4. Brokenoggin Gorge

Ancient, well-weathered quarry riddled with mine shafts

4a: Abandoned Quarry

Bare rockfaces (blue stone). **Teetering piles** (of discarded blocks, easily tipped over.). **Eerie quiet** (echoes; rusting mining equipment; distant clacking of small rocks). **Gems** (in rock walls; 5d20x10).

- **Gorge spiders** (8 HD; size of cows; feed upon cave locusts, wild dwarves; spin webs across gorge, between piles of stone).

4b: Ruined Underground Dwarf Stronghold

Wild dwarf dwellings (10d8 dwarves; in abandoned buildings; primitive; crude pictographs of dwarves mining, drinking, mining, smithing, mining, on walls). **Unlooted vaults** (TT H; guarded by 2d3 Stone Golems shaped like huge dwarves).

5. Bridge of Judgement

Grand, mile-long causeway over Skullspout River

5a: Superior Dwarf Engineering

Looming statues (of dwarf warriors; very judgmental). **Smooth paving** (no cracks). **Well-built** (entirely of blue stone).

- **Bridge dwarves** (wild dwarf sub-culture; cannibals; live in **Bridge Tunnels** [5b]; hold bungee-like rituals involving stones tied to feet by vines tossed over bridge).
- **Judgement of ancestors** (dwarf PCs experience shame at poor life choices under gaze of statues; Wisdom check or feel compelled to overcompensate next battle/carouse).

5b: Bridge Tunnels

Entrances (within dwarf statues). **Extensive passageways** (within bridge; mossy; haunted by green slimes which bridge dwarves use to make potent grog). **Bridge dwarf dwellings** (guano-plastered; captive wild dwarves; toll vaults: TT B).

- **Blind bridge troll** (stalks tunnels; bad gout from eating raw dwarf offal (-30' MV); blind; great sense of smell).

6. The Grudgerock

Hobgoblin-shaped megalith much abused by dwarves

Bust of Ancient Hobgoblin Conqueror, Rizzragg

Defaced (partially; scowling mangled by axe and hammer blows; urine stains). **Graffiti** (engraved dwarf runes; names of those who've, allegedly, wronged the engravers plus threats).

- **The Grudgeoning** (dwarves inscribe name of one who has, allegedly, wronged them upon stone; gain +2 hit and damage against target; every month subject of grudge lives, lose 1 Constitution as grudge gland inflames).

7. Levee 19 Marsh

Sunken marsh formed after engineering disaster

Sunken Tombs

Hermetically sealed (float despite being stone); **Unlooted** (TT B, bubbles of explosive corpse/swamp gas, if carrying torch: 2d6 dmg); **Soggy dwarf wights** (as normal wights but ornerier, soggier).

8. Hobgoblin Watchtower

Overlooks plain between hills and Skullspout River

Plain of the Feathered Dead

Quiet fields (of arrow-riddled remains). **Eager vultures** (circle overhead). **Watchtower** (of stretched hill giant hide; houses 3d3 hobgoblin raiders; bow range doubled; swanky interior furs).

- **Feathered Death** (countless arrows; Sv. vs. Breath or take 3d6 dmg, comically riddled with arrows).

9. Hidden Hill Paths

Labyrinthine canyon trails with confounding dead ends

Randomly Winding, Labyrinthine Trails

This way, No THAT way! (4-in-6 chance of becoming lost; random encounters on 3-in-6; takes 3d4 hours to traverse).

10. Hobgoblin Encampment

Leisurely stopover on bloody campaign of conquest

Yurts

Stretched hides (of hill giants). **Hill giant skull** (used as cauldron for wild dwarf stew; appetizing aroma). **Bonfire** (blazing at night; stinks of dwarf hair; wild dwarves tied to poles).

- **Hobgoblins raiders** (12d6 raiders; 2-in-6 chance of suffering food coma from too much dwarf meat).
- **King Zengak-Ruuk** (brooding; hast lost joy in slaughter, wonders if peaceful life not so bad; coup incoming).
- **Tugmarug** (enslaved hill giant; indigestion from diet of undercooked wild dwarf; chained to boulders).