

G. Gnoll Burrows

Gnoll Burrows is a Fifth Edition plug-in adventure for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3, 5, 8, or 11**. This document offers a general guideline on scaling the adventure for each level. The characters must delve into the rotting remains of a giant purple worm and root out the gnolls feasting on its flesh—along with their dark master.

Background

About a week ago, a caravan transporting the remains of a lich-like creature called Hak'shud was swallowed whole by a purple worm. Though the caravan and its human accompaniment were destroyed, the lich survived, and immediately began to decay the great beast from within. Once the worm was slain and buried beneath the sands, Hak'shud

reached out telepathically across the desert wastes in search of thralls. Though he found few intelligent humanoids, he did discover a roving band of gnolls and bound them all to his will.

Using his profane magics, Hak'shud transformed these gnolls into undead monstrosities and commanded them to bring him flesh—alive or dead. Meanwhile, the small number of humanoids he'd managed to contact and ensorcel began to infiltrate the highest levels of Sandara Oasis, including the Hall of Ancestors; countless bodies have been removed from those hallowed halls and placed at the feet of Hak'shud.

Now, deep within the bowels of the purple worm, Hak'shud is weaving a flesh golem powerful enough to destroy Sandara Oasis. Brave heroes are needed to enter the burrows and put an end to his foul schemes.

The Flesh Burrows

The Flesh Burrows are a series of tunnels and cavities that have been carved into the remains of a giant purple worm by Hak'shud and his army of gnolls. Desiccated and stiffened by the desert heat, the burrows are surprisingly stable; however, the venom of the purple worm is still active, even in death. The gnolls have taken to dipping their weapons in these pools of poison to give them an edge in combat.

Additionally, adventurers delving into the worm's remains must be cautious of noxious gases, unstable terrain, and bursts of toxic waste, to say nothing of the foul parasites nestled in its flesh. It'll take a strong will—and an even stronger stomach—to root out the gnoll infestation.

General Features

Unless stated otherwise, the Flesh Burrows have the following features.

Size and Dimensions. The ceilings within each area of the Flesh Burrows are roughly 15 feet high.

Illumination. Treat each area as having no light.

Surface Detail. There is an overwhelming stench of rotten flesh. Sacs of poison are suspended from the walls of the burrow. Every surface is sticky with bloody waste.

- Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell are made with disadvantage.
- Unless precautions are taken (stuffing their noses with cotton, for example), each character must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw upon entering the Flesh Burrows or become poisoned. A poisoned character can repeat this saving throw upon entering a new area of

the burrows, ending the condition on themselves with a success. Taking precautions after becoming poisoned grants advantage on the saving throw. A character who succeeds on this saving throw becomes immune to this effect for 24 hours.

Hazard: Gas Explosion. Characters with proficiency in Medicine or a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher realize that there is a massive buildup of gases within the purple worm's corpse—using fire is ill-advised. Whenever a fire source is ignited in any area of the Flesh Burrows, roll a d20. On a 1–5, a firestorm engulfs the area, causing fire damage to all creatures and objects within it. Each creature in the area can make a Dexterity saving throw, taking half damage on a success. The nature of the hazard depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Gas Explosion table.

GAS EXPLOSION

Adventure Level	Save DC	Fire Damage
3rd	13	22 (4d10)
5th	14	44 (8d10)
8th	15	66 (12d10)
11th	16	88 (16d10)

Creature Template: Fleshripped.

Certain creatures in this adventure are tagged with the “fleshripped” template (for example, a **gnoll** might become a **fleshripped gnoll**). A creature using this template has its statistics changed as follows:

- Its creature type becomes undead.
- It gains immunity to poison damage, as

well as the charmed, exhaustion, and poisoned conditions.

- It gains darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.
- It gains the following trait: **Poisoned Weapons.** The creature's weapons are coated in purple worm poison. On a hit, the target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Flesh Burrows on page 4.

G1 – The Mouth

The massive mouth of the dead worm lolls open, its tongue a desiccated carpet of stone. The stench of rotten flesh is overwhelming. Toxin sacs hang precariously from the walls of its gullet; their membranous shells quiver with each step.

Encounter: Swarms of Insects. The purple worm's flesh writhes with 3 **swarms of insects.** They don't attack unless disturbed by the characters. If a character makes a saving throw to avoid falling toxin (see below), they automatically disturb the insect swarms.

Hazard: Falling Toxin. Whenever a creature moves farther than 15 feet on the ground in a single round, toxin sacs are released from the roof of the mouth. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take poison damage. The nature of the hazard depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Falling Toxin table.

FALLING TOXIN

Adventure Level	Poison Damage
3rd	5 (1d10)
5th	11 (2d10)
8th	16 (3d10)
11th	22 (4d10)

G2 – The Corpse Dump

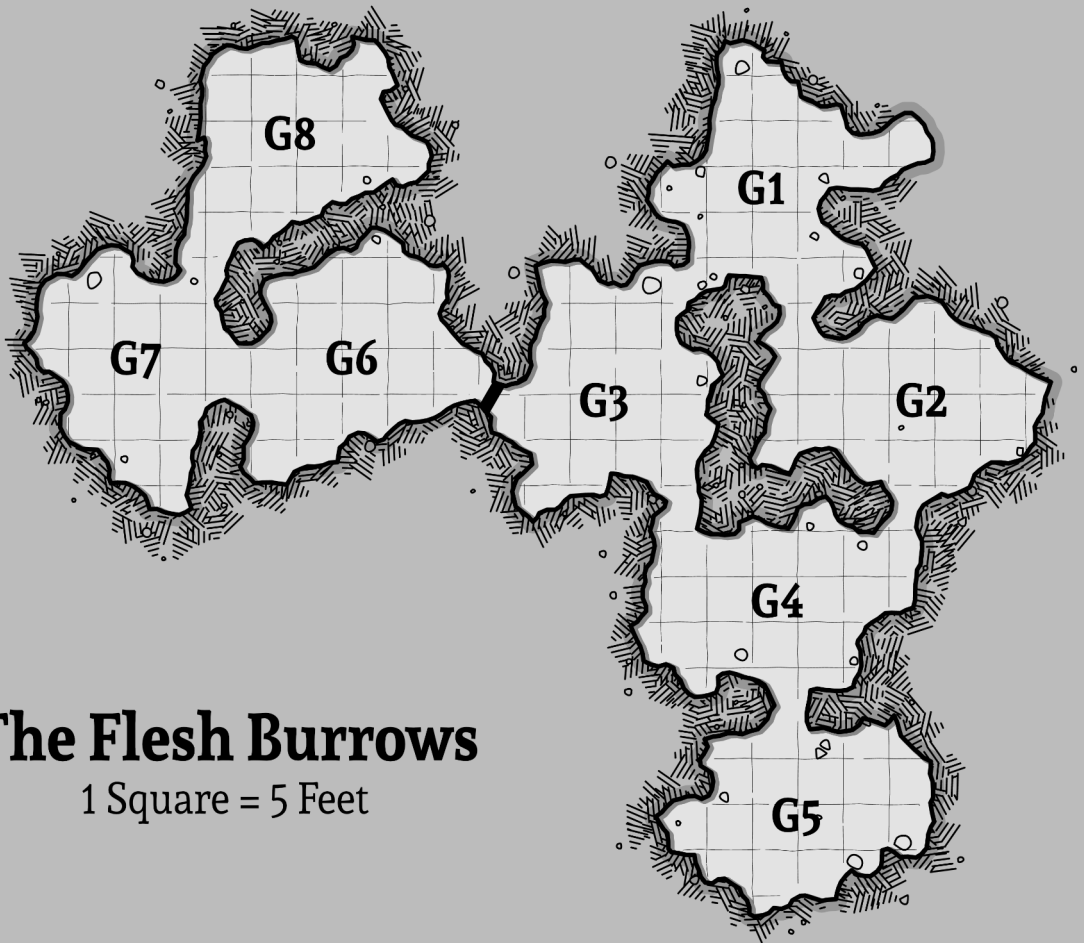
Before you are piles of stinking corpses—their mouths are all a bloody rictus. To the south, you hear rhythmic scraping sounds, as if by something being dragged across the ground.

Hazard: Corpse Piles – Cackle Fever.

Whenever a non-undead creature moves farther than 15 feet on the ground in a single round, they must succeed on a DC 14 Dexter-ity (Acrobatics) check or fall face first into a pile of corpses. A creature that falls into the corpses must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be infected with cackle fever. The nature of the cackle fever depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Modified Cackle Fever table.

MODIFIED CACKLE FEVER

Adventure Level	Save DC	Fire Damage	Madness
3rd	11	2 (1d4)	—
5th	13	5 (1d10)	Short-term
8th	15	7 (2d6)	Long-term
11th	17	11 (2d10)	Indefinite



The Flesh Burrows

1 Square = 5 Feet

Encounter: Scavengers. Several of Hak'shud's servants are picking through the corpse piles, searching for usable flesh. One of them is currently dragging a body into area G4 on their way to Hak'shud's lieutenant in area G5. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area G2 Encounter table. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new creatures featured in the appendix.

AREA G2 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
3rd	3 fleshripped gnolls
5th	3 fleshripped gnolls and 1 gnoll abomination*
8th	3 gnoll abominations*
11th	1 fleshripped mage and 2 gnoll abominations*

G3 – Burrow Intersection

Sharp stalactites hang from the ceiling, the result of the worm's flesh ossifying in the desert heat. You hear muffled screaming to the west.

Encounter: Ropers. One or more **ropers** have disguised themselves as stalactites on the ceiling. A character with proficiency in Medicine or Nature knows that the worm's flesh couldn't have ossified so quickly. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area G3 Encounter table.

AREA G3 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
3rd	1 roper
5th	1 fleshripped roper
8th	2 ropers
11th	3 fleshripped ropers

Obstacle: Door of Flesh. A thick, gooey web of flesh (as if a *web* spell with a save DC of 14) separates this area from area G6. The door reconstitutes itself on initiative counts 10 and 20. Additionally, any attempt to damage the door causes it to scream; each non-undead creature within 20 feet of it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 7 (2d6) thunder damage and is deafened for 1 minute. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't deafened. The door screaming alerts the creatures in area G6 to the characters' presence (see area G6 for more information).

The door can be deactivated by speaking the phrase: "Hak'shud Devours All." If Mort is accompanying the characters (see Adventure Hooks), he can tell the characters the password. Otherwise, Mort is busy sorting through corpses in area G5.

G4 – The Stomach

You come to the shore of a pool of bubbling liquid. Partially digested bodies bob on its surface.

Obstacle: Acid Pool. The entire room is submerged in a pool of stomach acid. It is 10 feet deep at the center. Any creature that begins its turn in the pool takes acid damage. Additionally, any nonmagical item that begins a turn inside the pool corrodes. After corroding, weapons take a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to damage rolls; armor takes a permanent and cumulative –1 penalty to AC. If its penalty drops to –5, the weapon or armor is destroyed. Smaller items (such as nonmagical clothing and rings) are instantly destroyed. The nature of the obstacle depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Acid Pool table.

ACID POOL

Adventure Level	Acid Damage
3rd	5 (1d10)
5th	11 (2d10)
8th	16 (3d10)
11th	22 (4d10)

Treasure: Ring of Water Walking. An oxidized copper *ring of water walking* floats in the center of the acid pool. A creature can attempt to fish it out from the shore by attempting a DC 16 Dexterity check using a line and hook. A failed check destroys the line and hook.

G5 – Corpse Sorting

This area strikes as a halfway point between a morgue and a bureaucrat’s office. It seems the bodies are being categorized and sorted into neat stacks.

Hazard: Corpse Piles – Cackle Fever.

The corpses are all infected with cackle fever. Refer to area G2 for more information.

Encounter: Hak’shud’s Lieutenant. If the characters enter the room quietly, they see a flying skull (**fleshripped flying sword**, except its longsword attack is instead a slam attack that deals bludgeoning damage and it can speak and understand Common). It is mulling over a large *manual of flesh golems*, muttering to itself and barking the occasional command to one or more gnoll servants nearby.

If Mort is already accompanying the characters (see Adventure Hooks), the flying skull is one of Hak’shud’s loyal lieutenants. Otherwise, the flying skull is Mort himself—and he is ready to turn traitor on his dark master! Once the gnoll servants are defeated, Mort begs for mercy (if he wasn’t already accompanying the characters), using his knowledge of Hak’shud and the password to the flesh door (see area G3) as leverage.

The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area G5 Encounter table. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new creatures featured in the appendix.

AREA G5 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
3rd	1 flying skull and 2 fleshripped gnolls
5th	1 flying skull and 1 gnoll abomination*
8th	1 flying skull and 2 gnoll abominations*
11th	1 flying skull and 3 gnoll abominations*

Treasure: Cursed Manual of Flesh Golems. The flying skull in this area is in possession of a *manual of flesh golems*. A DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the manual itself is made of humanoid skins and written in blood. The manual is cursed: whenever a non-undead creature touches the manual, it magically adheres to the creature touching it and attempts to consume its flesh. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the manual is also grappled by it (escape DC 15). Ability checks made to escape this grapple are made with disadvantage. At the beginning of each round, a creature grappled by the cursed manual takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. If this effect kills a creature, that creature's face is added as a page to the book.

G6 – The Slaughterhouse

Aligned around this room are rows and rows of upright embalming tables, upon which lie the mangled bodies of the gnolls' experiments. Some of them are awake—they moan in pain, begging for the release of death. An alchemical table lies at the center of the room.

Development: Trapped Creations. 1d4 + 1 of the experiments in this room are awake. If they hear the flesh door scream (see area G3), they call out to the characters for mercy, which prompts Fenian Ulevand in area G7 to investigate and quiet them down.

Treasure: Potions. There are several vials of colorful liquid on the alchemical table. The nature of the potions depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area G6 Treasure table.

AREA G6 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
3rd	1 <i>potion of poison</i> and 1 <i>potion of healing</i>
5th	1 <i>potion of poison</i> and 1 <i>potion of gaseous form</i>
8th	1 <i>potion of poison</i> and 1 <i>potion of flying</i>
11th	1 <i>potion of poison</i> and 1 <i>potion of heroism</i>

G7 – Traitor's Laboratory

More embalming tables are arrayed around the room, but they're all unoccupied. Bluish orbs of light dance in the air. You feel an ominous wind blow from the north, though nothing touches your skin.

Illumination. Treat this area as being dimly lit from permanent *dancing lights*.

Encounter: Mad Doctor and Servants. Fenian Ulevand, once an acolyte of High Priest Thraindor Earthshaper, now performs twisted experiments on the corpses that pass into the Flesh Burrows. Upon meeting the characters, he comments on the pliability of their flesh and promises them great power should they choose to lay under his knife!

During the encounter, Fenian commands his servants to grapple the weakest-looking character, restrain them on an embalming table (escape DC 15), and gag them. Should his servants succeed, Fenian commands them to do the same to the next weakest-looking character and so on until all characters are restrained and gagged.

If all characters are ever simultaneously restrained on embalming tables, the encounter

ends—the characters are soon slain and transformed into undead abominations. Only a *wish* spell can return them to life. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area G7 Encounter table. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new creatures featured in the appendix.

AREA G7 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
3rd	Fenian (fleshripped cult fanatic) and 3 fleshripped gnolls
5th	Fenian (fleshripped cult fanatic), 2 gnoll abominations ,* and 1 fleshripped gnoll
8th	Fenian (fleshripped mage), 2 gnoll abominations ,* and 1 fleshripped gnoll
11th	Fenian (fleshripped mage) and 3 gnoll abominations * with 80 hit points each

Treasure: Dimensional Shackles. One of the embalming tables is equipped with a pair of *dimensional shackles*.

G8 – Hak’shud’s Corpse Throne

Before you lies a throne stitched together from the mangled corpses of Hak’shud’s victims. Seated upon the throne, silhouetted against dancing orbs of light, is Hak’shud himself—or rather, Hak’shud’s skeleton. As his voice tickles the back of your mind, you feel the ground shift.

Illumination. Treat this area as being dimly lit from permanent *dancing lights*.

Hazard: Falling Debris. The ossified remains of the purple worm begin to collapse around the characters. On initiative count

10, each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take bludgeoning damage. The nature of the hazard depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Falling Debris table.

FALLING DEBRIS

Adventure Level	Bludgeoning Damage
3rd	5 (1d10)
5th	11 (2d10)
8th	16 (3d10)
11th	22 (4d10)

As soon as the battle with Hak’shud is over, the purple worm shudders one last time and falls apart, revealing a way to the surface.

Gas Release. Characters with proficiency in Medicine or a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or higher realize that the built-up gases within the purple worm are escaping during the battle. For the remainder of the adventure, gas explosions (see General Features) only happen on a 1 or 2.

Encounter: Hak’shud. Hak’shud, sensing his schemes coming to an end, engages the characters atop his golem, the corpse throne. On initiative count 20, Hak’shud attempts to infiltrate the characters’ minds with a psychic scream. Each character must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or take 7 (2d6) psychic damage and become frightened of Hak’shud for 1 minute. A frightened character can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If a character’s saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, that character is immune to the Hak’shud’s scream for the next 24 hours.

The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area G8 Encounter table. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new creatures featured in the appendix.

AREA G8 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
3rd	Hak'shud (fleshripped cult fanatic) mounted on a corpse throne (gnoll abomination*)
5th	Hak'shud (fleshripped cult fanatic) mounted on a corpse throne (fleshripped flesh golem)
8th	Hak'shud (fleshripped cult fanatic) mounted on a corpse throne (fleshripped clay golem)
11th	Hak'shud (fleshripped mage) mounted on a corpse throne (fleshripped clay golem)

Treasure: Hak'shud's Hoard. Should the characters manage to overcome Hak'shud and his corpse throne golem, they're free to pick through the remains and recover his treasure hoard. The hoard's contents depend on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area G8 Treasure table.

AREA G8 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
3rd	32 pp, 280 gp, 230 sp, 540 cp, 4 art objects worth 50 gp each, 1d4 <i>potions of healing</i> , and a gore-covered pair of <i>boots of striding and springing</i>
5th	52 pp, 480 gp, 430 sp, 600 cp, 8 art objects worth 50 gp each, 2d4 <i>potions of healing</i> , and a set of <i>pipes of haunting</i> made out of enchanted purple worm organs
8th	92 pp, 680 gp, 630 sp, 840 cp, 12 art objects worth 50 gp each, 1d4 <i>potions of greater healing</i> , and a <i>mantle of spell resistance</i> made of stitched-together animal flesh
11th	132 pp, 880 gp, 830 sp, 990 cp, 16 art objects worth 50 gp each, 2d4 <i>potions of greater healing</i> , and a bloodied <i>nine lives stealer</i> with 2 charges remaining)

Aftermath

If the characters successfully defeat Hak'shud, any of his servants remaining in the Flesh Burrows are killed as the purple worm collapses in on itself. The characters are free to rest and collect Hak'shud's treasure hoard before returning to their patron, who pays them what was promised. However, if the characters were forced to retreat from the Flesh Burrows, then Hak'shud continues to build his army into an unstoppable force. If left alone for 1d4 + 1 weeks, he emerges from the Flesh Burrows as a **lich** mounted atop a **fleshripped iron golem**. Backed by 25 **fleshripped mages**, 50 **gnoll abominations**, and 200 **fleshripped gnolls**, Hak'shud then attacks Sandara Oasis. Ω

Gnoll Abomination

Large Undead, Neutral

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 57 (6d10 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Special Traits

Immutable Form. The abomination is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The abomination has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The abomination's weapon attacks are magical.

Necrotic Absorption. Whenever the abomination is subjected to necrotic damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the necrotic damage dealt.

Rampage. When the abomination reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the abomination can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a Bite attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The abomination makes one Bite attack and one Slam attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.