

DUNGEONS & LAIRS #39: TROLL BRIDGE

Troll Bridge 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 how to scale the adventure for each level. The troll Zulgeteb and his minions have taken residence in caves underneath a bridge on an important trade route and use their position to ambush merchants and travelers. If the characters want to ensure that the road is safe once more, they must brave the traps and enemies within the caverns until they encounter Zulgeteb himself.

CREDITS

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PLUG-IN ADVENTURE

As a plug-in adventure, the adventure content serves as drop-in material for game masters who wish to add a dungeon to a preexisting campaign or need a side quest. Characters may come across the bridge as a random encounter during your travels, or they can be sent out to solve the problem by rumors or a patron. If you need a hook for this adventure or already have a similar hook, the Troll Bridge Hooks table below offers details for introducing this adventure to your players.

Gold Rewards. To further incentivize the party to travel to the Troll Bridge, the party's patron might offer them a gold reward. If you aren't sure how much to reward the party for completing the adventure, pay them a total of 500 gp per level of the adventure so long as their patron is wealthy enough to afford such a price.

Omeria Placement

Trolls are common in every Omerian region except for Elsath, and so Zulgeteb and his Roteaters might threaten trade routes going over just about any Omerian river.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

To run the adventure, you need the three Fifth Edition core rulebooks. If you don't have a copy, you can access a free basic ruleset from the official source.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under specific circumstances, as described in the text.

When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block as a way of saying, "Hey, game master, make sure you get this creature's stat block ready—there's going to be an encounter!" If the stat block appears in the Appendix of this adventure, the text tells you so; otherwise, you can find the stat block in the core rulebook.

Spells and nonmagical equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core manual for players. *Magic items* are described in the core manual for game masters unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in the Appendix.

Troll Bridge Hooks

d8	Side Quest Type	Details
1	Fetch Quest	Troll blood is a common ingredient in healing potions due to its regenerative properties. The Roteaters are the closest known troll group to collect some blood when an allied herbalist or even a character wishes to craft some.
2	Recover Stolen Item	A local merchant's latest shipment of honey and goods never made it to its destination. They hire the characters to find and retrieve the shipment, giving warnings about troll sightings in the area.
3	Receive Information	Lately, more people than usual have been vanishing on a popular trade route. The characters should try and figure out what is happening to them.
4	Rescue Mission	A trade wagon has been attacked by the Roteaters, a dangerous group of trolls. The characters must hurry to attempt to rescue the merchants as the trolls are not known to let prisoners escape.
5	Find a Missing NPC	A friend of the characters or their allies, Goster Stoutsong, was supposed to meet them a couple of days ago. When he fails to show, the characters travel along his last known travel route to discover why he hasn't shown.
6	Monster Hunt	The Roteaters have been a nuisance for too long, so the local ruler posts a bounty for anyone who brings an end to the group.
7	Supernatural Investigation	After a village child got lost in the woods, they told stories of seeing big green monsters vanishing into thin air on top of a bridge. The account seems a little too specific to be pure fantasy, and the characters go investigate to put the child's worries to rest.
8	Secure Aid	A local faction has information or manpower the characters could use in their endeavors. Before helping the characters though, the faction wants them to prove worthy by dealing with the Roteaters who have spoiled the faction's plans one too many times.



LEVEL SELECTION

Before play, be sure to know the level at which you wish to run the adventure. Overall, the locations and their descriptions in the adventure remain unchanged throughout the levels. However, most of the encounters, hazards, traps, and treasure scale with each level of the adventure. The keyed locations will present the differences between each level.

Also, the adventure works for more than just the listed levels. If you wish to run this adventure for levels other than 3rd, 5th, 8th, or 11th, the chart below shows you which version of the adventure you should select for each level. A given version of the adventure might be easier or harder for a given party. It's not recommended that you run this adventure for characters with an average party level of less than 3 as it may pose too much of a challenge. Similarly, a party with an average party level of 13 or greater might find the adventure too easy.

Scaling the Adventure

Average Party Level	Recommended Adventure Version	Relative Difficulty
3	3rd-level	Hard
4	3rd-level	Medium
5	5th-level	Hard
6	5th-level	Medium
7	8th-level	Deadly
8	8th-level	Hard
9	8th-level	Medium
10	11th-level	Deadly
11	11th-level	Hard
12	11th-level	Medium

TROLL RESEARCH

If the characters are hired specifically to deal with Zulgeteb and the Roteaters, they can spend one or more weeks of downtime learning what they can about trolls before they set out. To do so, the characters need access to a library or an expert on trolls—a local adventurer or ranger, for example. The characters need to spend at least 50 gp to cover the expenses of the research. After the characters conduct 40 hours of research, one of the characters must make an Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Nature) check with a +1 bonus per 50 gp spend beyond the initial 50 gp, to a maximum of +6. Refer to the table below to determine how much lore the character learns about trolls. The results are cumulative.

Check Total	Lore Learned
1-5	No lore learned
6-10	Trolls are tremendously strong, though dimwitted and easily outsmarted.
11-20	Trolls have regenerative capabilities that allow them to shrug off injuries. Their filthy lairs are often home to poisonous fungi to which the trolls are immune.
21+	Trolls have a weakness to fire. Burning a troll prevents it from regenerating any injuries for a short time.

THE TROLL BRIDGE

As the main connection between two prominent trade roads, the troll bridge is not hard to find. When the characters come across it, read or paraphrase the following:

The sounds of a quick-running river have been getting louder for the past few minutes of your journey, and as you round a bend in the road, you come to the bridge that crosses it. What could be a pleasant scene is marred by a destroyed wagon lying in the middle of the bridge. There is blood on the stones surrounding it, and nobody in sight.

After a number of successful ambushes, the Roteaters have grown careless. They did not bother to remove the evidence of the latest fight, nor post a guard outside their cave. If the characters search the broken wagon, they find that no valuables are left in the wreckage, nor are there signs of survivors. The bloody trail of where the Roteaters dragged both merchants and merchandise away can be followed without a check and leads down a few steps to the shore of the river. There, a character can discover the hidden entrance to Zulgeteb's caverns with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check or 10 minutes time.

ZULGETEB'S CAVERNS

Zulgeteb is a self-proclaimed "King of Trolls," a vicious, elder brute of a troll who leads a small group of minions known as the Roteaters in terrorizing the surrounding region. Zulgeteb and the Roteaters set up ambushes on hunting paths, raid traveling merchant caravans, and blockade key crossings, especially bridges. The caverns beneath this particular bridge serve as their lair.

GENERAL FEATURES

The following features are common throughout all areas of the caverns unless otherwise stated and are printed here for ease of reference:

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The trolls have slightly expanded and reshaped what are otherwise naturally-formed caverns. Ceilings average 15 feet in height. Floors are uneven but are not considered difficult terrain.

Light. The caverns are dimly lit by pole-mounted torches inconsistently placed throughout their interior.

Ambient Stink. The caverns smell terrible. When a visitor to the caverns enters them for the first time, they must succeed on a DC 8 Constitution saving throw to avoid vomiting. A creature who succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the stink for the next 24 hours.



1. ENTRANCE PASSAGEWAY

Roughly hewn stone steps descend to the south toward a spiked pit. A large boulder flanks the east wall of the passageway.

Secret Passageway. The entrance to the cave is set up to lure invaders toward the pit trap. The trolls access the rest of the cave by pushing aside the boulder along the east wall and moving through the passageway behind it. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices disturbed dirt and scrape marks in the cavern floor

that suggest previous movement of the boulder. The boulder can be pushed aside to reveal the hidden passageway with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

2. SPIKED PIT

The passageway is cut off by a spiked pit approximately fifteen feet deep, its northern end partially flooded with murky water. Several wooden planks have been nailed together to provide a rickety path over the pit. The air carries a faint but distinct smell of feces.



The planks are deliberately placed to suggest their use; however, their construction is purposefully shoddy. A character who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check of the planks and their construction can determine that using them to cross would almost certainly result in their collapse.

Trap: Spiked Pit. When a Medium or larger creature attempts to use the planks to cross over the pit, the planks give away and fall into the pit below. The creature can make a Dexterity saving throw to leap to the other side or fall into the pit itself. The DC of this saving throw and the damage dealt by the pit are dependent on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

Spiked Pit

Version	Save DC	Damage
3	DC 13	11 (2d10) piercing
5	DC 15	16 (3d10) piercing
8	DC 17	16 (3d10) piercing and 11 (2d10) poison
11	DC 19	16 (3d10) piercing and 11 (4d10) poison

Refuse Tunnel. A character at the bottom of the pit with a passive Perception score of 12 or higher notices a 4-foot-wide and 3-foot-tall tunnel near the base of the west wall. This tunnel connects to the refuse room (area 10) where the occupants of the caves do their business.



3. REFUSE TUNNEL

This refuse tunnel is half-flooded with murky, feces-filled water. A character who spends at least 1 round in this tunnel must make a Constitution saving throw, becoming poisoned for one hour on a failed save. The DC of this saving throw depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

Refuse Tunnel

Version	Save DC
3	DC 13
5	DC 15
8	DC 17
11	DC 19

4. KITCHEN

Skinned carcasses hang from hooks mounted to the ceiling of this spacious chamber. Stone tables are smeared with blood and covered in cuts of meat, carving tools, and discarded bones. An animal hide is stretched over a tanning rack. In the middle of the cavern, a bubbling pot of stew is suspended over a roaring fire. Multiple passages exit in all directions.

Zulgeteb and his minions butcher and prepare their food in this chamber and occasionally gather here to share meals. The carcasses throughout the room mostly belong to deer and cows; however, a character who makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check can identify pieces of humanoid remains amongst the meat.

Manacles Key. Hanging on a rusty nail in the south wall of this cavern is a single iron key that unlocks the manacles that restrain the halfling Goster Stout-song in area 11.

Encounter: Zulgeteb's Minions. A few of Zulgeteb's minions are present in this room preparing a meal. The minions attack the party on sight and attempt to flee the caverns once it becomes clear that the party will defeat them in combat. In this case, they will try to flee to area 7 or area 13 to warn their allies. Add any creature that escapes here to the encounters in those areas. The nature of Zulgeteb's minions depends on the level of the adventure as shown on the table below.

Version	Creatures
3	6 goblins
5	1 troll and 2 goblins
8	2 trolls
11	3 trolls

Hazard: Spiked Pit. There is a spiked pit at the southern end of the kitchen area. In combat, Zulgeteb's minions (especially any trolls) may attempt to draw characters towards the pit and shove them in. The pit is 10 feet deep. A creature who falls into the pit takes piercing damage from the spikes in addition to 3 (1d6) fall damage. The spikes are also poison-tipped, requiring the creature to make a Constitution saving throw, taking full poison damage on a failed saving throw or half that amount on a successful one. The DC of this saving throw and the damage dealt by the spikes depends on the level of the adventure as shown on the table below.

Spiked Pit

Version	Save DC	Damage
3	DC 13	9 (2d8) piercing and 7 (2d6) poison
5	DC 15	11 (2d10) piercing and 13 (3d8) poison
8	DC 17	16 (3d10) piercing and 16 (3d10) poison
11	DC 19	22 (4d10) piercing and 22 (4d10) poison

5. WEST SLEEPING CAVERN

This sleeping area is filled with dirty linens and musty animal skins.

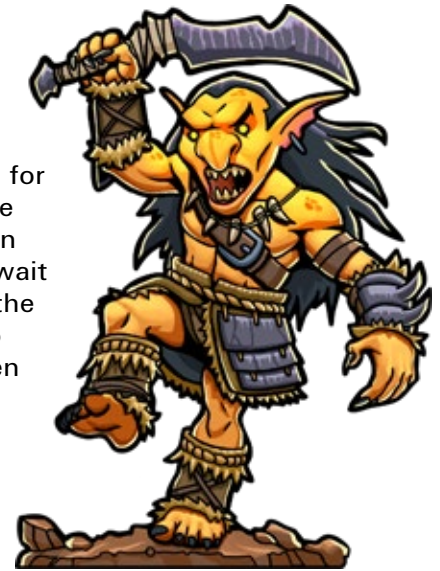
The minions who sleep in this room are currently busy with duties in the kitchen (area 3). A character with a passive Perception score of 12 or higher notices a cracked pair of glasses lying near one of the animal skins. These glasses belong to Goster Stout-song, the halfling imprisoned in area 11.

6. STORAGE AREA

Five large jars wrapped in linen and an iron-bound wooden chest are nestled within this small cavern.

The five jars as well as the chest were recently stolen from a merchant wagon by Zulgeteb's minions. A halfling named Goster Stoutstong is the sole surviving member of the wagon and is imprisoned in area 11. Each jar is full of honey that the minions hope to keep and enjoy for themselves.

Treasure: Locked Chest. As with the jars of honey, Zulgeteb's minions are hoping to take the contents of this chest for themselves. They have temporarily hidden it in this room while they wait for Zulgeteb to leave the caverns for a while so they can smash it open and take its contents. The chest is locked and can be opened with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a successful DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check. Inside the chest are 350 sp, 210 gp, and four sapphires worth 25 gp each.



7. EAST SLEEPING CAVERN

Animal skins and dirtied linens are piled haphazardly near the north wall of this cavern to form a simple sleeping area.

Half of Zulgeteb's minions sleep here, while the other half rest in the adjoining sleeping area (area 5). Characters who search through the skins and linens can find a leather pouch placed behind a small pile of rocks. Inside the pouch are two rubies worth 25 gp each.

Encounter: Zulgeteb's Minions. When they aren't sleeping, some of Zulgeteb's minions wrestle and bicker in this cavern. The minions attack the party on sight and attempt to flee the caverns once it becomes clear that the party will defeat them in combat. The nature of Zulgeteb's minions depends on the level of the adventure as shown on the table below.

Version	Creatures
3	6 goblins
5	1 troll and 2 goblins
8	2 trolls
11	3 trolls

8. TROPHY ROOM

The walls of this chamber form natural rock ledges, atop which various skulls have been placed, many of them humanoid.

The skulls throughout this chamber are personal trophies of Zulgeteb that he has gathered over many years of terrorizing the area.

9. GARBAGE ROOM

This room is piled with broken containers, rusted weaponry, scraps of wood, old bones, organic waste, and other detritus. Multiple passages exit to the east and west.

Zulgeteb and his minions dispose of anything in this chamber that isn't their feces.

Treasure: Discarded Hilt. A character who searches the room and makes a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a rusted dagger hilt embedded with a mud-smearred emerald worth 25 gp that the clan overlooked.

Encounter: Waste Disposal. Zulgeteb and his minions share a symbiotic relationship with the creature that lives in the piles of waste in this room, consuming garbage for sustenance. The creature is familiar with the clan and does not attack its members because it knows they are the steady source of its food. The characters, however, have a different smell to the cave's inhabitants and are recognized as outsiders, causing the creature to attack. The creature will not pursue the characters if they flee



the room. The nature of the creature depends on the level of the adventure as shown on the table below.

Version	Creatures
3	1 otyugh with 75 hit points
5	1 shambling mound
8	1 shambling mound with 200 hit points that can make three slam attacks as part of its Multiattack
11	2 shambling mounds with 200 hit points each

10. REFUSE ROOM

The smell of feces overpowers the senses in this small cavern, which features a pit dug out near its northern wall filled with dark sludge that buzzes with flies.

Zulgeteb and his minions do their business in the pit within this cavern. The pit leads to a small, naturally formed tunnel that connects this chamber with the pit trap near the entrance to the caverns.

11. PRISON CAVERN

Iron cages, old bones, and rusted chains are scattered about this cavern. Manacled to the south wall is a tired-looking halfling wearing dirtied merchant's finery.

Zulgeteb and his minions occasionally keep prisoners here for a time before eating them, sometimes in an attempt to extract information from them on potential raiding targets.

Prisoner of Zulgeteb. The halfling manacled to the wall is a traveling merchant named Goster Stout-song (NG male halfling **commoner**). Goster is a middle-aged halfling with long, messy black hair, a freckled face, and a slightly raspy voice. He can explain the following to the characters:

- ▶ His companions were slain and he was taken prisoner after their merchant caravan was attacked by the trolls.
- ▶ His caravan was loaded with jars of honey as well as a chest of treasure. He believes the trolls are keeping the wagon's payload somewhere in the caverns.
- ▶ One of the clan members took his glasses from him and now he can barely see.

- ▶ He doesn't know where the key to his chains is kept.
- ▶ If the party can rescue him and recover his payload, he will reward them with 150 gp.

Goster's chains can be released with the key in area 4, with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or with a successful DC 22 Strength (Athletics) check. Goster is a non-combatant. If freed, he waits for the party to signal that the escape path is clear.

12. STAGNANT POOL

This chamber is flooded by a stagnant pool of water. An inconsistent stream drips through a seam in the cavern ceiling. Colorful patches of yellow fungus grow over the walls.

The water in this chamber is one foot deep. Characters with a passive Perception score of 12 or higher notice yellow mold growing not just on the walls, but on parts of the cavern floor as well. A character who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Nature) check can identify the mold as a highly toxic species that releases dangerous spores when disturbed. As long as the characters actively try to avoid stepping on the mold, they can do so without a check.

Hazard: Yellow Mold. Characters who walk over the yellow mold cause it to release a cloud of spores in a 10-foot radius around itself. Creatures caught in the spore cloud must make a Constitution saving throw, taking full poison damage on a failed saving throw or half that amount on a successful one. The DC of this saving throw and the amount of damage taken depend on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

Yellow Mold

Version	Save DC	Damage
3	DC 13	9 (2d8) poison
5	DC 15	13 (3d8) poison
8	DC 17	22 (4d10) poison
11	DC 19	33 (6d10) poison

13. ZULGETEB'S CHAMBER

A gnarled throne of wood and bone rests on a layer of animal skins and is surrounded by skulls mounted on wooden stakes. Trunks, chests, and crates line the walls of the room.

A roaring campfire burns in the middle of the chamber.

Encounter: Zulgeteb. Zulgeteb spends most of his time here with his pet, staring into the flames of the fire and attempting to commune with spirits. Zulgeteb and his pet attack the party immediately. Zulgeteb is too furious to retreat and fights to the death alongside his pet. Zulgeteb's statistics and the nature of his pet depend on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

Version	Creatures
3	Zulgeteb uses troll statistics, his pet is a wolf
5	Zulgeteb is a troll with 125 hit points, his pet is an owlbear
8	Zulgeteb is a troll king , his pet is a wolf
11	Zulgeteb is a troll king , his pet is a dire wolf

Treasure: Zulgeteb's Hoard. Though many of the containers in this chamber are filled with food and alcohol, Zulgeteb has also amassed a small hoard of wealth over his time of terrorizing the surrounding region. The total value of the hoard depends on the level of the adventure and can be determined by rolling a number of times on the appropriate treasure hoard table in the DMG as shown in the table below.

Version	Hoard Value
3	One roll on the CR 0-4 Hoard table.
5	One roll on the CR 5-10 Hoard table.
8	Two rolls on the CR 5-10 Hoard table.
11	One roll on the CR 11-16 Hoard table.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As long as the characters clear out the cave and deal with Zulgeteb, the trade route becomes secure once more. Goster pays the promised 150 gp to the party if he is escorted back to a village or town and his merchandise is returned to him, and if the characters were initially hired to deal with the troll problem, their patron or employer pays them their reward as well.

If any of the Roteaters escaped, they might lick their wounds and eventually come back stronger, though without the leadership of Zulgeteb this is unlikely. The caves underneath the bridge however are a tempting hideout for many other creatures as well, and so in time, they could serve as the lair of other bandits. Ω

APPENDIX

Troll King

Huge giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 149 (13d2 + 65)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	24 (+2)	21 (+5)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +4, Wis +5

Skills Intimidation +7, Perception +5

Damage Resistance bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Giant

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Keen Smell. The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

King's Command. As a bonus action, the troll can order one of its allies within 60 feet of it that can see or hear it to strike. When the troll does so, that creature can immediately use its reaction to make one weapon attack with advantage against a target of the troll's choice.

Regeneration. The troll regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes 20 or more acid or fire damage in a single turn, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its greatclub.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 6) piercing damage. If the attack is a critical hit and the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or a random limb is severed from its body (if it has any).

Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is pushed up to 5 feet away from the troll.

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