

GRIFFON RIDERS



3rd-Level Adventure

GRIFFON RIDERS

Griffon Riders is a Fifth Edition adventure designed for three to five 2nd- to 4th-level characters, and is optimized for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3. This adventure takes place in the DMDave Worlds' setting of Omeria but can easily be placed in any campaign setting that has griffons, griffon riders, and griffon thieves. The characters must travel west to the Black River Caverns and contend with an ogre warlord who's been stealing griffons from the Kuzhuk griffon riders.

BACKGROUND

The mountain enclave of Kuzhuk is home to the Vaskil Valley griffon riders, a proud people whose heritage and culture extend beyond living memory. Their skill as winged warriors is legendary amongst the kingdoms of The Summer Land, though few are old enough to remember the last time they took to the skies for war.

Central to Kuzhuk culture is the raising and training of griffons. As early as the age of seven, a young rider is paired with a griffon chick and charged with its protection and development. As a result, the bond between a griffon and its paired rider is unbreakable. Common folklore suggests that one can sense distress in the other, though they may be miles apart.

A few days ago, a rider named Anridan and his griffon companion, Wildhammer, were ambushed by a band of orcs led by Basher Yurub. Anridan, overwhelmed, could do nothing but watch as the two-headed ogre and his orc lackeys netted Wildhammer and forced him into an iron cage. Though grievously wounded, Anridan survived long enough to return home and warn his fellow Kuzhuk of the orc threat.

Crisavor, a Kuzhuk elder, is determined to seek out the orcs and Basher Yurub to exact revenge. However, their numbers are few, and the loss of Wildhammer has dealt a serious blow to their striking capability. Crisavor has put out an open call to go west and slay the beasts. Those who succeed in ridding the land of Basher Yurub and his band of thugs will find an eternal home within the enclave of the griffon riders.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following plot hooks provide some possible ways for the characters to get involved in the adventure.

Wildhammer. A young and brash Kuzhuk rider named Anridan stole into the night and headed west, determined to take back his precious Griffon, Wildhammer. The characters are asked by Crisavor to track him down and bring him home before he's turned into Orc meat. He offers the characters 200 gp upon Anridan's return.

Wanted: Basher Yurub! A bounty is posted in Steeproost for the head of Basher Yurub, who's said to be holed up in the Black River Caverns. The reward is 500 gp.

Hunt the Hunters. An investigation by the sheriff of Steeproost has revealed the source of the cattle raids in recent weeks: the Black River Caverns, where several orcs have set up camp. Talindra, a cattle rancher in Steeproost, has raised 500 gp with a coalition of other ranchers to destroy the orcs and bring back the head of their leader.

ORC CAMP ENCOUNTER

As the characters approach The Black River Caverns, they come across a small encampment of griffon-thieves: three orcs led by a single orc berserker (treat each creature as having proficiency in Animal Handling and Survival). They're currently in the middle of eating a freshly cooked adolescent griffon.

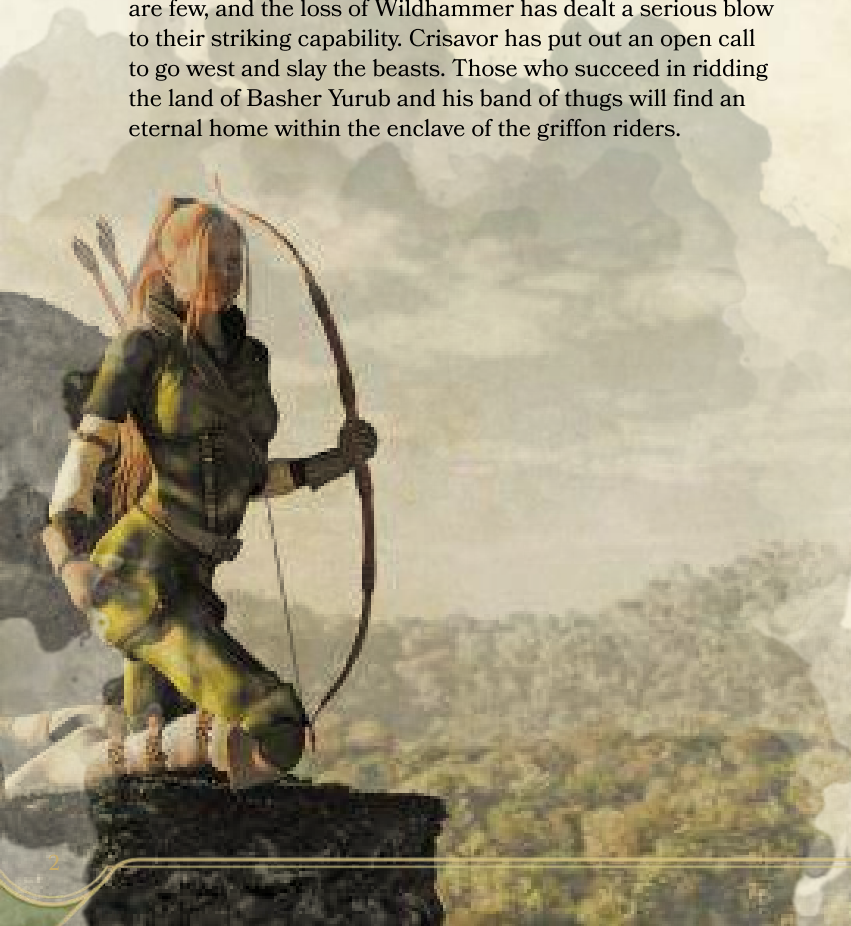
Illumination. The Orc Camp Encounter takes place during the day.

Flash Flood. At the beginning of the second round of combat, a fierce rainstorm will descend upon the area without warning, dumping massive amounts of rain and causing the caverns to flood. The flooding will begin in **area 4** (Anridan's Plight) and rise at a rate of one foot per hour. After one hour, Anridan will drown. After four hours, Basher Yurub and his orc lackeys will be forced to evacuate; they will leave the griffons behind to drown.

Chained Cage. The orc camp has two cages: one on its southwest side and one on its northeast side. The northeast cage is chained shut; the berserker has the key to the padlock. Alternatively, the lock can be picked by succeeding on a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. An adult griffon thrashes about inside, trying desperately to break free. Once the cage is unlocked, the griffon will become hostile to the characters unless someone succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. If the characters are forced to battle the griffon, it will flee toward Kuzhuk after two rounds of combat.

Bloody Cage. The southwest cage is open and contains a bloody section of the butchered adolescent griffon currently being eaten by the orcs. A baby griffon chick mewls sadly beneath the dismembered corpse of its mother. While inspecting the camp, have the characters perform a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check to locate the source of the crying. Any character that succeeds finds the baby griffon chick.

Treasure: Iron Orb & Gold. The orc berserker has a skeleton key that can unlock the chained cage in the camp as well as the cages in **area 5** (Griffon Holding Pen), an iron orb (25 gp), and a leather pouch containing 100 sp. The other orcs collectively have 200 cp between them.



THE ORC CAMP



THE BLACK RIVER CAVERNS

The Black River Caverns lie approximately 30 miles west of Kuzhuk and are so-called due to a mysterious black ichor that's found in the dried riverbed. So long as the seasonal rains aren't too heavy, the caverns along the river are habitable year-round; that being said, fierce storms are prone to form over the mountain ridges without warning. As a result, many unfortunate souls have been lost to flash flooding. Caution is advised.

GENERAL FEATURES

Size & Dimensions. The cavern ceiling is 10 feet high unless specified otherwise. The cavern descends into the earth at a gentle incline and terminates 30 feet below surface level at its deepest point.

Illumination. While in the caverns, treat each area as having no light unless specified otherwise.

Slick Surface. The cavern floor is slick with moss and causes the characters' footing to occasionally slip. Characters who attempt to move farther than 10 feet during a combat round must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone.

AREAS OF THE BLACK RIVER CAVERNS

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Black River Caverns below.

1 - CAVERN ENTRANCE

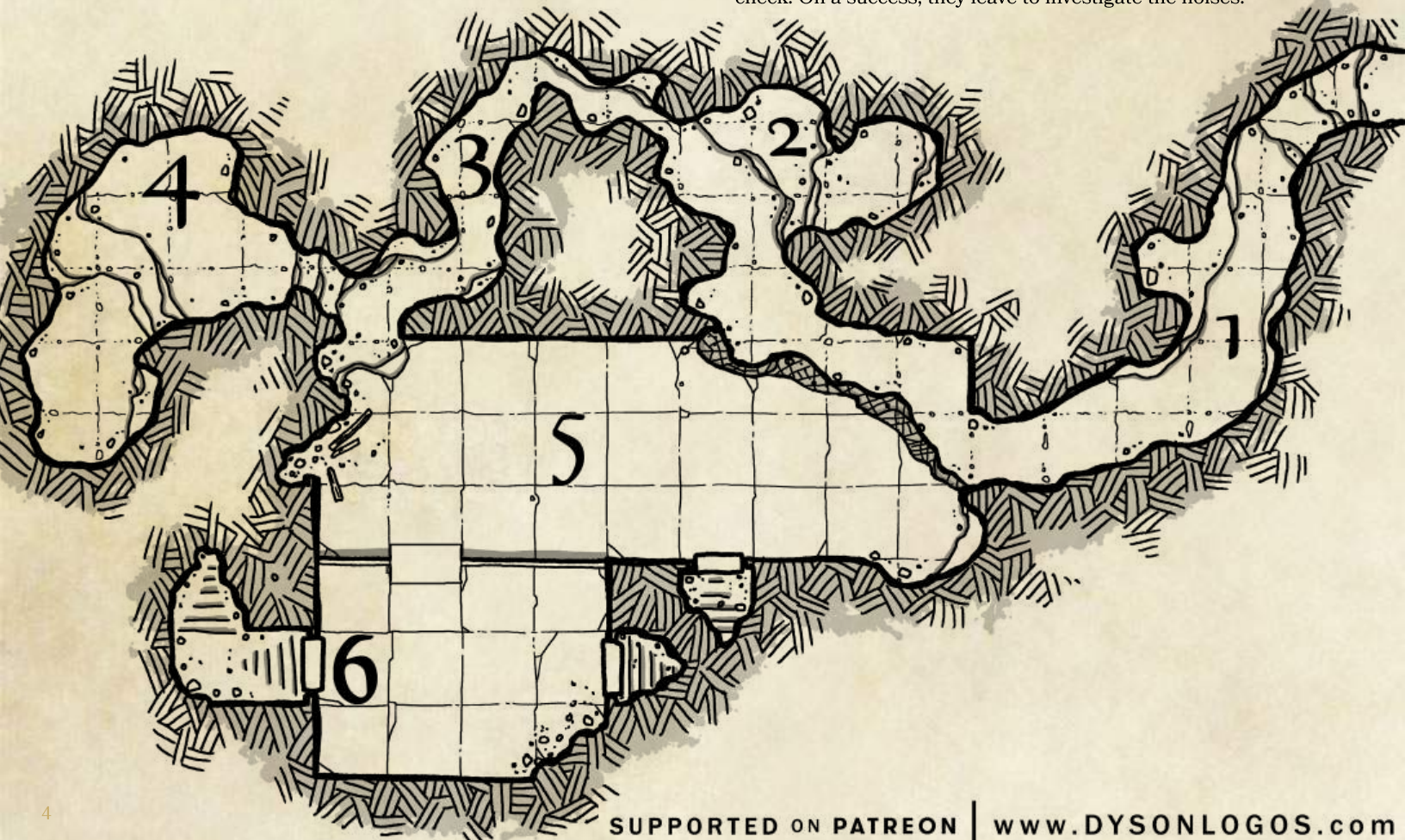
The cavern hall descends into the earth at a gentle incline; rainwater trickles down from the entrance and slickens the stony floor.

Treasure: Hidden Stash. A six-foot-deep, three-foot-wide divot is dug out of the hall's northern side. A character with a passive Perception of 12 or more notices the sound of rainwater dripping into a low space somewhere. Any character that succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Investigation) check locates the divot hidden by a pile of rocks. Searching the divot reveals a leather pouch containing 30 sp, a rabbit fur ribbon (25 gp), and a silver cloth talisman (25 gp). A piece of vellum is attached to the pouch: drawn in charcoal is a very angry orc face next to a large X symbol. The X is underlined three times.

2 - TRAPPED PASSAGE

A ledge on the passage's north side leads to a small alcove. A piece of wood is staked to the cavern wall next to the ledge: drawn in charcoal is an even angrier orc face next to a snake symbol. The snake is underlined four times.

Trap: Snake & Insect Trap. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals the copper tripwire covered in charcoal installed along the ledge. The trap is activated when a creature attempts to move past the tripwire without having first detected its presence. When activated, a goatskin bag filled with 20 pounds of dead snakes and insects is released onto the creature's head. Only a single **snake** remains alive. If the creature makes a lot of noise after the trap is activated, Anridan in **area 4** (Anridan's Plight) will begin to cry louder for help. Additionally, have the orc **berserkers** in **area 5** (Griffon Holding Pen) perform a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they leave to investigate the noises.



2 - TRAPPED PASSAGE CONT.

Treasure: Hidden Stash. At the back of this alcove is a conspicuous pile of rocks covering a small hole. A character that searches the small hole finds a leather pouch containing 40 sp, 2 *potions of greater healing*, and a *cap of water breathing*. Another vellum note is attached to the pouch, but this time there are words accompanying the angry orc drawing. It reads as follows:

GONK'S WORKPLACE COMPLAINT

Basher Yurub big meanie to Gonk, Gonk no like! If no bash Basher, den what? Gonk hide goodies, and when de rains come, Gonk keep breathing and Basher drown! Wish cap was bigger for Gonk's big head. I draw sign to keep de other orcs out of Gonk's goodies! Gonk good thinker.

3 - EMPTY PASSAGE

The cavern hall descends deeper into the earth.

Cries for Help. Anridan in **area 4** (Anridan's Plight) can be heard calling for help from the western passage.

Animal Smell & Illumination. An awful stench emanates from **area 5** (Griffon Holding Pen), and the flicker of firelight can be seen against the curve of the cavern wall. Any character that succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check hears the mewling of griffon chicks and orcs talking amongst themselves in **area 5** (Griffon Holding Pen).

4 - ANRIDAN'S PLIGHT

A gentle incline terminates in a pool of water, where Anridan (**tribal warrior** with proficiency in Animal Handling and Survival) is chained face-down to the cavern floor; it is taking every ounce of his strength to keep his head above water and cry for help.

Flooding. If over one hour has gone by since the flash flood rainstorm began, then Anridan is drowned and considered unconscious (or dead, depending on the GM's discretion).

Freeing Anridan. The chains binding the Kuzhuk griffon rider are staked to the cavern floor, though the rainwater has loosened the stakes. There are four stakes total: two binding Anridan's wrists and two binding his ankles. Any character that succeeds on a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check can rip out a stake. If any stakes remain once all the characters have attempted this Strength check, then the remaining stakes are considered stuck and must be removed by a character spending 30 minutes using carpenter's or smith's tools. Once free, Anridan falls unconscious (if he wasn't already).

5 - GRIFFON HOLDING PEN

Basher Yurub's crew is stashing their stolen griffons in cages here. The conditions are horrendous: the cavern floor is covered in a thick layer of hay and animal excrement, and the animals are kept chained in darkness.

Illumination. Torch sconces provide dim light throughout the area.

Cages. There are three large-sized cages pushed against the northern wall of this room. They are all locked and require a key held by the orc berserkers, who function as Yurub's lieutenants. Alternatively, each lock can be picked by succeeding on a DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The left cage contains an emaciated and unconscious adolescent **griffon**. The center cage contains Wildhammer, Anridan's personal **griffon**. Wildhammer, once free, will ignore everything else to seek out Anridan and carry him back to Kuzhuk. If Anridan dies in the rising flood, Wildhammer will refuse to leave the caverns, choosing instead to perish with their former master. The right cage has two healthy adolescent wild **griffons**. their first instinct is to ignore everything else and escape the caverns.

Encounter: Gonk & Friend. There are two orc **berserkers** (treat each creature as having proficiency in Animal Handling and Survival) in charge of this area. One of them, Gonk, has been stashing items across the caverns in the event of a flood; she plans on abandoning Yurub and the whole operation. If the characters are aware of her plan, she can be convinced to turn against Yurub with a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Regardless, upon reaching half her hit points, Gonk will flee the area and attempt to recover her two stashes in **areas 1** and **2** (Cavern Entrance and Trapped Passage), then flee the caverns entirely. Both berserkers hold keys to the griffon cages.

Stone Door. A stone door separates **areas 5** and **6**.

6 - BASHER YURUB'S BASH PAD

Basher Yurub's bash pad is clean and dry in comparison to the rest of The Black River Caverns. Basher is currently passed out on an ogre-sized pile of furs; over a dozen empty bottles of wine are scattered about the room.

Illumination. Torch sconces provide dim light throughout the area.

Encounter: Basher Yurub & Pet Wyvern. Yurub's pet **wyvern wyrmling** (see Appendix D) will make a bite attack against Basher Yurub (male **brasuga**, see Appendix D) to wake him up once the stone door opens. Additionally, Yurub is quite hungover: while exposed to bright light, he has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Treasure: Talisman & Furs. A careful search of Basher Yurub's bash pad turns up a bloody electrum cloth talisman (25 gp), a small bag of incense (25 gp), and a goatskin pouch containing a small assortment of gems collectively worth 10 gp. Additionally, any character that succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Investigation) check discovers that the pile of furs isn't all garbage: at the bottom of the pile is a fancy (if smelly) rug that weighs 20 pounds and is worth 50 gp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE: RETURN TO CRISAVOR

If Anridan is returned safely to Kuzhuk, Crisavor will thank the characters for their brave actions and pay them whatever he promised earlier.

If both Anridan *and* Wildhammer are returned safely to Kuzhuk, Crisavor will award the characters an additional 100 gp.

If neither Anridan nor Wildhammer are returned to Kuzhuk, Crisavor will only pay the characters half of what was promised.

For helping the Kuzhuk griffon riders, Crisavor pledges to help the characters in their time of need against the Wyvern Kings.

Finally, if Gonk escapes the caverns alive, she finds gainful employment in a Vaskil Valley animal sanctuary after 2d8 days of wandering.

REWARDS

If the characters were asked by Crisavor to free the griffons, award an additional 50 XP per griffon freed from Yurub's operation.

If the characters were after the bounty on Basher Yurub, they may present his head either to the sheriff's office or Talindra (both in Steeproost) to collect their 500 gp.

If the griffon chick from the orc encampment was rescued and brought to Kuzhuk, award the characters an additional 50 XP; the griffon chick becomes a faithful companion for life.

Finally, if the emaciated and unconscious griffon from **area 5** (Griffon Holding Pen) was brought to Kuzhuk, award the characters an additional 100 XP for the extra effort.



SAVE GRIFFONS AND BEAT UP ORCS

The bond between rider and griffon is central to the Kuzhuk warrior culture, and a group of orcs have severed that bond, killing riders and caging their griffons.

For this affront, the elders of Kuzhuk have sworn to avenge the fallen and reclaim their companions if possible. Though their ranks are too thin to risk abandoning their mountain stronghold, there is gold to be made for adventurers willing to travel west and track down these monsters.

No one messes with the griffon riders!

ADVENTURE DESIGN: [JKW](#)

DUNGEON MAP DESIGN: [DYSON](#)

BATTLE MAP DESIGN: [JKW](#)

PART OF THE [DMDAVE](#) **SETTING OF OMERIA**

