

Nimble

A fast, tactical TTRPG



Questions or Feedback?

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Inspired by:

D&D 5th Edition, Paizo's *Pathfinder 2e*, Isaac Williams' *Mausritter*, Chris McDowall's *Into the Odd*, Ben Milton's *Knave*, The Dungeon Coach's *DC20*, Kobold Press's *Tales of the Valiant*, Yochai Gal's *Cairn*, House DM, and many other long forgotten sources.

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ISBN: 979-8-9912696-1-2

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Starting as a GM

GMing isn't that hard! It's actually fairly easy, and WAY more rewarding than being a player. The players only get 1 character, YOU get *hundreds*—you get entire WORLDS at your command. Sound cool? Yeah it does. A bit intimidating? Also, yes.

The good news is you can start very small, and build what you need as you need it. This book will walk you through your first sessions with baby steps and by the end you'll be at the helm of your own open sandbox adventure that follows your heroes wherever they want to go!

1 Familiarize yourself with the core rules. If you haven't read that, stop here and do that. You don't have to be an expert—a general understanding will be just fine—you'll get a better hang of them as you play through the adventure.

2 Get some friends together. 3-5 is typical—though fewer (or many more!) is certainly possible as well. If your players are new to TTRPGs use the premade characters: print out character sheets for everyone and start the included adventure! They'll probably have some questions. Don't worry, just start playing, you'll sort it out as you go.

If they're experienced with other TTRPG systems already, they can make custom characters using the Core Rules and Heroes books. Be available in case any questions pop up.

3 Don't expect to remember all of the rules perfectly. The first few times you play, expect to forget some rules, that's okay. When in doubt, rule in favor of your players and keep the game moving.

What If They...?! Yes, sometimes your players will try to go so far off the adventure path that you don't know what to do. Be honest and feel free to say "Hey, I'm new at this." And ask your players to stick to the story you've got prepared for now. In time you may be able to let them wander off and do anything their little hearts can imagine, but for now, let's play the adventure that's at hand. Easy.

The No. 1 Rule WHEN IN DOUBT RULE IN FAVOR OF THE HEROES.

Roll With It. Sometimes you won't know the "right" way to resolve a particularly off the wall idea. Don't stop to look up rules. Often, there are many "right" answers. Do the coolest thing in the moment, look it up later if you must. For example:

Player: *"I climb up that building and jump down, landing on top of the bad guy and attack him!"*

Encourage the creativity! Let it happen (maybe just this once, and you can reserve the right to change how it works in the future).

For the above example, you can resolve the attack easily enough, roll some dice. But falling that far would likely deal some damage (1d6 per 10 ft.). On the other hand they'd be landing on another character and that might soften the blow. Some options on how to handle it:

- The bad guy takes the fall damage instead.
- If the attack hits, split the fall damage between the two of them; on a miss, the hero takes the fall damage; on a crit, the bad guy takes it instead.
- Make a DEX save (when in doubt, DC 10). On a success, the bad guy takes the damage, else split the damage evenly between them.

Any of these would be fair enough and also

pretty cool. You could even tell the player how you'd resolve it and give them the chance to change their mind. "You can definitely do that if you want, you'll have to make a DEX save to avoid taking damage yourself, still want to?"

Just don't stop the game to look up the "right" way to resolve this situation. If this becomes a regular tactic with your group—then you'll want to agree on a solution that feels right for your table.

The No. 2 Rule: LET PLAYERS DO COOL THINGS!

Your job is NOT to foil the players or be their enemy. The GM's job is to facilitate the fun and help them feel HEROIC! Yes, the Oathsworn will deal more damage if you attack them, *do it any way*. If you're playing intelligent monsters, maybe they catch on after a while and attack other players, but don't rob your players of the cool things they can do.

If a player casts a spell like Shadowtrap, go ahead and have monsters keep attacking them! Then have the monsters be scared to attack them for fear of another Shadowtrap, even when it's not cast! If it's what the monsters would do, do it.

Give More. When an adventure offers an opportunity for a skill check (e.g., picking a pocket, or the Assess action) and they roll exceptionally well (e.g., 20+), feel free to give more than the bare minimum. For example, on a DC 12 Finesse check to secretly pick someone's pocket: on a 20+ perhaps they find some extra loot. Or a 20+ check to Create an Opening, they could get an additional die of damage as well!

Default to Yes. If a player comes up with a creative idea not explicitly in the rules, encourage it! If it seems like a longshot idea, tell them the consequences of failure. If they still want to do it, let the dice decide.

Avoid a flat "No, it doesn't work." Instead try "You fail to pick the lock, but you notice the chest isn't bolted down..." Or "Yeah, it works but... (the guards are alerted, you drop something as you leap across the pit trap, you take damage, etc.)" There should always be a way to push the story forward

when the heroes fail.

Give everyone spotlight time: If one or two players generally tend to speak up first, call on the others to weigh in. Make sure they get opportunities to shine. Design encounters and situations that cater to different hero strengths (combat, diplomacy, stealth, etc.).

When information is necessary: Choose one hero who "knows" the information. For instance: the Hunter knows about this forest, the Mage knows what an arcane symbol means. Alternatively, have everyone roll a skill check and reward the hero with the highest roll with the information. *They* are the ones who knew it!

The No. 3 Rule: BE HONEST & TRUSTWORTHY

Roll in the open. Even if you're NOT cheating (perhaps especially so) make sure play also feels to your party that everything is on the up and up. What *happens* is what was *supposed* to happen. Players love to know that they won fairly.

For Example. If they missed killing the bad guy by a single Hit Point, you are welcome to tell them "oo, sorry, ALMOST got him, he has 1 HP left." Or if they suddenly kill a bad guy that was proving to be exceptionally difficult, with exact damage, you could even show them the stat block and congratulate them for their great luck! Cheers will be had all around the table.

Telegraph Danger. Then let the bad thing happen. You MUST be clear about danger. If you telegraphed danger and the heroes still make bad decisions, let them suffer the consequences of their choices.

Heroes have plenty of options to get themselves out of sticky situations—go get em! Don't be afraid to keep attacking a dying Hero (they're still standing, it's what a monster would do), and don't be afraid to let them fall down an endless pit—leave it to the players to figure out how to save themselves. Interpose, Retreat, or something else...



ADVANCED GM TOOLS

After you've been GMing for a while, many of the basics become easier and you have the mental bandwidth to try new techniques and see how they work at your table. Some will, some won't. But you won't know until you've tried!

What You DON'T See Is...

It can be great fun to have the *heroes* unaware of the plots and machinations of the Big Bad Evil Guy, but you don't often want your *players* confused or lost in a campaign. A great way to make a complex story more sensible or keep moving forward despite a bad roll is to give the *players* information that the *heroes* don't have and can't act on. Letting the players in on what is happening, giving them information that the heroes are not privy to can be a great way to increase the fun.

Cutscenes

Cut away from the heroes and narrate a "cutscene" of the bad guy being *bad* so they can understand what he is doing, why, and hopefully hate him more when the time comes to face him!

Imminent Danger

The heroes wander into a clearing near a goblin camp, you ask for a Lore check to see how much they know about goblins. On a bad roll, it's great fun to describe what they COULD have known, but didn't: goblins LOVE to put traps everywhere they go. So you can tell them all about the traps they are about to fall into! Starting making some DEX saves!

Secret Allies

While exploring a dungeon, the heroes narrowly avoid a hidden trap. Narrate how a secretive ally (a sympathetic goblin), disarmed it just in time, without

the heroes ever knowing. They heroes may just be more open to chatting when they meet their little secret friend rather than coming to blows.

Undetected Traitors

The party meets a new NPC or gains a new companion. Narrate a scene where this companion is seen communicating secretly with the villain. Giving information to the players that the party can't act on is a great way to increase drama and excitement!

Foreshadowing

Describe a dark figure watching the party from the shadows as they camp, while the heroes are unaware. Describe the weather turning unexpectedly, right before a bad twist in the story.

Monster Secrets

On a failed Assess check (to encourage them to try again) you can inform the players of a monster's hidden strength, weakness, or technique that they *won't* be able to exploit, until they succeed, encouraging more thoughtful play and adding more tactics to the encounter.

Note: These techniques only work if your players are willing to PLAY ALONG. Some players may get frustrated by information they can't act on, others will love it! If you give them hidden information and they try to start acting on it, you might not be able to use this technique too often.

Character Vignettes

Out of ANY way to start a new campaign. Using character vignettes (or a playable backstory) is definitely one of BEST. A campaign is great fun once the players have gotten to know each other's characters and connections are made, but often one of the most boring parts of a RPG campaign is *introducing* the characters. A great

way to fast forward past the boring and jump right into the fun is with character vignettes (and players LOVE them)! These are brief (no more than 5 minutes) one-on-one stories between the GM and one of the heroes. Before you begin a campaign, chat with your player about their character—they may have lots of ideas and

a full backstory or they might only have "I'm a dragon dude with a big axe." Either is perfectly fine. You can work with them on a vignette if they have a very clear idea of their hero, or surprise them with one if they don't too much care what their story is.

Example 1

Ben wants to play a dumb kobold who thinks he's a divinely chosen servant, but accidentally signed a pact with an evil Patron. He doesn't really care about the details though. Let's help him fill in the blanks:

You are surrounded by thorny twigs and leaves, and the sound of suppressed giggles as you squat inside a small bush, hiding with your best buds, Doppo and Twigs - hunger gnawing at your bellies.

The sound of wagon wheels and horse hooves in the distance grow louder and louder.

"Aw man, this is gonna be so good! I bet these dopes have some rad stuff on them...you think they have any sandwiches?"

"Well, if not, we can eat them--Their deaths will not be in vain." *hehehe*

What skill would you like to use to jump out and accost these travelers?

With a swift and silent movement, you three lunge forward. Your companions attack the faces of the man driving the cart and the young man riding in the back - the horses pulling it panic and send the cart flying. You snatch the satchel and disappear into the shadows.

Excitement coursed through your veins as you fumbled with the satchel's contents. To your surprise, instead of food, you found a set of papers inside. INEDIBLE. PAPERS! What do you do?

Ben: I pull them out and start looking at them.

Your fellow kobolds gathered around, curious about your find. You hold up the papers, examining them with confusion. Incoherent words and symbols cover the pages, and though you couldn't read, something about them feels different, POWERFUL...

Ben: "Look at me I'm a human! I can read! I can write... *marks an X on the papers-*

A surge of power courses through your veins as a shadowy figure bursts forth, claiming the signed papers, they disintegrate into ash before your eyes.

'THE PACT IS SEALED! Wha- who are you?'

Your friends, are. TERRIFIED. "AHHHH!! It's BAHAMUT!! We stand judged and bow before your shiny dragonness oh great platinum dragon - it was Kerrick's idea to steal the things! We didn't want to do it, HE MADE US! We are NOT GUILTY, devour HIM, not USSSSS!" In your limited kobold intellect, what does Kerrik believe to be happening?

Ben: The mighty Bahamut himself has chosen me to be his servant and bestowed these powers upon me!

With newfound confidence and a heart full of pride with the belief that you were now a divine servant of Bahamut. Your fellow kobolds watch in awe as you stand tall, clutching the satchel of papers containing strange words like "UNIVERSITY" and "ADMISSIONS" you embark on a quest to find out what it all means!

Note that players are **in** on the vignette. This is not like an adventure where we don't know exactly what's going to happen—we both know that he's going to sign the papers and start this journey. This is for the **other players** to find out about his character in a fun way. In a vignette we also introduce fun NPCs that only he knows. His kobold buddies can be called upon to help with a quest, and an investigation surrounding what happened to the people they attacked might start brewing. Great quest hooks for later!

Simply allow your player to say what they do or call for skill checks (the sooner you can get to rolling dice, the better!). If you do call for skill checks, make sure they only narrative consequences: if he rolls low or high tweak the narrative to accommodate but either way he still jumps out of the bushes to attacks the wagon and signs the papers.

Example 2

Nicole has a much more developed backstory, a family with names and even a specific arc she'd like to play out. She is playing a non-magical rogueish hero in a campaign set at a magical school.

Where are you hiding as you overhear your mother begin activating her speaking mirror and begins conversing with someone - about you?

Nicole: Um...in the hallway, just outside her office.

Perfect. from the hallway you can hear your mother

clearly enough but you struggle to hear the other side of the conversation.

"Thank you for doing me this favor Professor, about my daughter-Maeve- yes, I know she failed the entrance exam, there were extenuating circum-

Your mother, is INTERRUPTED by the person she is speaking with. Twice – has this ever happened before in you entire life?

Nicole: DEFINITELY not... she just ALLOWS that to happen?!

Give me an Insight check. Not only does she allow it to happen, you think you can sense her voice quavering ever so slightly. She is afraid.

Professor, I trust that you understand the importance of this matter. My daughter, Maeve, is destined for greatness, and the University is the key to unlocking her true potential. She won't fail. She's just... a late bloomer. She'll get used to the studies – when she's surrounded by fellow classmates who are dedicated to their craft. Magic runs through our veins.

indistinct response from the mirror

"I see." (Disappointed) "...That favor you asked for. I'll have to pull some strings, but - What if... it COULD be done?"

Your mother falls completely silent as the person on the other side speaks for a final time. Give me a Perception check, let's see how much of it you can hear.

Professor: An unfortunate accident will soon befall a student here and we will have a spot open up. I do believe I will be able to take a personal interest in your daughter's admission here. The influence of her lineage, combined with her potential, is a rare and compelling combination.

She will need to be present for class within the week.

We can use her vignette to introduce important NPCs, and give her personal goals, and raise some questions for her as well. Why is my mom so afraid of this professor? Who is she? What is the favor?

Example 3

Vignettes can also be a great way to give the players information that their heroes wouldn't have access to. Brandon wants to play an ooze spy character, he doesn't really care what the other details are. We work together to come up with a cool secret passphrase

and response and he gets to show off his sweet spy skills in front of the rest of the players. As well as secret lore the party shouldn't have yet:

The countryside of your homeland flashes past you. Hills, farmland, woods. It won't be long until you're in the capital. You were instructed to wait here in your private train carriage for your first assignment. You are just beginning to settle in when you hear a gentle knock on the cabin door. What do you do?

Brandon: "Open the door, cautiously."

Old Steward: Would you like any refreshments? Please help yourself(seltzer water, fresh fruits, bread, cheeses). Oh, by the way how is your sick uncle?

He speaks the secret phrase that has been drilled into your head a thousand times in the citadel, your response?

Brandon: "Dead. As always."

"Your mission begins now, agent," the steward's disguised voice changes in an instant. Now hard, and hushed as he slips you a sealed envelope.

"You will be a student at the famed magical university–our target of concern, a group called the Shadowblades. We have heard whispers that they are recruiting mages from this campus and need you to investigate."

"You will find all your documents in order, of course your identification, forged transcripts and letters of acceptance, contact information for your handler in case of emergency, and of course instructions on how to access your expense account."

"Something big is coming. The kingdom is counting on you. Read the dossier carefully while in your cabin. Burn it before you arrive at the teleportation circle in the capital. Long live the king."

Do you burn it or keep it? Examination check to see how much you remember.

What a cool way to start a campaign! You're a spy with secret information AND AN EXPENSE ACCOUNT! This also gives you as the GM hooks into the story to drop information, and twists in a very natural way. You can make any monetary requests contingent upon him uncovering information, you can have rival nationions also sending spies as fellow students trying to ferret him out, you can even have the Shadowblades attempt to recruit him!

Running Skill Challenges!

A skill challenge is an extended series of skill checks that helps paint a narrative picture when there is extreme uncertainty outside of combat. For example:

- Navigating a collapsing dungeon
- During an urban chase scene
- Sailing through a dangerous storm
- Negotiating a peace treaty
- Playing a team competition (e.g., a fantasy sport or baking competition).

Present a series of obstacles, and have the Heroes use their skills and abilities to tackle each one. A failed check can impose minor consequences (e.g., HP loss, a Wound, a Condition, or loss of an item). Multiple failures might escalate to severe consequences, such as failing the quest, losing a key ally, or even resulting in character death. Tips for Running Skill Challenge:

Vary the Skills. Encourage players to use a

range of skills beyond the obvious ones. For example, instead of just using Athletics in a chase scene, allow Insight to predict the target's movements or Perception to spot shortcuts.

Reward Creativity. If a player spends resources (e.g., a spell, a rare item, or limited-use ability) or proposes a particularly creative idea, grant advantage on their check, allow an unconventional skill use, or provide an automatic success.

Engage the Whole Party. Make sure to present a variety of challenges so that all Heroes have a chance to contribute. Balance physical, social, and mental tasks.

Keep Up the Tension. Describe the stakes and outcomes clearly after each roll to maintain suspense. Use vivid descriptions to illustrate the urgency of the situation. For an example of what skill challenge might look like, see "Skill Challenge: Escape the Ruins!" on page 67.

Making Your Own Adventures

An adventure should be have a mix of all three RPG pillars: Combat, Role Playing, & Exploration. Here are some great ways to ensure your adventures have a nice mix:

Problems, Not Solutions

Create problems or situations for your players to creatively solve. Don't worry yourself with planning a solution though! It is guaranteed that your players will come up with ideas you never considered. Encourage your players to be creative, allow anything that sounds reasonable. They may have to roll a save or as skill check, there might be consequences, or their hair brained idea might be so good that it just works!

Something to Fight

2-5 "fair" combat encounters per session is typical). Having some well-balanced fights are appreciated

so the heroes can do their cool things. Though some sessions may not have any combat, if your players are having fun, that's okay too!

Places to Explore

Your players can explore boring places at home all day long. We play RPGs to explore INTERESTING places. A "tomb" is boring. An "ANCIENT tomb" is better. "The ancient tomb of Azithromaxian, the World Gorger" is better still. The places you present can include, secret entrances, spots to hide & sneak around in, places to gain the high ground and set up traps for the bad guys, cool loot, and importantly, they should include branching paths—rather than being strictly linear!

Others to Influence

Fun NPCs to role-play with. A dumb bad guys to bamboozle, a quirky granny to charm, cuddly ani-

mals to befriend, jerks to offend, troops or citizens to rally, people to make into their enemies or allies, merchants to trade and bargain with.

Something Too Big

It is your job to present a realistic world, not everything should be "level appropriate." Some monsters will be far too powerful to face head on, the party will need to RUN. If they do face it, it'd have to be with EXCEPTIONAL tactical/social wit (or cheating).

Be Clear About Danger. You can only do this if your area also CLEAR about danger though. You shouldn't spring a super deadly TPK encounter on your players who are expecting an easy one. Warn your players when something is actually dangerous, you are their eyes and ears. If they get in over their head because of their own foolish choices despite your warnings, that's okay! If that happens and it's your fault, they won't be having very much fun. Either way, allow them to retreat (with consequences if appropriate).

Traps

Traps that are already triggered for foreshadowing. Traps they can spot and disarm (successfully or unsuccessfully!), Traps they can get stuck in and figure out how to get out of. Traps they can create and set up themselves or existing ones they can creatively turn on their enemies.

Treasure

Yes, a great adventure has treasure. But not just gold, weapons, and armor, lots of things can make great treasure! Single use items like health potions or spell scrolls. Expended items like powerful wands. Mysterious objects that can kick off new quests. Cursed items, blessed items, stolen items (that the rightful owner badly wants back), sentient objects that can lead (or mislead) the heroes. Or even an entire castle that they can use as their home base!

The best treasure frequently doesn't have an obvious use, but can be used creatively by the players or the GM as *adventure fuel*.

Lore & Secrets

Information can be a fantastic reward as well. Information about a safe resting location so they can recuperate HP and mana, information on the bad guy's plans, secret passage ways, answers to personal backstory questions, weaknesses of a monster they're going to face, history about the region or dungeon, etc. The more your players know about the setting, its people, and history, the more likely they will care about the campaign and develop their own personal stakes in the story.

Dilemmas

Situations where, if the party makes 1 choice, they can't choose another one are a great way to emphasize the stakes of a story. Save this person or save this other person, the choice is yours! A treasure lodged deep within a monster, if you take it, it will wake the creature!

Follow the Fun

Whatever you plan, your players will make their own decisions and take the adventure in directions you didn't expect. Let it happen, go where the fun is.

Note: As a new GM, feel free to speak plainly and ask them to follow the adventure! You'll get better at rolling with their crazy ideas later.

Gating Information

Make sure critical information is not gated behind a skill check, the story MUST be able to continue even if the party rolls very poorly. When something is critical to the story, the party succeeds.

If you do call for a roll, it should be to determine other surrounding consequences. If they roll well: the party succeeds quickly, or they gain surprise on the bad guys; poorly: it takes them longer, or the bad guys surprise them.

Reveal the DC or keep it secret? Typically, a DC is hidden information for the GM only. However, letting the players know what the DC is before they roll can sometimes really increase the drama of a moment.

What to Avoid

“Oh, it doesn’t matter.”

When your players ask you for the name of an NPC or some small detail that you think doesn’t really matter—it matters! When they do this, that means you are doing a good job and they are taking your world seriously! Don’t shatter the verisimilitude by shrugging off their question.

If they ask about a random no-name NPC, he’s got a name now (and don’t forget to write it down)! If they ask what kind of shoes the goblin is wearing, give them an answer! Feel free to ask why they’re curious about it—perhaps they suspect the goblin as a culprit in a crime, or they want to memorize what the goblin’s tracks look like. Reward your players for taking your world seriously. The things they are interested in matter!

Don’t punish curiosity, bravery, or creativity!

Make sure the first few things new players interact with are positive. If, instead, the first 2 doors are trapped, they may just stop opening doors. If they save an NPC from danger only to be stabbed in the back, be prepared for them to never trust your NPCs (or even worse, you!).

If they negotiate creatively with some bad guys instead of getting into combat and it goes poorly, expect them to give up on attempting that ever again. Even if the bad guys really are bad, give the party something in return for playing thoughtfully and taking your world seriously.

“Actually that spell can’t be used that way...” Let the fun thing happen. Maybe just this once, but let it happen.

Don’t let them behind the screen

Avoid the temptation to reveal “the last hour was completely improvised!” It may feel good to tell them and pat yourself on the back for your improv

skills, but it likely won’t feel good to them that you’re “just making it up as you go along.” Granted, that’s what *all* of this is—but they don’t need to know that. Players want to feel like what happens was what was SUPOSED to happen. That NPC they took a liking to was really supposed to be in that town. That bad guy was really supposed to tick them off.

Ruling too Rigidly

Players may want to use their “combat only” abilities outside of combat, if the situation calls for it and it sounds reasonable, let them. For example, a Berserker may rage before trying a Might check, or a Stormshifter may shapeshift into an Owlbear—you can optionally give them advantage on the skill check.



ADVENTURING REWARDS

PHOENIX HELM

Creating interesting adventuring rewards can be challenging. Magical items that only provide a flat stat or damage boost are good fun – in the fleeting moment a hero receives it. But these bonuses are quickly forgotten–rolled into the base math of the game. It just inflates the numbers and forces you to rebalance encounters around it.

These don't generally make for interesting or **memorable moments**, nor do they provide the characters with any **interesting choices**. The most memorable and interesting magical items are a bit *strange*, or have some *trade-off* or are *temporary*, or require *creativity*, or provide some other opportunity for the players to create memorable moments at the table.

Release Valves

A total party kill (TPK), or when your entire party dies is sometimes the right outcome. The heroes are playing fast and loose, you have telegraphed danger and yet they forge ahead, heedless. It's important that a player's choices have realistic consequences—the heroes all die.

That said, a TPK when it's **not** the fault of the players: when it's unexpected, unfair, or unintended; it's good for the GM to have a release valve to get themselves out of trouble. This allows you some leeway in encounter design and frees you to not worry too much about tuning the game balance perfectly.

Having extremely dangerous threats that players can stumble into (and escape from!) is a great way to show that the world is realistic and make things painful for the *heroes* without being so punishing for the *players*.

Gem of Escape

These magical gems are always crafted in pairs and can have any number of creatures attuned to it. Crush one (1 Action) in case of emergency to instantly teleport ALL who are attuned to it to the location of the other gem.

Why This is Great. A party may find the gem on a defeated bad guy. Where is the other gem... who knows? They might use it to hunt down the rest of the bad guys, they might use it to escape a sticky situation. It's up to you as the GM whether they escape to safety or if it's "out of the frying pan, and into the fire!"

Glacier in a Bottle

When poured out (1 Action), the Glacier in a Bottle creates a solid form of ice, filling any number of unoccupied consecutive spaces up to 6 spaces away and 2 high. The ice lasts for 1 hour before melting. Extreme heat or damage may cause it to fail prematurely. 1/per Safe Rest.

Phoenix Helm

On Death: You are reborn as a golden fiery phoenix. Enemies within 6 spaces must make a **DC 10+KEY DEX** save, or take **LVL d10** fire damage (half on save). After 10 minutes this form ends, the helm and your body are no more. Until then gain the following stats and abilities:

- Gain a fly speed of 16, you have 12 Armor, and $10 \times \text{Level HP}$.
- Creatures that touch you take LVL fire damage.
- **Fiery Talons (1 Action).** $1d12 + \text{LVL}$ damage

Story Items

Sometimes as the GM you need to *reach into the world* and give the party information – to lead (or mislead) the party in a particular, *dramatic* direction. BUT direct advice from the GM can come across as railroading. Especially unasked for advice.

These items give the players an "in-world" way to have access to information they *need*, but perhaps *shouldn't* have. They can decide if and when they ask for it, how to interpret it, to follow it or even to trust this in-world source, or not.

Hear-ring

A simple piece of jewelery worn on the ear. While worn wearers can communicate with one another no matter the distance. Frequently crafted as a pair, sometimes as a larger set.

Why this is cool. How many do you let your party find, just one? Who has the other ones, the bad guys perhaps? Or do they find a pair, perhaps they are part of a much larger set and left by the bad guys so they can listen in on the party's plans!

Pocket Cauldron

While Safe Resting, use this to brew your choice of 1 potion, to be consumed immediately:

- **Elixir of Futuresight:** Grants the drinker a brief, cryptic vision of a future event.
- **Elixir of Requiem:** Allows the drinker to relive a crucial memory from their past.
- **Elixir of Time:** Once every 100 years the cauldron can brew a potion that can take the drinker back in time 1 day.

Why this is great. Not only does this allow you as the GM to reach into the world and move things along or mix things up. It can also help your players develop their backstories and even as a "redo" button if that should ever be necessary.

The Grimoire of Truths

This Book is a sentient magical item that knows many things about the world and past events, about people and their motivations, and even about possible future events. It will happily converse with its owner when spoken to first. Its goal is to gain trust and to help his owner out *juuuust* enough to get them into great trouble.

"Ah, another mortal thirsting for knowledge."

"Oh, **that one?** Her smile hides a thousand lies and treacheries."

"Would you like the safe, **boring** route, or the one filled with **excitement** and potential doom? I know which one I'd pick."

Combat Items

Create combat related items with a drawback so there is a choice to be made. It can be a 1 time use item, something that damages the hero, or something that needs to be recharged to be used again. Alternatively, you can have it become a friend with the party like Lumina!

Lumina, Living Sunbeam

A small, radiant orb of light, about the size of an apple, with a gentle, warm glow that pulses with life and a perpetual, cheerful expression. She is a one-time use item that, when activated as an action, will deal **Level d6** radiant damage to all enemies within 6 spaces and heal allies in the area for the same amount. Until then, she hovers around her owner, spreading warmth and light, and offering encouragement.



"I'm here to brighten your journey and, when the time comes, it's okay... don't be afraid to let me shine."
—Lumina

On Resting & Healing

When a party rests is up to you, as the GM. Offering 1 time healing can be a great quest reward if the party would like to keep adventuring some more before returning to town. Keep an eye on the party's resources, if things get too challenging, feel free to allow them to stumble upon a friendly cleric, or a hidden oasis where they can Safe Rest!

Secret Spells

These spells are either incredibly powerful and banned from common knowledge, or ancient and simply forgotten to the ravages of time. These may not be appropriate to teach to the heroes in your party for them to use as will, but finding a wand with one of these spells (or an NPC who can cast it for you or teach you) can be a great quest reward!

These spells being a possibility "in world" can make for very interesting stories as well.

Revive. (Tier 3 Radiant spell, casting time: 1 hour.) Bring a dead creature back to life provided they have not been dead for more than 7 days or revived by this spell before. There is a chance that attempting to revive a creature already brought back with this spell will raise a mindless, zombified husk instead.

Why this is secret? Being able to freely come back to life can greatly warp the game. It can lower the stakes and suck the excitement out of a near death encounter. On the other hand, it can be a handy tool to keep a game going when truly bad luck hits, or even narratively very impactful (bringing a big bad evil guy back to life, for instance). Whether you allow it in your game is up to you though!

Sparkfetch. (Lightning cantrip) Loudly teleport a tiny, unheld metal item you can see to yourself.

This spell famously became the most swiftly banned cantrip in recent history. Shortly after being introduced as part of first year curriculum, a string of mysterious burglaries broke out whenever it stormed—cheeky first year students took great pleasure in pilfering coins and other valuables with this seemingly innocuous cantrip.

Hearth & Home. (Tier 3 Fire spell, casting time 10 minutes). Conjure a cozy fire in an ornate fireplace, surrounded by a welcoming inn—complete with sturdy wooden tables, plush chairs, and a soft rug underfoot. Suitable for safely resting as you would at any comfortable inn. The fire burns warmly for 12 hours, at which point the inn vanishes, leaving no trace behind.

But... This spell is notoriously difficult to cast manually. It is most frequently imbued into wands for frequent wealthy travelers. Being able to Safe Rest anywhere can certainly break the balance of a game very quickly, allow this spell in your game with caution.

Lesser Windform. (wind cantrip, concentration up to 10 minutes) You are invisible and blinded

for the duration of the spell.

Greater Windform. (Tier 5 wind spell, concentration up to 10 minutes) Gain invisibility, a flying speed and the ability to pass through any space that wind can.

Radiant Bond. (Tier 3 radiant spell, concentration up to 10 minutes) Communicate telepathically over any distance with a creature who holds a gift freely given by you.

Speak With Dead. Temporarily animate a corpse you touch and imbue it with the ability to answer up to 3 questions before returning to death. It must answer, but is under no obligation to answer truthfully if it does not like the questioner or question.

Teleport. (Tier 6 Lightning Spell, casting time: 10 minutes) You and up to 10 other willing creatures within 2 spaces are instantly teleported to a place of your choice that you have been to before.

Cryotomb. (Tier 8 Ice Spell, 4 Actions) Range: 12. A target must make a STR save or become entombed in ice. While entombed they are incapacitated and immune to harm. This lasts as long as you survive, or until it melts or is destroyed by natural means. The creature may repeat the save once every 10 days. Huge or larger creatures have advantage on the save, a Small or smaller creature, disadvantage. Upcast: +5 spell save DC.

This spell can be a great quest starter: The King secretly has a very big, bad, evil monster trapped in a cryotomb in the dungeon of the palace and the ice is beginning to crack...

Boons

Boons can be a great quest reward from a powerful patron (e.g., an elf queen, hearing of a hero's bravery could bestow them with the Brave or Lionhearted boon), a temporary buff (e.g., a tonic that gives Epic Speed for 1 hour), or you can allow players to take a minor/major boon instead of a secondary/key stat increase.

Minor Boons

- **Intrepid.** +1 speed when moving to danger.
- **Fiery.** At the end of your turn, you may deal 1 fire damage to an adjacent target.
- **Experienced.** +5 HP.
- **Feisty.** Gain 1 maximum Hit Die.
- **Alert.** +1 to Initiative rolls.
- **Bright.** +2 max Mana.

Major Boons

- **Unflinching.** Your focus is unbroken even in the face of danger. Advantage on Concentration checks.
- **Honorable Protector.** Gain LVL temp HP whenever you Interpose. Suffer LVL psychic damage whenever an ally within 2 spaces is attacked and you don't interpose.
- **Natural Talent.** Learn 1 Cantrip in a school you do not know.
- **Unnatural Talent.** Learn any 1 Utility Spell.
- **Tough.** Whenever you gain temp HP, gain 5 more.
- **Hardy.** Whenever you would roll your hit dice to increase your maximum HP, roll with an additional stack of advantage.
- **Brave.** Gain +2 to damage while you have the most enemies adjacent to you.
- **Lionhearted.** +2 Armor while you have the most enemies adjacent to you.
- **Expansive Mind.** +KEY Max Mana. (excl. Shadowmancers)
- **Tenacious.** Gain +2 maximum Hit Dice.
- **Stalwart.** Gain +1 maximum Hit Die, +2 on Might checks.
- **Smart, not book smart.** -KEY Max Mana + Mana recovery. Gain 1d4 mana whenever you roll Initiative, this expires if unused at the end of combat.
- **Veteran.** +10 HP.
- **Good Patient.** Whenever you would receive magical healing you heal an additional KEY HP.

- **Sniper.** Gain +2 damage when no enemy is adjacent to you, -2 damage otherwise.
- **Aggressive.** On your first round of combat you can spend 1 Action from your next turn.
- **Resolute.** When pushed, you are pushed 1 space less. Whenever you would be knocked prone, you can instead be moved back 1 space.
- **Resilient.** If you would take any levels of Wounds, you may become immune to them this turn instead. 1/Safe Rest.
- **Battle Hardened.** +1 Armor.

EPIC Boons

- **Epic Stamina.** Rolling 4 or higher on a Hit Die heals 1 Wound.
- **Epic Resistance.** 1/encounter. Whenever you would suffer damage or fail a save you can choose not to instead.
- **Epic Speed.** +4 Speed, +4 Initiative.
- **Epic Criticals.** Whenever you would roll for critical hit damage, you may replace one die with a d20.
- **Epic Mind.** +6 Mana
- **Epic Mana.** Whenever you would be healed, you may instead recover 1 Mana for every 5 HP you would have been healed
- **Epic Stats.** Increase 3 different stats by 1.
- **Epic Defense.** Your shields gain +3 Armor.
- **Epic Senses:** Gain blindsight 6 or darkvision 16.
- **Epic Knowledge:** 1/day, you can call upon a moment of profound insight to gain hidden knowledge about a legendary person, place, or object.
- **Epic Foresight:** Gain +5 to Initiative rolls and advantage on your first attack each encounter.
- **Epic Agility:** Gain 1 action. 1/encounter.

Note: Boons that affect Mana do not affect Shadowmancers or martial classes since they have no mana of their own to increase.

If your players can handle a bit more CRUNCH consider giving out boons, utility spells, wands, and complex magical items much more freely.



MONSTERS

Running Monsters

The GM controls the monsters during combat. Monsters do not use Heroic Actions/Reactions, they can move, use the actions listed on their stat block and their turn ends. Monsters die when they reach 0 HP.

Monster Armor

While most monsters are unarmored, some creatures are tougher to take down:

- **Medium Armor "Just the dice."** Monsters with Medium Armor (M) ignore all damage modifiers from stats and other effects, taking damage from the sum of the dice only.
- **Heavy Armor "Half the dice."** Monsters with Heavy Armor (H) ignore damage modifiers and take half damage from dice (rounding up).

Tell Your Players! When a monster has armor, it shouldn't be a secret. Regular goblins are unarmored. That goblin? He's holding a shield, he has Medium Armor. A golem that's completely made out of metal? Heavy Armor.

How to deal with armor? Heroes' critical hits, save spells, and damage type vulnerabilities ignore monster armor altogether. This means certain weapons and spells are better or worse against armored foes!

This is also a great opportunity to remind your players about the Assess action. At your discretion, depending on the difficulty of the encounter and with a good or creative skill check they could ignore armor for 1 turn, 1 round or for the entire encounter!

Monster armor VS Hero armor. Why does it work differently? GMs have enough to juggle without the added complexity of having to decide when to Defend against a dozen attacks each round; they need the mechanical simplification to manage large battles. Heroes, on the other hand, have only 1 character to focus on, so the added tactical depth is not a burden but an enjoyable detail.

Default Monster Stats

Unless otherwise noted, assume that monsters are medium sized, unarmored, speed of 6 (can replace an attack to move again, or replace either one of those to make a save), attacks have reach 1, and roll saves with an unmodified d20 roll, (though some monsters may have Advantaged/Disadvantaged saves when appropriate).

Reading a Stat Block

GOBLIN LVL 1/3, SMALL 15

Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attack misses you, deal 1 psychic damage in return.

Stab. 1d6+2 (or Shoot, Range 8).

This stat block for a goblin serves as an example. No Speed, Armor, or Saves are listed so we use the defaults. If he ever takes a total of 15 or more damage he'll die. His LVL of 1/3 means 3 goblins are about as strong as a level 1 hero. On the goblin's turn, the GM could move him up to 6 spaces and then stab (or shoot) in either order. Whenever an attack misses him, his special ability triggers.

Flunkies & Minions

Combat Encounter Guidelines

Monster levels. Making encounters in Nimble is easy! Simply add up the total levels of the heroes (e.g., if you have 3 level 2 heroes, their total is 6). Monsters with a total level equal to that will be a challenging but fair fight; less than that, easy; and more than that, hard or deadly.

Example: A griffon is a level 4 monster. So flock of 6 griffons (24 monster levels total) would be a hard encounter for: 6 level 4 heroes, 4 level 6 heroes, or 3 level 8 heroes.

Typical encounters should have between 1-3 monsters per hero (excluding minions). For an epic fight against a single monster, use a legendary monster, and if you want hordes of monsters, use minions.

Important Note! If the heroes or monsters greatly outnumber one another the encounter may be easier or harder than anticipated.

Easy. If the monster's total levels are less than half of the heroes', this is an easy encounter. Heroes will lose minimal HP and resources, making these encounters great for testing new abilities or gauging progress, or whittling down resources. They help players feel powerful, especially after leveling up. Use 0-2 easy encounters per session.

Medium. When the monster's levels are around 75% of the heroes', expect some HP loss and moder-

ate resource expenditure. Heroes will get hurt but shouldn't drop to 0 HP. Use 0-2 medium encounters per session.

Hard. When the monster's levels equal the heroes', this encounter will be challenging but fair. Heroes must use significant resources; some may drop to 0 HP, but none should die barring poor tactics or bad luck. Typically use 1 hard encounter per session.

Deadly. When monster levels are 100-125% of the heroes', this encounter requires strategic thinking and teamwork. Suitable for tough battles, well-equipped parties, or campaign bosses. Use sparingly.

Very Deadly. At 150%+ monster levels, this encounter is extremely dangerous. Unless they are very well optimized and play exquisitely (or multiclassing), they will almost certainly need to retreat, or die. Use only when the heroes made a bad mistake: you telegraphed danger and they failed to heed.

How many encounters per rest? Returning to town (or some other safe base) after each adventure/session is typical. Be flexible, whenever the heroes start to accumulate many wounds, you may allow them to stumble upon a friendly cleric, or a hidden oasis where they can Safe Rest, or lower the encounter difficulty, otherwise they'll have to cut the adventure short to go rest.

Fine Tuning Difficulty

Low Level Balancing. For an easier game at lower levels, use **Flunkies** (they're the same as a regular monster, but they can't crit). When players are new, and while HP & armor are low, it can feel really bad to lose all of your HP from one unlucky crit.

Balancing with Minions. Minions are great for filling the battlefield and adding fluidity without slowing combat. They are easy to kill but can overwhelm heroes if ignored.

No HP Tracking: Minions die from any damage taken. At your discretion, excess damage can carry

over to nearby minions (e.g., a 20-damage attack could kill up to TWO d10 minions or FIVE d4 minions within range).

Streamlined Movement and Attack: Minions act together, each using a single damage die (e.g., 1d4 for weak, up to 1d20 for strong). They roll attacks simultaneously, without modifiers, cannot crit, and miss on a roll of 1. Heroes can Defend or Interpose against multiple minion attacks as a single attack.

Let your heroes shine! Minions are easy to run and give heroes a chance to shine. Heavily armored heroes can block lots of attacks, while spellcasters can wipe out large groups at once!

Waves of Minions. When designing combat encounters, you can start with a slightly easier encounter and add minions over the course of the first round or two of combat. Minions might appear from hidden spots or be summoned mid-battle, increasing the tactical complexity.

- 1 minion/hero: Slightly more difficult, but will greatly increase the tactical options.
- 2-3 minions/hero: noticeably more difficult.
- 4 minions per hero: quite a bit more challenging.

Suggested minion die size by party level:

Party Level	Appropriate Minion Size
1-3	d4 sized minions
3-5	d6 sized minions
5-10	d8 sized minions
10-13	d10 sized minions
13-17	d12 sized minions
17-20	d20 sized minions

Be Fair & Consistent: Ensure all combat actions make sense within the game world. Adding minions hiding in the bushes until a leader calls them out? Logical! Monsters pouring from a summoning portal until it's closed? Great—players need to handle that threat. However, don't adjust the encounter by making minions appear out of thin air or suddenly shutting down the portal if things get tough. Secretly changing rolls to help or hinder players breaks immersion and trust. If players suspect you're manipulating the game unfairly, it can ruin their experience and erode their trust in you as a GM.

Balancing With Tactics

Focus Fire. The more the monsters focus their attacks on one or two heroes the more difficult the encounter will be. Conversely, the more monsters spread their damage out (or sending monsters in waves, a few at a time) the easier it will feel.

Give a Reason. If you want to ease up in the middle of an encounter, sub optimal play should at least make sense. If you want to attack the Hunter who hasn't taken any damage yet instead of the badly damaged Commander, ask out loud, "Who dealt the most damage last round? Oh, the Hunter? Ok he's coming after you now!"

Movement. Moving monsters every turn makes martial characters use their actions on movement rather than burning them all attacking. It also lets players use Opportunity Attacks and other special abilities. To tune the challenge down, move monsters less frequently.

Go for squishy characters. Make them use their actions to defend or run away and hide behind their stronger friends! Let the tanks feel good about defending and interposing.

Be flexible with Initiative. The sooner the monsters act in the round, the harder the encounter will be, and vice versa. If, after the first player's turn, it looks like the bad guys are in for a trouncing, move some of them up in the initiative order instead of waiting until the end of the round.

Armor Allotment. Typical armor allotment of monsters in a session is: 60% unarmored, 30% medium, 10% heavy. This ratio can change for certain encounters and as the heroes level up, but having too many armored creatures can result in slow gameplay. Armor should add spice to an encounter, it should not be the main course.

Be flexible with Armor. Give a good mix of different monster armor types. If an encounter calls for only Medium Armored foes, it won't break the encounter balance to make a few of them unarmored and one or two heavily armored. It'll let different classes shine more and keep things interesting.

Don't Worry. In the end, the players have a lot of tools to get themselves out of trouble. Don't stress too much about getting the difficulty exactly correct. You'll get better at it as you go, as will your players. Relax and have fun!

Monster Builder

If you'd like to create your own monsters, use the table below for your monster's stats. You can also mix and match stats from different levels as well for a different kind of monster. For each special ability a monster has (e.g. the Kobold's "Noooo!" ability) treat it as if it were 1 step stronger.

Example. If you wanted a glass cannon type of enemy, like a mage or an assassin, you can use damage from 1-5 rows higher, and the HP from an equal number of rows lower. A level 5 mage might have 34 HP and deal 26 damage per round. If we then give the mage a teleport ability, it'd be as strong as a level 6 monster. For a tanky, defensive type of creature, lower the damage and increase the HP/Armor.

Monster Level	HP No Armor	HP M Armor	HP H Armor	Damage per round	Attack Sample Dice	Save DC	CR Equiv.
1/4	12	9	7	3	1d4+1	9	1/8
1/3	15	11	8	5	1d6+2	9	1/4
1/2	18	15	11	7	1d6+3	10	1/4
1	26	20	16	11	2d8+2 or (2x) 1d8+1	10	1/2
2	34	27	20	13	2d8+4 or (2x) 1d8+3	11	1
3	41	33	25	15	2d8+6 or (2x) 1d8+4	11	1
4	49	39	29	18	2d8+9 or (2x) 1d8+5	12	2
5	58	46	35	19	2d8+10 or (2x) 1d8+6	12	2
6	68	54	41	21	2d8+12 or (2x) 1d8+7	13	3
7	79	63	47	24	3d8+10 or (2x) 2d8+4	13	3
8	91	73	55	26	3d8+12 or (2x) 2d8+5	14	4
9	104	83	62	28	4d8+10 or (2x) 2d8+6	14	4
10	118	94	71	30	4d8+12 or (2x) 2d8+7	15	5
11	133	106	80	33	5d8+11 or (2x) 3d8+3	15	6
12	149	119	89	35	5d8+13 or (2x) 3d8+4	16	7
13	166	132	100	38	6d8+11 or (2x) 3d8+6	16	8
14	184	147	110	40	6d8+13 or (2x) 3d8+7	17	9
15	203	162	122	43	7d8+11 or (2x) 3d8+8	17	9
16	223	178	134	45	7d8+13 or (2x) 4d8+5	18	10
17	244	195	146	48	8d8+12 or (2x) 4d8+6	18	11
18	266	213	160	50	8d8+14 or (2x) 4d8+7	19	12
19	289	231	173	52	9d8+12 or (2x) 4d8+8	19	13
20	313	250	189	54	9d8+13 or (2x) 4d8+9	20	14

What die size to use? Default to d8 for custom monsters—it offers a balanced chance of hitting, missing, and critting. Any die size is fine as long as overall damage per round stays consistent. Here are some thematic guidelines:

- **d4:** Undead (slow, with BIG bonus damage)
- **d6:** Goblins (small, chaotic, likely to miss or crit)
- **d8:** Humans (balanced and reliable attackers)
- **d10:** Beasts (stronger than humans)
- **d12:** Giants or superhumanly strong/accurate
- **d20:** The mightiest creatures (massive damage)

Flavorful Monster Abilities

Once you have the base stats for the encounter, you can optionally add a cool flavorful ability to make these monsters feel and play differently. Abilities can be passive or trigger "On Movement," "On Attack," "On Miss," "On Hit," "On Damage," "On Crit," "On Death," and more.

- **Acid Blood:** When damaged by a melee attack, the attacker takes acid splash damage equal to half the damage dealt.
- **Aggressive:** Faster if moving toward enemies.
- **Blinding Spit:** Spits a blinding substance at a target within range. The target must make a save or be blinded for 1 round.
- **Bloodthirsty:** Has advantage on attacks against Bloodied targets.
- **Brute:** Attacks also knockback a number of spaces equal to the primary die rolled.
- **Brawler:** Extra damage, can only attack in melee.
- **Burning Aura:** Creatures that start their turn adjacent to this monster take 1d6 fire damage.
- **Climbing:** Can traverse walls or ceilings normally.
- **Controlling:** Creates/immune to difficult terrain.
- **Disgusting/Venomous/Heavy Blows:** Attacks also dazes the target.
- **Disintegrating Armor:** Start with Heavy Armor, on crit degrades to Medium, then to none.
- **Doom:** Attacks also Wound the target.
- **Explosive Death:** On death, explode dealing 2d6 damage to creatures within reach.
- **Mounted.** Faster movement and deals extra damage after moving toward an enemy.
- **Fearsome:** Frighten enemies within range on a failed WILL save. 1/encounter.
- **Flying:** Flying speed and immune to Opportunity Attacks. May FALL when crit (1d6 damage/10 ft. fallen, and land Prone).
- **Formation:** Armor increases 1 step for each adjacent ally (None, Med, Heavy).
- **Frenzied:** Deals extra damage or has faster speed while damaged.
- **Grappler:** On hit, it also grapples.
- **Gravity Manipulator:** Can pull or push enemies within reach.
- **Hates the Light:** Attacks the hero holding light.
- **Hypnotic Gaze:** Forces enemies to make a WIL save or be confused for 1 round.
- **"Invulnerable":** Immune to damage until crit.
- **Obstinate:** When attacking a target with disadvantage, treat the roll as if it had advantage instead.
- **Pack Tactics:** Advantage on attacks when an ally is adjacent to the target.
- **Parry/FAST:** Reaction: 1/round. Force a reroll with disadvantage on an attack. Or, attack against them miss on a 1 and 2.
- **Ranged:** Extra damage, can only attack at range.
- **Retaliate:** Attacks the first creature who attacks them in melee each round.
- **Savage:** Always crits grappled creatures.
- **Shifty:** Can move after being attacked.
- **Silencer:** Attacks silence enemies (making them unable to cast spells or perform other actions that require the voice).
- **Sneak:** Invisible until they attack.
- **Spiked:** When hit by a melee attack, the attacker takes 1d4 piercing damage.
- **Standard Bearer:** Buffs nearby allies, reducing the damage they take or increasing the damage they do.
- **Sturdy/Undying:** The first time the monster would die, they have 1 HP instead.
- **Summoner:** Calls minions to their aid each round.
- **Tricky:** Can swap places with allies or enemies.
- **Vicious:** Crits are vicious.
- **Warping Touch:** When it hits a target, that creature is teleported 6 spaces away.
- **Webslinger:** Can immobilize a target with webs when hit or crit.

BESTIARY



Kobolds

Small, maniacal dragonlings. Fiercely protective of their own. **Kobold Ability:**

Nooooo! When an ally within 2 spaces dies, attack once for free.

KOBOLD MINION LVL 1/4, SMALL
Stab. 1d4 (follows minion rules).

KOBOLD LVL 1/3, SMALL 12
Stab. 1d4+2 (or Sling, Range 8).

KOBOLD SNEAK LVL 1/2, SMALL 15
Revenge! If an ally dies, first move up to 6.
Stab. 1d4+2 (or Sling, Range 8).

KOBOLD CLANGER Lvl 1 16 H
CLANG! Allies who hear your clanging roll 1 additional die whenever they attack.

KOBOLD TRAPPER LVL 1, SMALL 26
Throw Scorpion (2x). **1d4+2** (Range 8)

- Trap!** When an enemy moves adjacent to you or an ally, they trigger your trap! 1/encounter each.
- **BEEES!** Deal them 5d4 damage (doesn't miss). Half as much to ALL adjacent creatures.
 - **GOTCHA!** They are Restrained until they can escape (Action: DC 10 STR or DEX).

KOBOLD DENWARDEN LVL 1 20 M
Hold! Adjacent allies gain Medium Armor.
Stab (2x). 1d4+2 (or Sling, Range 8).

Sample Encounters Per Hero:
For an easier encounter use the stats 1 or 2 levels lower. More challenging, 1 or 2 levels higher.

Level 1: 3 Kobold Flunkies/4 Minions

Level 2: 6 Kobolds/4 Sneaks/1 Clanger+1 Trapper

Level 3: 2 Clangers+1 Trapper/3 Trappers/6 Sneaks

Level 4: 4 Trappers/2 Denwardens+4 Sneaks*

Remember! Even very weak monsters can be far more deadly than intended when they outnumber the heroes by more than 3 to 1, Between 1-3 monsters per hero is ideal.

Kobold Loot

Honey, LOTS of twine, sandwiches (stolen), shiny objects, dragon painting (poorly, yet lovingly made), rotting meats, a variety of traps (small cages, spikes, snapping).





Goblins

Green, cunning, & thriving on the edge of chaos. Will mock you mercilessly if given the chance. GOBLIN ABILITY:

Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attack misses you, deal 1 psychic damage in return.

GOBLIN MINION LVL 1/4, SMALL
Stab. 1d6 (follows minion rules).

GOBLIN LVL 1/3, SMALL
Stab. 1d6+2 (or Shoot, Range 8).

BUGBEAR LVL 2
• **Cleave.** 2d6+4. OR:
• **Javelin.** 1d6+2 (Range 8).

GOBLIN TASKMASTER LVL 2, SMALL **M** 30

Meat Shield. Can force other goblins to Interpose for him.

- **Stab.** 1d6+2 (or Shoot, Range 8). Then:
- **Get in here!** Call a goblin minion to the fight.

GOBLIN RATRIDER LVL 2 **M** 30 **10**

CHAARGE! If you move at least 4 spaces in a straight line, attack with advantage once.

Bite & Stab (x2). 1d6+2. On crit: knock prone.

Sample Goblin Encounters (per hero)

For an easier encounter, use the stats 1 or 2 levels lower, more challenging, 1 or 2 levels higher.

Level 1: 1 Flunk or 2 Minions

Level 2: 3 Goblins, or 1 Bugbear/1 Taskmaster/1 Ratrider

Level 3: 1 Bugbear/Taskmaster/Ratrider + 1 Goblin

Level 4: 1 Bugbear/Taskmaster/Ratrider + 2 Goblins

Level 5: 1 Taskmaster + 1 Ratrider, or 2 Bugbears

Level 6: 3 Bugbears, 3 Ratriders, or 9 Goblins.

Goblin Loot

Live mouse (a snack for later), moldy bread, smooth stones, sharp sticks, teeth (forcibly removed), arrows (surprisingly well-made), lots of blades (jagged, but effective), dead captive (forgot to feed him).



Bandits

You've got money, they want money... a perfect match! (hand it over)

Parry: Treat attacks against you that roll 2 as a miss.

BANDIT MINION LVL 1/4

Stab. 1d8 (follows minion rules).

BANDIT LVL 1/3 **M** 12

Stab. 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 8).

BANDIT BRUISER LVL 2 **M** 24

Bash. 2d8+4 damage

BANDIT CAPTAIN LVL 4 **M** 36

Slice (3x). 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 8)

BANDIT HUNTER LVL 1 **22**

Battlebow. 2d8+2 damage (Range 12).

BANDIT ASSASSIN LVL 2 **24**

Sneak. You are invisible until you attack.

Poison Blade (2x). 1d8+4, on damage: Dazed.

BANDIT MAGE LVL 4 **41**

Spark Step. When damaged, teleport up to 4 spaces..

Arc Lightning. 3d8 damage (Range 12).

Also strikes the next closest creature. On miss: strikes you instead.

Sample Encounters

For an easier encounter, use the stats 1 or 2 levels lower, more challenging, 1 or 2 levels higher.

Level 1: 1.5 Flunkies or 2 Minions

Level 2: 4 Bandits, 1 Bruiser, 1 Hunter + 1 Bandit, or 6 Minions

Level 3: 6 Bandits, 1 Bruiser + 1 Bandit, or 8 Minions, or 2 Hunters

Level 4: (1 Bruiser/1 Assassin) + (2 Bandits/4 Minions)

Level 5: 1 Mage, 2 Assassins, 1 Captain, or 1 Bruiser +4 Bandits

Level 6: 1 Mage/1 Captain/2 Assassins/Bruiser + 2 Bandits.

Bandit Loot

VERY valuable item (stolen; its owner may come looking for it, or reward you for its return), kidnapped person, leather armor, chipped blades, old food, fine art or clothes, wagonload of some commodity (salt, nails, wool, etc.), coded letter from a secretive client.





Dungeon Denizens

For some creatures, YOU are the loot at the end of the dungeon.

STIRGES

Evasive Flier. Attacks are made against you with disadvantage.

STIRGE LVL 1/2, TINY **10** **Latch On.** 1d4+2 damage and Latched On.

GREATER STIRGE LVL 6, SMALL **60** **Latch On.** 1d12+10 and Latched On.

Latched On: You move where your target moves until either dies. Your attacks can't miss or be Defended/Interposed against. Attacks that miss you, damage your target instead.

MIMICS

Ambusher. Mimics always start first and heroes roll initiative with disadvantage.

TINY MIMIC LVL 1 **28** (Cup, Shoe, Apple, Candlestick, Potion, Pebble)

Pseudopod. 1d4 (escape DC 9) or **Bite.** (a Grappled creature) 1d12 damage.

SMALL MIMIC LVL 2 **41** (Backpack, Shield/Weapon, Chair, Crate, Tree Stump)

Pseudopod. 1d6 (escape DC 11) or **Bite.** (a Grappled creature) 1d20 damage.

MEDIUM MIMIC LVL 6 **79** (Table, Treasure Chest, Barrell, Bookshelf, Door, Bed)

Pseudopod. 1d8 (escape DC 13) or **Bite.** (a Grappled creature) 2d20 damage.

Sticky. Mimic hits also Grapple and can Grapple any number of creatures.

When crit: release 1 creature (attacker's choice).

OOZES

Digestive Touch. Contact with an ooze inflicts the Digested condition: they deal an additional **X** damage for each time the target has been Digested this encounter.

GRAY Ooze LVL 1 **28** **Acidic Touch (2x).** 1d6+**2** damage.

OCHE JELLY LVL 4, LARGE **52** **Acidic Touch (2x).** 1d6+**3** damage.

BLACK PUDDING LVL 8, LARGE **90** **Acidic Touch (2x).** (Reach 2) 1d6+**5** damage.

ELDER Ooze LVL 12, HUGE **150** **Acidic Touch (3x).** (Reach 3) 1d6+**6** damage.

Goopy. Slashing damage or when crit: summon **X** ooze minions (size: d6) their attacks inflict Digested.

Dungeon Denizen Loot

Tarnished coins (partially dissolved by acid), ancient bones with traces of gnaw marks, Undigestable items (bones, gems, magical trinkets), a leather-bound journal (water-damaged pages), lockpicks, a treasure map (only half), boots (suspiciously untouched by corrosion).



Hills & Fields

Mighty brutes and cunning beasts, always on the lookout for easy prey.

GNOLLS

Frenzy: Advantage against bloodied creatures.

GNOLL LVL 1 **28**

- **Ravage (2x).** Deal 1d10 damage. OR:
- **Shoot.** (Range 12) 1d10 damage.

GNOLL PACKLEADER LVL 4 **M 39**

- **Bark Orders.** 2 allies can move. Then:
- **Ravage (3x).** Deal 1d10 damage.

GRIFFON LVL 4, LARGE **50**

- **Talons.** Fly 12 then deal 2d6+10 damage On hit: Grappled. OR:
- **Fly & Drop.** If Grappling: Fly 12 upward and release (6d6 fall damage).

HILL GIANT LVL 12, HUGE **140 8**

Brute. On hit: Knockback Primary Die spaces.

- **Smash (2x).** (Reach 2) 1d6+15. OR:
- **Boulder!** 1d6+20 (Range 12)

WORG LVL 1, LARGE **28 10**

Savage. Always crits when attacking a Grappled creature.

- **Rip Apart (2x).** 1d6+2. On damage: Grappled (escape DC 10).

BULETTE LVL 10, LARGE **H 74 BURROW**

Burst Forth! Combat with a Bulette starts with the heaviest character making a DC 14 DEX save or they take 1d12+20 damage and are Grappled (escape DC 14, half on save).

- **Drag Below.** If a creature is grappled, deal 2d12 damage and drag them below and burrow away. OR:
- **Leap & Bite.** If no creature is grappled, leap 6 and attack for 1d12+20 damage. On damage: Grappled.

Half on Save. This means if creature succeeds on the save, they take only half damage and suffer no other effects.

Roc LVL 17

M 195 FLY 20

Pluck Up. Target up to 2 creatures within 4 spaces of each other, deal 3d12+20 and Grapple them (escape DC 18). OR:

- **Crush & Drop.** Fly upward 20 spaces., deal 20 damage to Grappled creatures, then drop them (10d6 fall damage).





Undead

Hate the living for not being dead, hate themselves for not being living.

UNDEAD ABILITY:

Unliving, Undying. The first time this dies, reset to 1 HP instead (excluding minions).

SKELETON LVL 1/3 10

Grave Arrow. 1d4+3 (Range 8)

GHOUL LVL 1 20

Sickening Claw. 1d4+8, on damage: Dazed.

OGRE ZOMBIE LVL 5, LARGE 46

Greatclub (2x). 1d4+8, on crit: Prone.

GIANT ZOMBIE LVL 8, HUGE 73

Decaying Swipe (x2). 1d4+10, on damage: knockback Primary Die spaces.

ZOMBIE LVL 1/2 15

Crunch. 1d4+4, on damage: grappled.

SPECTER LVL 3 30

Deathly Touch. 1d4. On damage: set HP to 0.

MUMMY LVL 6 54

Slam (2x). 1d4+8. On damage: Dazed.

WRAITH LVL 10 94

Soul Rend (2x). 1d4+10 (Range 8), on damage: deal 1 Wound.

MUMMY LORD LVL 21 280

Cursed Gaze. When Crit: DC 20 INT save, or suffer 1 Wound.

- **Scarab Swarm.** Summon 10 scarab minions (d6) within 6 spaces. Then:
- **Slam (2x).** 1d4+20, on damage: Dazed.

Undead Loot

Tarnished silver locket containing a faded portrait (who is it?), bone fragments engraved with arcane symbols, a dark gemstone (emits a faint chill), vials of blood (long-dried), a diary written in an ancient hand, a macabre necklace (skeletal finger bones), a broken holy symbol smeared with ash, a signet ring from a lost noble house, moldy grave dirt (whispers when touched), shovel.



Forest Denizens

Briarbanes. Soulless, thorny plant beings fertilized by blood.

Peeling Bark. Damage degrades Armor 1 step: Heavy » Medium » None.

SEEDLING LVL 1/2, SMALL H* 8

Thorn Seed. 2d6+2 (range 6)

TANGLER LVL 2 H* 20

Tangle (2x). Deal 2d6 damage (range 30 ft). On a failed DC 12 DEX save they are also Grappled (escape DC 12, or any amount of fire or slashing damage).

TREANT LVL 14, HUGE H* 170

Enrage. When Armor is reduced to none: attack with advantage.

Choose Twice:

- **Slam.** (Reach 3) 2d6+15 damage. On hit: knock Prone.
- **Stomp.** (Slowed target) 1d20+15 damage.

ACIDPOD LVL 1, SMALL H* 8

On Death: Caustic Eruption. deal 4d6 acid damage to all adjacent creatures.

Grab. DC 12 DEX save or Grabbed: The grabber moves with you and attacks that miss you damage the grabber.

ROOTBREAKER LVL 5, LARGE H* 50

Slam. 3d6+6, on crit: knockback 2.



Briarbane Loot

25 ft. of vines (usable as rope), glowing sap (minor healing properties), moss-covered coins from an ancient era, a brittle leaf with veins that spell out words in Druidic, a pouch of dried herbs, a cluster of rare mushrooms, a handful of acorns (they grow INSTANTLY when placed in water), a small flower that never wilts, flute overgrown with moss, a tattered map to a hidden grove, a dried flower crown.



Cultists/Horrors

Driven by twisted beliefs, fanatical cultists perform dark rituals to awaken ancient evils, unleashing horrors that feast on fear and despair.

CULTISTS

Fanatical Zeal. While not at max HP, make all rolls with advantage. Your crits also inflict Despair.

CULTIST LVL 1

28

- **Oblation of Blood!** If undamaged, attack self for 2 damage. Adjacent enemies are inflicted with Despair. OR:
- **Dreadful Blade.** 1d6+6 damage. OR:
- **Blood Boil.** (Range 12, Bloodied creature) 3d6+6 damage.

DOOMSAYER LVL 5

58

- **Feverish Chant.** (Concentration) Reduce all damage done to allies who can hear you to 1. OR:
- **Ecstatic Ravings.** Deal 2d6 psychic damage to all enemies who can hear you.

Despair. Disadvantage on the next attack you make this encounter.

STENCHLING LVL 1/2, SMALL

18

- **Bite.** 2d6 damage.

On Death: Putrid Cloud. Reach 2: 2d6 poison damage.

SPINY FIEND LVL 4

49

- **Spines.** Melee attackers take 3 damage.
- **Claws (2x).** 1d6+6 damage. OR:
- **Shoot Spine.** (Range 12) 1d6+6.

GLABREZU LVL 14, LARGE

H 110

- **Doomclaw (2x).** (Reach 2) 3d6+10 On damage: Grappled (escape DC 17). If the same creature is grappled by both of the glabrezu's claws, it must escape from each of them separately. OR:
- **Tear Asunder.** (a target grappled by both of the glabrezu's claws) 50 unpreventable damage. If the target is at 0 HP: DC 17 STR save or be torn in two, dying instantly.

Horrible Loot

Bloodstained dagger (engraved with dark symbols), a twisted idol (whispers terrible thoughts), vial of black ichor, a mask (carved, likeness of a fiend), a tattered robe (lined with hidden pockets), a scroll with summoning rituals (half-finished), shackles inscribed with infernal runes, fragment of a fiendish contract, black candles (cannot be extinguished).



Underground

Nightmarish denizens of the deep, these monstrous beings lurk in dark tunnels and cavernous depths, ready to ensnare or devour any intruders.

Giant Spider LVL 2

M

27

- **Shoot Web.** (Range 6) 1d8+2 On Hit: Restrained (Escape DC 12, or slashing/fire damage). OR:
- **Bite.** (slowed targets only) 2d8+4 damage and Poisoned (magical healing ends).

ETTERCAP LVL 4

49

Web Garrote. 1d8+2 damage, Grappled, and Silenced. This attack deals an additional 1d8+2 damage for each round until target escapes.

Silenced. Cannot cast spells or use other abilities that require speaking (e.g. Commander's Orders).

NESTWEAVER LVL 6, LARGE

M

54

- Summon 2 spider minions (d8). Then choose 1:
- **Shoot Web.** (Range 6) 1d8+2 On Hit: Restrained (Escape DC 12, or any slashing/fire damage). OR:
 - **Bite.** (slowed targets only) 3d8+6 damage and Poisoned (magical healing ends).

GREAT WORM LVL 16, HUGE

H

140

Tremor Sight. Advantage against creatures that moved since the worm's last turn.

- **Crush.** Creatures in a 2×6 area take 50 damage on a failed DC 18 DEX save. (Creatures who fail can spend 1 Action to dive out of the way instead of taking this damage. They move half their speed and land Prone.) OR:
- **Bite/Swallow.** 1d4+40. On crit: Swallowed.

Swallowed. You take 20 damage at the start of your turn. Your attacks cannot miss and ignore armor.

Underground Loot

Chitinous plating, tunnel map (hastily scrawled), serrated teeth (as much as you can carry), spider silk, venom sac, partially digested meats, gemstones (uncut), pheromone gland.

CLOAKER LVL 13, LARGE

110

FLY 10

Ambusher. Cloakers always start first and heroes roll initiative with disadvantage.

Mutual Harm. You take half damage from attacks while grappling a creature (they take the other half).

- **Wrap.** 2d10+20 damage and Grappled (escape DC 16). OR:

- **Horrifying Wail.** DC 16 WIL save, or creatures within 6 spaces are Frightened and must spend 1 Action moving as far away as possible.

UMBER HULK LVL 10, LARGE

H

70

Confounding Pheromones. Players must make a DC 15 WIL save at the start of their turns or be Confused this turn.

Confused. The GM spends 1 of your Actions this turn. Gain advantage on the save for each failure this encounter.

Mandible & Claws (2x). 1d10+10 damage.





LEGENDARY MONSTERS

While most combat encounters will be the heroes against a group of monsters, occasionally a solo fight is demanded by the story (and they can be incredibly fun!). Heroes, when facing only a single enemy, can pump out serious amounts of damage and take down even a very powerful foe very quickly. So, solo monsters should almost always be Legendary.

Heroes should *know* when they are fighting a Legendary creature. They should not happen every session, these encounters should be saved for a particularly meaningful fight. This is THE SCARY DRAGON, or the named boss, or the Big Bad Evil Guy. A Legendary monster has a few important elements:

Legendary monsters act after EACH hero's turn. This creates new tactical options and challenges for the party aids you in balancing an encounter for different party sizes.

Acting after each turn? What if a mob of 100 commoners attack a dragon, does it get to move at light speed after each one of their turns?! No. Only after Hero's turns. Commoners, minions, and other followers are not heroes. As the GM use your best judgment, feel free to nix any rule that your table doesn't like or doesn't make sense in the world.

They have interesting mechanics and weaknesses that can uncover through role playing research or using the Assess action in combat.

Bloodied. They gain an additional dangerous ability as their HP drops to half.

Last Stand. When they are reduced to 0 HP, legendary monsters are *dying* and they gain dangerous new capabilities. They finally die once a small amount of additional damage is done. The tide shifting back and forth in a Legendary battle will help make it memorable!

Optional Actions. Each legendary monster can also have the default actions to cause fear or move players around instead of their listed attacks. A great way to add drama or tune down an encounter that is too challenging. For example:

Terrible Roar/Creepy Monologue/Taunt. Creatures who hear this make a WIL save or are frightened for 1 turn.

Toss Around/Telekinetic Shove. STR save or moved, knocked prone, etc.

Legendary Monster Builder

Legendary monsters are balanced to last long enough for heroes to each get a chance to do something cool, and short enough to not drag on for too long (roughly 15 hero turns to get to the Last Stand, and then 2-4 additional turns after that). Legendary Monsters will typically have 2 actions to choose from: a one that allows them to move (or has other utility) and deals a **small** amount of damage. And another that deals **big** damage if they're already in position.

A good legendary monster will feel almost puzzle-like. It should have abilities that the heroes need to figure out how to best deal with and encourage the heroes to think differently, move, and use teamwork to overcome. A good monsters is not merely their stats; however, the following stats should help when creating your own legendary monsters. The numbers are all based off of the Party Level (PL) and stay the same regardless of the number of heroes in the party.

Legendary Monster Stats by Level

For an easier encounter, use the stats 1 or 2 levels lower, more challenging, 1 or 2 levels higher.

Party Level	HP Med Armor	HP Hev Armor	HP Last Stand	SAVE DC	Attack Dmg Small	Attack Dmg Big
1	50	35	10	10	8	16
2	75	55	20	11	9	18
3	100	75	30	11	10	20
4	125	95	40	12	11	22
5	150	115	50	12	12	24
6	175	135	60	13	13	26
7	200	155	70	13	14	28
8	225	175	80	14	15	30
9	250	195	90	14	16	32
10	275	215	100	15	17	34
11	300	235	110	15	18	36
12	325	255	120	16	19	38
13	350	275	130	16	20	40
14	375	295	140	17	21	42
15	400	315	150	17	22	44
16	425	335	160	18	23	46
17	450	355	170	18	24	48
18	475	375	180	19	25	50
19	500	395	190	19	26	52
20	525	415	200	20	27	54

Offense

Small Attack. 10+PL. **Big Attack:** 2x Small Attack.

Bloodied: Do something to shift the tide of battle.

Last Stand HP: 10xPL Gain a terrifying ability!

Defense

MED Armor. HP: (25 x PL) + 50

Heavy Armor. HP (20 x PL) + 30

Saves: 1 or more Advantaged saves.

Example

For example, see Pudge the Blunderer below. For a level 2 party he'll have 75 HP, Medium Armor, and 1 Legendary Resistance. No need to stick strictly to the stat guidelines though, his small attack hits for slightly less than suggested and in exchange his big attack hits for slightly more. When Bloodied, Pudge gets angry and his die size goes up, increasing his damage and reducing his chance to miss, and for his Last Stand he becomes far more dangerous, moving and using his big attack each turn.

Level 2 Solo Dumb Ogre

Pudge the Blunderer

75 M STR+, INT/WIL-

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Move & Smack.** Move up to 8, Attack for **1d8+2** damage. On damage: Prone.
- **Grab & Throw.** **1d8+2** damage. On damage: they are thrown at another hero within 6 spaces. Both make a **DC 12 DEX** save or take **1d8+2** damage and are knocked prone, half damage on save.

BLOODYED: At 37 HP, Pudge's damage increases to **1d12+2**.

LAST STAND: Pudge is dying, if he takes 20 more damage he dies. Until then, Pudge can move 6 spaces, and use Grab & Throw each turn.



Level 3 Solo Owlbear

Grimbeak, the Unyielding

100 M STR+

Brutal. If Grimbeak damages a creature twice on one turn, they are knocked prone.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Savage Screech (1 time use).** Reach: 16. Damage: **2d6** psychic. Then DC 11 WIL save or Frightened 1 round.
- **Rend & Tear (2x).** Attack for **2d6+3** damage.
- **Beak.** Move 8. Attack for **2d6+3** damage.

BLOODY: At 50 HP, Grimbeak immediately uses Savage Screech.

LAST STAND: Grimbeak is dying! 30 more damage and she dies. Until then, her Attacks use d10s instead of d6s.

Level 4 Solo Human Criminal Thorn Quickblade

125 M DEX+

Special Ability: Strikes Back. When crit make a Heart Piercer or Stormquill attack in return.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Heart Piercer (Rapier).** Move 8, **2d4+3** damage. On crit: Dazed.
- **Stormquill (Crossbow) (2x).** Move 4, **4d4+3** damage (Range 8).

BLOODY: **Smoke Bomb.** At 62 HP, as a reaction I become invisible until the end of my next turn, then I move up to 8 (ignoring opportunity attacks).

LAST STAND: Mortal Panic! I'm dying! 40 more damage and I'm dead!! Until then I'll Strike Back EVERY time I'm attacked.





Level 5 Solo Large Manticore
Ravager of the Lowlands

150 M STR+, DEX+

Feral Instinct. Whenever Ravager is crit, he can fly 10.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Venomous Stinger.** (1 time use) Reach:3 Damage: **5d12**
- **Move & Claw.** Fly 10, attack for **1d12+6** damage.
- **Ravage (2x).** Attack for **1d12+6** damage.

BLOODY: At 75 HP, his Venomous Stinger recharges.

LAST STAND: The Ravager is dying! 50 more damage and he dies. Until then, whenever he takes damage and he uses Move & Claw.



Level 6 Solo Large Matriarch of Spiders
Queen Aranya, Broodmother

170 M ALL+

Weave Web. The ground within 6 spaces of Queen Aranya is difficult terrain for non-spiders.

Flammable Webs. Fire critical hits suppress the Broodmother's Weave Web for 2 turns.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose twice:

- **Move.** Up to 8 spaces, across floors, walls, or ceilings, ignoring difficult terrain.
- **Shoot Web.** (Range 12) **1d8+6** damage. On hit: target is entangled in sticky web and Dazed. On crit: Dazed again.
- **Impale.** (Reach 2) **2d8+6** piercing damage.

BLOODY: **"Avenge Your Queen, My Brood!"** At 85 HP, summon 4 spiderlings minions (size: 1d6)/hero within 8 spaces. They act next and can Interpose for her.

LAST STAND: Aranya is dying! 50 more damage and she dies. Until then, summon a single spiderling per hero after each of her turns. They act immediately.



Level 6 Solo Large Grey Drake

Nalzar, Apex Predator

170 M STR+, DEX+

Tail Swipe: When dealt slashing or lightning damage she may knock a hero within 3 spaces prone.

Torn Wings. Each slashing critical hit reduces Wing Buffet save DC by 1.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Move.** Fly up to 12 spaces.
- **Wing Buffet.** Creatures in a 8 space cone take **1d12+6** damage. They are also knocked prone on a failed **DC 14 STR**, roll with advantage if standing behind cover or another hero.
- **Devour.** (Prone creatures only, Reach 2) deal **4d12+6** damage.

BLOODY: At **85 HP**, her Wing Buffet Range and DC increases by 2.

LAST STAND: Nalzar is dying! **60** more damage and she dies. Until then, she can Move and use one other Action each turn.



Level 7 Solo Floral Dragon

Florindris, Bane of the Forest

200 M ALL+

Aura of Wind: Ranged attacks against you have disadvantage. End of turn: push adjacent creatures 2 spaces away.

Wither: Resistant to necrotic damage, but it suppresses Aura of Wind for 1 turn.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, use Petal Storm or choose from other options twice:

- **Petal Storm:** (1 use) Creatures within 6 spaces take **4d10+4** damage. Half on a **DC 13 DEX** save.
- **Rend:** Fly up to 12 then attack for **2d10+4** damage. On damage: target gains Pollenblight: (Forced movement also knocks you prone. Magical healing ends this effect.)
- **Gust:** (Reach 4) **1d10+4** damage, and moved that many spaces.

BLOODY: At 100 HP, Florindris' Petal Storm recharges, enemies within Reach 12 gain Pollenblight.

LAST STAND: Florindris is dying! 70 more damage and she dies. Until then, her Aura of Wind deals **1d10** damage before moving creatures.



Level 8 Solo Huge Flame Titan **General Flameheart**

175 H STR+ WIL+

Cinder Armor. Immune to fire. When damaged, deal **5** fire damage to all adjacent creatures.

Extinguish Flame. Cold or Radiant crits extinguish all areas ignited by Molten Fury and suppress Cinder Armor for 1 turn.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Inferno Cleave.** Move up to 10 spaces then strike a 2x2 square area for **2d10+10** fire damage.
- **Molten Fury.** Lob a molten fireball, igniting a 2x2 square area. Creatures there take **2d10+10** damage (target the furthest hero not already in the flames). Creatures in this area suffer **10** fire damage at the end of each of their turns.

BLOODYED: At **87 HP**, on his next turn he uses Molten Fury a number of times equal to half the number of heroes (rounded up).

LAST STAND: Flameheart is dying! **80** more damage and he dies. Until then, the area of his attacks increase to a 3x3 square.



Level 9 Solo Shepherd of Death **Vael, Undying**

250 WIL++

Bane, Spirit Companion. **1d12+6** necrotic (see Shepherd's Lifebinding Spirit).

Protect Master! Whenever Vael would fail a save or take 20 or more damage, he may sacrifice Bane instead. Vael spends his next turn moving and resummoning Bane.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, Bane attacks and Vael chooses one:

- **DOOM.** (Range 16, undamaged target) **5d12** damage, **DC 14 WIL**, half on save.
- **Veilwalker's Rebuke.** Range: 12. Damage: $2d12+6$. 2x against those behind cover. 1/round you may swap places with them.
- **Cruelty's Edge.** Deal **1d4+2** damage. On hit: target is Dazed. Then move up to 6.

BLOODYED: At 125 HP, Vael gains the reaction **Shield of Cruelty**. (1 time use) If Vael would be damaged, instead he may reflect that much Radiant damage back at the attacker.

LAST STAND: DEATH, AN OLD FRIEND. Vael is dying! **90** more damage and he dies. Until then, he gains Heavy Armor, the hero that most recently damaged him is reduced to 0 HP, and Bane is sacrificed into a Vengeful Spirit. It deals **1d12+6** necrotic damage to creatures within reach 3 at the end of each of his turns.



Level 10 Solo Gargantuan Skeleton **240** H STR+++ WIT++
Titan of the Deep Woods

Splintering Legions. Bludgeoning damage or crits, cause his bones splinter off and animate, forming a d10 minion.

Brittle Bones. Resistant to Piercing, vulnerable to Bludgeoning.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose 1:

- **Crushing Stomp.** Move up to 10 and deal **1d4+20** damage to up to 2 targets along the path. On hit: Prone.
- **Devastating Strike.** (Reach 4) **1d4+30** damage. On hit: Knockback 6.
- **Beckoning Doom.** The 2 furthest heroes make a **DC 16 STR** save or are moved adjacent to Titan.

LAST STAND: Shattered Legion. At 0 HP Titan collapses into 4 skeleton minions/hero (d10 sized). If any remain, they reassemble into the Titan the next evening.



Level 11 Solo Medium brain-eating Aberration **300** WIT++
Rth'mxr-zk, Psionic Despot

Mind Shield. Whenever Rth' would fail a save or take more than 30 damage while he has a creature dominated, he may avoid the attack instead, but all dominated creatures come to their senses.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Dominate.** (If no creatures are dominated) Half of the heroes (rounded down) must make a **DC 15 WIL** save or are Dominated. Ends when they are damaged.

Dominated: Attacks and saves are made with disadvantage while dominated. You spend their first Action on each of their turns making a weapon attack or casting a cantrip.

- **Consume.** Grapple an adjacent dominated creature (contested STR or DEX save) creature, on success: Deal **6d12** damage. cannot be Defended or Interposed against.
- **Control.** Teleport up to 8 spaces, then spend one Action of a creature to make a weapon attack or cast a cantrip on a failed **DC 15 INT** save. On save, they attack with disadvantage.

BLOODYED: Gain **Illusory Shift**. Reaction (if you would be damaged): Swap places with a Dominated creature, making them the new target of the attack. (1 time use).

LAST STAND: Rth' is dying! **110** more damage and he dies. Until then, When he Every hero makes a WIL save or is Dominated, it no longer ends on taking damage.



Level 12 Solo Large Aberration, all TEETH & EYES
Dravok, All-Seeing Tyrant

325 WIT++

My plans, flawless! I make all saves with +1 Advantage, attacks against me have Disadvantage.

Weakness: Taking more than 12 Piercing or Slashing damage: Dravok's plans are FLAWED! (for 1 turn.)

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, Move 6 and then use **Eye Ray**. (Range 12, randomly chosen ray then choose target) OR **Terrible Maw**. (Melee attack. 4d4 damage. EVERY die can crit and is vicious.)

1. Warping Ray. 3d6 damage, exchange places with target. They are Dazed.

2. Petrification Ray. Permanently Dazed. Magical healing ends. (3 stacks, Petrified).

3. Terror Ray. 5d10 psychic damage & Terrified: Your screams give allies within 6 spaces disadvantage on rolls. Ends when Dravok's plans are flawed.

4. Gravitation Ray. 2d6 damage. Push that many spaces. Knocked prone on 7+.

5. Charm Ray. DC 16 WIL save or you spend 3 Actions attacking with or moving them. (Cannot spend class resources, they regain 3 actions afterward.)

6. Death Ray. DC 16 STR save or drop to 0 HP. On save, gain 1 Wound. If a dying creature fails this, they die.

BLOODYED: To Dust! At 110 HP, use Petrification Ray against every enemy. His save DC increases to **18**.

LAST STAND: Dravok is dying! 70 more damage and it dies. Until then, each turn it will move or use Warping Ray and then **Devastation Beam**. Deal **6d12** force damage in a 12x2 beam.



Level 14 Solo Huge Balor feeling hot & spicy
Azriel, Lord of Pain & Flame

320 H ALL+

PAIN! Crits against Azriel are Vicious, he deals damage equal to the crit dice back to the attacker.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose 1:

• **Move.** Azriel can fly up to 10.

• **Crackling Whip.** (Reach 10) 3d12 damage. On hit, the target is Grappled and pulled adjacent to Azriel (escape DC 17 STR, DEX, or until he uses the whip again).

• **Doom Sword.** (Reach 2) 3d12+10 fire damage to all creatures within reach.

BLOODYED: At 160 HP, Azriel can use Crackling Whip twice each turn.

LAST STAND: YES, MORE PAIN! Azriel is dying! **200** more damage and he dies. Until then, EVERY hit against him is a critical hit.



Level 15 Solo Huge Rot Dragon
Gloomwing the Cruel

320 H ALL++

Aura of Rot: Creatures within 6 spaces take **5** necrotic damage at the start of their turns.

Light Sensitivity: Radiant damage suppresses Aura of Rot until the end of the next hero's turn.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- **Rot Breath (One time use):** Gloomwing flies up to 10 then deals **8d10** necrotic damage to creatures in a 8 cone, or half on a **DC 17 DEX** save.
- **Bite:** (reach 2) Move up to 6 spaces then deal **3d10** damage. On damage: target gains:
Cruelty's Gift. Vulnerable to necrotic damage until they receive any amount of healing.
- **Claws:** (reach 2) then **3d10** slashing +**10** necrotic damage.
- **Tail:** (reach 4) **1d10** damage, and knockback that many spaces.

BLOODYED: At 160 HP Gloomwing's Rot Breath recharges.

LAST STAND: Gloomwing is dying! **150** more damage and he dies. Until then, the damage and range of His Aura of Rot is doubled.

Level 16 Solo Vampire Lord
**Alaric Draegoth,
the Crimson Count**

320 ALL++

Sanguine Cloak. (1/turn) Deal **1d12** necrotic damage whenever you are attacked, that attack is reduced by this amount.

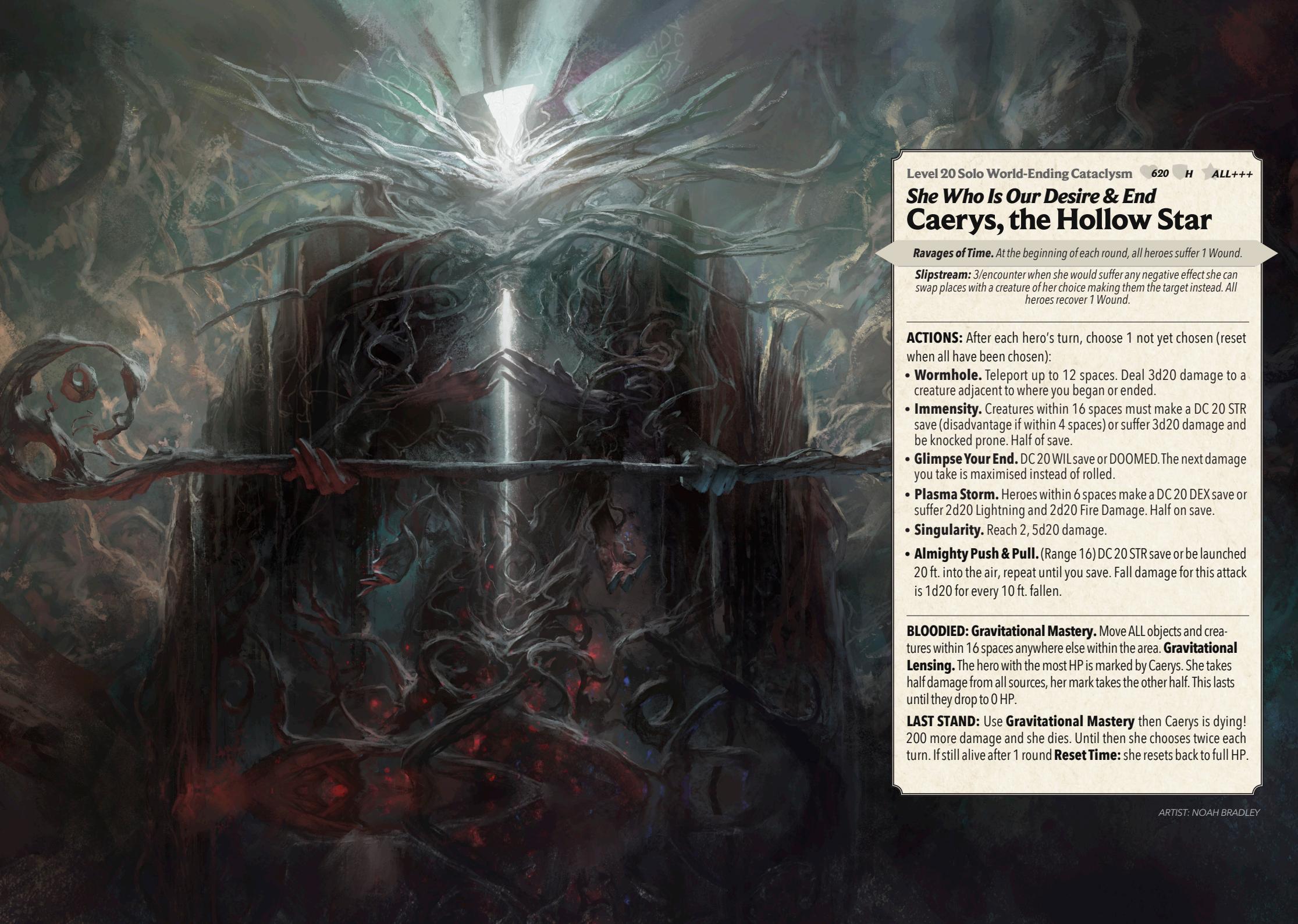
Sunscorn: Vulnerable to Radiant. After taking radiant damage, use Beguile as a reaction, they roll with disadvantage.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose 1:

- **Summon Blood Bats.** For each Bloodied hero, summon 2 Blood Bats (d10 minions).
- **Ebonfang.** Fly up to 8 spaces (or swap places with a bat minion), then deal **1d10+15** damage. On hit: target is considered Bloodied until healed.
- **Beckon & Bite.** 1 Beguiled creature spends a Reaction moving toward you and is then bitten: **40** unpreventable necrotic damage, **1** Wound, and ends the Beguile. Alaric's next Ebonfang attack uses a d20 instead.
- **Beguile:** Fly up to 8 spaces, 1 hero is Beguiled on a failed **DC 18 WIL** save (with disadvantage if adjacent).

BLOODYED: Mistform. No longer vulnerable to Radiant. 1/round **Bat Decoy.** whenever you would take damage, instead swap places with a bat minion.

LAST STAND: Alaric is dying! **160** more damage and he dies. Until then, he and his bats roll d20s when they attack.



Level 20 Solo World-Ending Cataclysm 620 H ALL+++

She Who Is Our Desire & End Caerys, the Hollow Star

Ravages of Time. At the beginning of each round, all heroes suffer 1 Wound.

Slipstream: 3/encounter when she would suffer any negative effect she can swap places with a creature of her choice making them the target instead. All heroes recover 1 Wound.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose 1 not yet chosen (reset when all have been chosen):

- **Wormhole.** Teleport up to 12 spaces. Deal 3d20 damage to a creature adjacent to where you began or ended.
- **Immensity.** Creatures within 16 spaces must make a DC 20 STR save (disadvantage if within 4 spaces) or suffer 3d20 damage and be knocked prone. Half of save.
- **Glimpse Your End.** DC 20 WIL save or DOOMED. The next damage you take is maximised instead of rolled.
- **Plasma Storm.** Heroes within 6 spaces make a DC 20 DEX save or suffer 2d20 Lightning and 2d20 Fire Damage. Half on save.
- **Singularity.** Reach 2, 5d20 damage.
- **Almighty Push & Pull.** (Range 16) DC 20 STR save or be launched 20 ft. into the air, repeat until you save. Fall damage for this attack is 1d20 for every 10 ft. fallen.

BLOODYED: Gravitational Mastery. Move ALL objects and creatures within 16 spaces anywhere else within the area. **Gravitational Lensing.** The hero with the most HP is marked by Caerys. She takes half damage from all sources, her mark takes the other half. This lasts until they drop to 0 HP.

LAST STAND: Use **Gravitational Mastery** then Caerys is dying! 200 more damage and she dies. Until then she chooses twice each turn. If still alive after 1 round **Reset Time:** she resets back to full HP.

ARTIST: NOAH BRADLEY

LET'S PLAY!

A TINY RESCUE

A introductory adventure for Level 1 Heroes (and GMs) to learn the ropes!

Long narrations can lose attention. This adventure starts right in the middle of the action and the information given is intentionally minimal to get the heroes involved: asking questions and rolling dice right away. This brief background info should be enough to answer any questions the heroes may have.

What's Going On?

The heroes are at the **Valley's Rest**, a cozy inn located in the humble town of **Merivale**. Goblins have snuck into town to kidnap the town's beloved fairy, **Moonblossom**. (for more info, see "Merivale" pg 74). Read or paraphrase:

Just as you are sitting down for dinner (griffon stew), a tiny scream sends the inn's patrons into a hush. They look at the door, then to you—the only ones capable of handling anything scarier than a stray sheep. What do you do?

Encourage them to ask questions! This is intentionally minimal information to get started with, encourage them to ask questions! "Wait—Where are we?" "What do we see?" "Did we hear anything else?" They'll get more out of the game the more questions they ask!

• **Did we hear anything else?** DC 10 Perception check: the sound of a dozen or so small feet shuffling around outside in the dark, orders being whispered-shouted.

• **Egg them on!** If they're hesitant: Marla, the innkeeper can offer "Free dinner to whoever deals with that!" a very elderly old man slowly stands up, armed himself with his fork, heads toward the door.

When the heroes go to investigate:

- Opening the door, you are facing down a pack of goblins who clearly look like they've been caught red-handed.
- A goblin in the back riding on top of a giant rat is quickly stuffing something into his pack (Percep-

tion: it's Moonblossom!), as he yells "get'em boys!" He and a few others take off into the night.

- The remaining goblins face you down, filthy, crooked daggers drawn look ready to leap at you and attack. **"ROLL INITIATIVE!"** To do this, each hero rolls 1d20 and adds their Initiative bonus. If the total is a single digit, they start their first turn with just 1 action; 2 digits, 2 actions; and a result of 20+, all 3 actions. Regardless of what they rolled, at the **end** of their turn, each player gets all 3 actions back.

Whoever is ready first can go first, and then play will go around the table clockwise, the monsters will go last (**2 goblin minions/hero**).

Minions. Any damage kills a minion, they all move at the same time, can't crit, and their attacks (each goblin minion rolls 1d6) can be blocked as if it were a single attack.

Moving & Attacking

Heroes can spend 1 action to move up to their speed (typically 6 spaces), or 1 action to attack. Roll the dice listed on your weapon or ability and you'll deal that much damage! After all the players have gone, any goblins still standing will take their turn. The goblin minions can move up to 6 spaces on their turn and make a single attack.

The Quest

With all the goblins dispatched, let the heroes loot the goblins as some of the commoners pour out into the village square.

- **Goblin Loot:** chipped/rusty daggers, rope, pocket full of teeth, nicely shaped rocks.
- **The Quest.** The party is asked to hunt down the rest



of the goblins and **rescue Moonblossom**. They are well-provisioned before leaving and promised 20 gp each upon her safe return.

Additional Info:

- A large golden oak tree proudly stands in the town square (**the Faerie Tree**, a symbol of hope and good luck to the townsfolk). Feels warm and comforting to the touch, gives goosebumps.
- Arcana or Lore: Fairies are often kept for the blessings they can bestow, but more sinister forces often treat them as *ingredients*.
- People are shocked that goblins would come so far away from **the Elderwild** and into the valley.

Traveling Encounters

- **Old Caravan.** An abandoned and ransacked supply wagon, a struggle took place here recently (DC 10 Examination: blood and goblin tracks all around; 12+ find 1d10 gp also).

Skill Checks. Let one person roll, this represents the party's best effort at uncovering information. If necessary 1 other person can help on occasion. Don't let them all roll until they succeed! If your heroes have particularly good ideas for searching you can give them advantage on the skill check.

- **Misleading Footprints.** The goblins have left multiple sets of diverging footprints. Only one path is correct, the others lead to hidden pitfall traps. Whoever is in front must make a DC 12 Naturecraft check or take 2 damage from a pitfall trap. Keep rolling to find the right path until someone succeeds. Should arrive at the woods tomorrow.

Resting: if the heroes make camp for the evening, remind them that they can take a Field Rest and spend their hit die to recover HP.

The Elderwild

2 days north of Merivale, the Elderwild is an ancient forest with impossibly large trees. Misty canopy, dense undergrowth. Teeming with life, rabbits, squirrels, dragonflies, etc. (DC 10 Lore: Grown from the corpse of a titan, trees impossibly large.)

- **Distant Laughing.** Boisterous laughs echo loudly through the forest. Following the sound reveals a goblin encampment. 1 Goblin is riding on the back

of a giant rat, other goblins are pelting him with rocks, trying to knock him off. All are laughing maniacally.

*Allow the party time to observe, ask questions and plan how to deal with the situation. This is a more challenging encounter designed to teach the **Defend** and **Interpose** reactions and what happens when a hero **drops to 0 hp** (use the Ratrider's speed to go for the hero with the least armor or HP). This encounter kicks off when the party jumps into action; or if they're taking too long, the giant rat begins sniffing the air suspiciously in their direction and growling. **ROLL INITIATIVE!***

- **ROLL INITIATIVE!** 1 Goblin Flunkie/hero and 1 Goblin Ratrider (Ratrider can be at half HP if there are 3 or fewer heroes).

Aftermath

- **A curious note.** Found on the goblin leader: "Tell Pinky he better not come back without my ingredients! WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT, KROGG!" —Green-thumb. On the back side of the note is a map with odd symbols (will need to ask someone in town about it).
- **Moonblossom.** *muffled* "Pardon me? A little help would be lovely..." It's Moonblossom! A tiny fairy with a minuscule voice, locked in a crude cage. Will offer a healing kiss on the forehead of the most injured hero. She's eager to return home and promises them a gift as thank you when they get there.
- **What she knows.** She overheard that the Goblins were hired by someone *really bad*. But it sounded like they were arguing which guy to bring me to. Apparently there are 2 bosses?
- **Back in Merivale.** Moonblossom gifts the party with a golden acorn from the fairy tree as token of thanks. (1 time use: reroll any 1 die).
- **Level up.** The heroes also advance to Level 2 upon resting back in town. See "Leveling Up" on pg 36 of the Core Rules book.

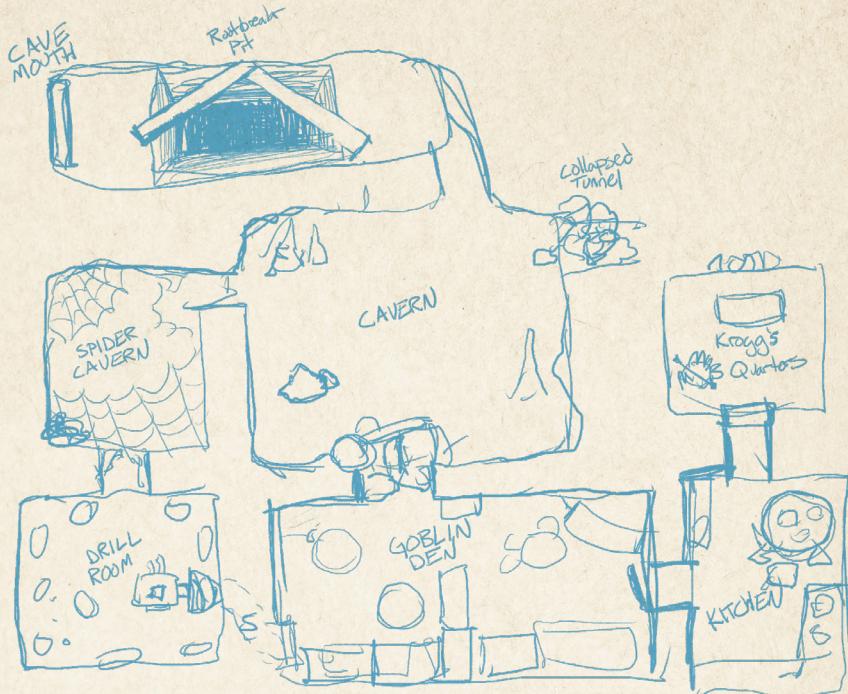
GOBLINS

Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attack misses you, deal 1 psychic damage in return.

GOBLIN FLUNKIE 15
Stab. 1d6+2 (or Shoot, Range 8) can't crit.

GOBLIN RATRIDER 30 10
CHAAARGE! If you move at least 4 spaces in a straight line, attack with advantage once.

Bite & Stab (x2). 1d6+2. On crit: prone.



Goblins of the Crystal Crag

(Level 2 Adventure for 2-8+ heroes)

What's Going On?

The wizard **Greenthumb**, in his hubris, has planted a **Deathbriar** seed—a sentient plant with spores that can animate the dead—foolishly thinking he could tame it for study. His experiments have gone horribly wrong though, and now the Deathbriar has grown out of control. Desperate, Greenthumb seeks to perform the ritual to become a Lich in order to gain the power needed to undo his mistake.

Greenthumb hired a band of Goblins, led by the cunning chieftain **Krogg**, to steal magical items from the nearby town of **Merivale** for use in his ritual. True to their devious nature, the Goblins are now demanding triple payment, refusing to turn over the goods. Enraged by their betrayal, Greenthumb has sent Rootbreakers to the Goblin's lair in an abandoned mine to take the items by force. It is into this mess that the adventurers find themselves drawn.

Back in Town

The villagers of Merivale are overjoyed to have Moonblossom, back home safely and are more than willing to share helpful information:

- The goblins came back while they were gone, some food and a **golden locket** was taken. Unsure of what else was stolen. But they're up to something and getting more aggressive. They must be stopped!
- The map leads to a well-known abandoned **mine** deeper into the Elderwild. Villagers are happy to provide directions.
- Plants around town are "acting up," thorns and briars growing at rapid pace.
- Don't know who **Krogg** is (the goblin leader), sounds like a goblin name. **Pinky** is unknown.
- "Greenthumb" was a froglin wizard that stayed upstairs at the Valley's Rest for a few days. Grumpy, kept to himself. Left a few weeks ago (travelers are always coming and going through Merivale on their way to Farhope)."

Who's Talking? Your players may be perfectly happy talking to anyone in general and not ask for names or details, that's fine! But if they ask for more information about who they're speaking to, or who might be the best person to speak to about see "Merivale" on pg XX for more information.

Travel to the Goblin Cave

Travel to the goblin cave deep inside the Elderwild takes 2-3 days and is largely uneventful. Possible encounters on the way to the cave:

- You see far to the NW the peaks of the **Iceforge Mountains**, and to the NE, the **Skyreach Isles** floating in the sky. Feel free to share small bits of info they might know about these areas—you can ask for a Lore check, or give it for free if their character would know!
- Perception check: A BIG monster carrying something in its claws. (DC 10 it is a manticore, carrying a cow!).

Goblin Cave Entrance

- Deep in the woods, a large hole in the side of a rock face.
- Agoblin, covered in dirt, stands watch at the entrance.
- He's dozing off as he leans against a dead tree, jagged machetes and hatchets are lodged in its bark (DC 8 Naturecraft: It's actually a dead Rootbreaker. A large plant creature animated by botanical magic).

Rootbreaker Pit

- Just inside, the cave lies a DEEP pit. Obstructing passage. 30 ft. deep, too dark to see the bottom (Goblins have hastily dug the pit to stop the attacking Rootbreakers).
- Narrow, rickety wood scaffolding zig zags to the other side.
- Perception check, DC 8: Vines reach up from the pit and DEEP rumbling voices are heard. (DC: 12 or if they investigate further before attempting to cross: A pair of enormous Rootbreakers (wrapped in black thorny vines, with dull red eyes) are trapped at the bottom.
- (Rootbreaker voice: as deep and slowly as you can!) "Help us, we are trapped."
- "Wee will aid you against our common fooeee..."

Do the Voice! You don't have to be good at it, the worse you are at it the more fun it can be! Your players will be more likely to loosen up and play along the more they

see you getting into it. Okay you don't HAVE to, but it can be fun, try it out.

If the heroes attempt to cross without speaking to them, the Rootbreakers will attempt to entangle the heroes and pull them down (DC 10 DEX save or grappled and pulled down into the pit). The Rootbreakers will negotiate with the heroes (though they will use any heroes in the pit as leverage in the negotiation, threatening to pull their limbs off if negotiations don't go well).

If freed from the pit, the Rootbreakers will fight and defeat the goblins in the Atrium, dying in the process.

What the Rootbreakers know:

- Master created us to retrieve the necessary components. "A locket, and a life."
- The ritual must be completed or all is lost.
- Aid us and you will be rewarded when **Deathbriar** makes all things new (they don't know what this means). The hero with the highest WIL gets a *deathly cold chill* down their spine upon hearing this name.

Atrium

Large cavern illuminated by a few lit torches along the walls.

- Bright reflections from Quartz Crystals pepper the walls and ceiling. like a constellation.
- **1 Goblin**/hero mills about in this room. Examining the floor scratching their heads deep in thought. (it is covered in cracks, they seem to be growing)
- Unless the heroes made a lot of noise in the previous room, they can have advantage on their Initiative roll.
- **A Collapsed Tunnel** to the left, A barricaded tunnel straight ahead (to the **Goblin Den**—removing the barricade is easy enough, but will alert the goblins on the other side to your presence, automatic 1 on Initiative), and an open tunnel to the right (to the **Spider Hallway**).

Collapsed Tunnel

A passageway blocked by rubble.

- Another Rootbreaker(not moving but alive) is visible

under the collapsed rubble along with a shiny object (d4 amber crystals (5gp each). Will take 30 min to clear rubble.

- The Rootbreaker attacks the closest creature if the rubble is cleared (treat it as a d12 minion).

Spider Hallway

Passageway obstructed by dense layer of webs.

- **1 Giant Cave Spider/hero** hide amidst the webs (will attack if the webs are disturbed).

- Leads to Drill Room

Giant Spider Lvl 2 M 27

- **Shoot Web.** (Range 6) 1d8+2 On Hit: Restrained (Escape DC 12, or slashing/fire damage). OR:
- **Bite.** (slowed targets only) 2d8+4 damage and Poisoned (magical healing ends).

Drill Room

A large room with about 1 dozen holes drilled into the walls. A large mechanical drill (broken) is lodged in the wall at an angle.

- (Examination: DC 10 with a diamond tipped drill bit 25gp). Moving the drill reveals a secret passage to the **Goblin's Den**.
- A dozen holes (2 ft. in diameter, 3-6 ft. deep) bored in the walls and floor. The first hole looked into has a small treasure. Looking in additional holes roll 1d12:
 - **1-5:** A cave spider
 - **6-10:** bones wrapped in spider webs
 - **11:** A small treasure
 - **12:** big treasure!

Don't punish curiosity or bravery! Make sure the first few things the players interact with in a dungeon are positive. If instead the first 2 doors are trapped, they may just stop opening doors. If they save an NPC from danger only to be stabbed in the back, be prepared for them to never trust your NPCs.

Goblin's Den

Smell of fish, body odor, and charcoal. Shoddy bunk beds and hammocks.

- **1 Goblin/hero** are here, sleeping, picking their toenails, or playing cards at a stump.
- Crude drawing of a goblin named "Pinky" on the wall used as target practice for thrown daggers and darts. Known as a traitor amongst the goblins.

Kitchen

Large cauldron full of slop bubbles over a fire.

- A grumpy goblin—(Sprig) wearing an old, stained white chef's apron full of wooden spoons) stands on a stepladder stirring it lazily. Grumpily mumbling to himself:
"Stupid KROGG, make me stir this stupid slop, it's not MY fault my stupid brother..."
- When he sees the heroes: "AH DON'T KILL ME I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW IT WAS MY BROTHER, PINKY! HE DID IT"

What Sprig knows:

- Sprig was put on slop duty as punishment for his brother, Pinky's crimes. He ran off to serve some hack wizard called "Greenthumb".
- Pinky has been secretly visiting his brother Sprig using some magical item to come and go invisibly (a Cloak of Lesser Windform). He wants to convince Sprig to join him in service to Greenthumb.
- Pinky claims there is an awful force that will soon terrorize the region.
- If the party has taken a large amount of damage and is in need of healing, Sprig can offer some slop. Tastes terrible but very nutritious. Eating one bowl **heals 2 hit dice** worth of HP. Eating more than that will not heal them any further, and may cause awful vomiting.
- Krogg (a bugbear) is in the next room awaiting his slop. Very mean, very strong.
- **"Oh, before you go..."** Sprig asks to stab one of you (just a little stab), in case you lose—so Krogg knows he at least put up a fight. Will offer one of you to punch him in return. Will quickly drop it if heroes seem unwilling.

Krogg's Quarters

Large hock of meat on a spit roasts over an open flame (way overcooked). A very large creature sits behind a wooden desk scrawling something on paper.

- "IT'S ABOUT TIME, I'M STARVING. GOT TAKE THIS LETTER TO YOU BROTHER THE BETRAYER—"
- Krogg is happy to reveal any information he knows

about "GREETOM" before attacking.

- Wooden desk. Notes in sloppy handwriting outline a deal with "GREETOM" who instructed Krogg to steal the Amulet and a Fairy for a strange ritual. In exchange, the goblins were to receive 10 wagons of pigs and rats. "10" is crossed out, "30" is written in big bold lettering.
- **Krogg, Goblin King.** Bugbear, strong, crafty (smarter than average goblins). Wears a crown of metal scraps. Wields a Manglemaul, a warhammer with a bear trap on the end.

Treasure:

- **Abacus** with beads made of bone, silver and gold (worth 30-60 gp). Used by Krogg to keep track of his legers.
- **Golden Heart Locket.** Opens to reveal small (not very good) paintings of Marla Homebrew's children. She'll definitely want this back!

Manglemaul (Rare)

2-handed Maul. 1d6+STR bludgeoning damage. On hit: you may Grapple a smaller creature than you (escape DC 10). Action: You may swing a creature grappled this way at another creature within range, damaging both of them and ending the Grapple.

What's Next?

When the heroes make it back to Merivale to Safe Rest (2-3 day journey) they will level up to level 3 and ready to start the next adventure!

70 M STR+, DEX+

Level 2 Solo Angry Bugbear

Krogg, Goblin King

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, move up to 6 then choose one:

- **Manglemaul.** **1d6+3** on damage: Grappled (escape DC 10).
- **Crack Skulls.** Swing a Grappled creature at another creature. Both take **1d6+3** damage, ending the grapple.

BLOODYED: At 35 HP, Krogg's damage increases to **1d10+3**.

LAST STAND: Krogg is dying! if he takes 15 more damage he dies. Until then, his armor increases to HEAVY.





THE GARDEN OF DEATH

A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE FOR 2-8+ HEROES

Rest well, friends. I'm afraid we'll need to lean on you once again for aid. A terrible scene, awaits your tired eyes as you arrive back at Merrivale. It has once again been attacked and ransacked, not by goblins this time, but nature itself seems to have risen up and taken a swipe at the village. A dead Rootbreaker and a few other smaller plant creatures lie heaped in a pile in the town square. Farmers and peasants stacking the wooden and viny corpses to be burned.

Greenthumb, betrayed by the goblins and more desperate than ever, has taken the situation into his own hands. Despite their lack of intelligence, the plants will follow orders well enough—the ritual to ascend to lichdom requires beloved things, he cares not much for what they are.

The Villagers Know:

- They were attacked last night at dusk, fighting went on for hours, we fought bravely, there's only so much farmers and merchants can do. Most of them left willingly after picking up and taking anything that wasn't nailed down. Barrels, tables, a door, livestock, you name it.
- "Master Needs Beloved Things" They all kept mindlessly bellowing. Without seeming to know what they were saying.
- Ruby and Pearl were taken—well Ruby was at least, Pearl went chasing after her sister (probably to get out of her chores).
- The only book in town that speaks of the Deathbriar is an old dusty tome in Mayor Till's personal library: The Deathbriar began as a benign magical flower cultivated by ancient druids who sought to harness its rapidly spreading its roots to enrich blighted soils. But some soil will not so easily be cleansed of its blight. It was corrupted and began to cultivate a hunger for power. Nobody but the most prideful and hubristic botanical wizards would even think to plant a Deathbriar seed.
- Marla Homebrew is grateful to have her locket back. Though she isn't too worried about her children, "Foolish as they are they can look after themselves." But these incursions and attacks against the town must be stopped. Suggests to go meet with Mayor Tills, "There's not nothing he doesn't know about

plants."

To Greenthumb's Base

The numerous, plodding tracks the Rootbreakers left make navigating to the ruins where Greenthumb has been holed up quite easy. A half day's journey from the Goblin's former base, you find (1 per 2 heroes) **Rootbreakers** standing watch outside the entrance to what looks like an ancient tomb.

Mural Chamber

Water flowing down steps from entrance. Dappled light shines through ceiling.

- **1 Briarbane Tangler** and **X Briarbane Seedlings** (1/hero) gathering under a beam of sunlight.
- Murals cover the walls and floor (partly obscured by creeping vines and overgrown moss). If the player look more closely, under the foliage:
 - An engraved series of murals that depicts a band of soldiers lead by a human king.
 - The next panel depicts them in a losing battle against terrible odds, four of the dwarves are slain.
 - The next panel is partially destroyed to the ravages of time—the human king offers something, and they all are taken away to safety by a unicorn.

Blade Trap Hall

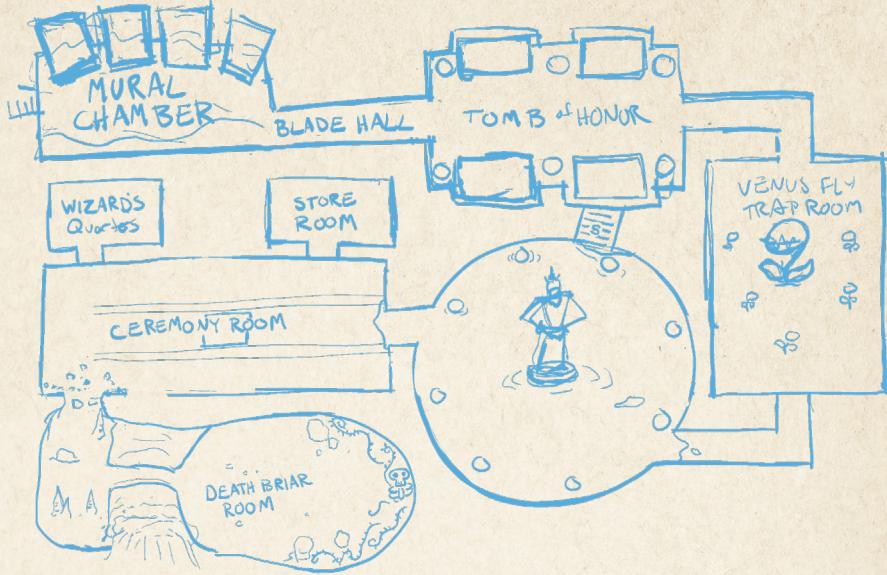
Long corridor, the floor is covered in a dense carpet of foliage arranged in a strange manner.

- Insight/Examination check: The foliage has been CUT horizontally as if by a massive blade every 5 ft.
- Swinging blades from the ceiling activate if pressure plates are stepped on dealing 1d8 damage. Traversing the hall unscathed requires two DC 10 DEX saves to avoid the blades (advantage if the blades were noticed first). Or heroes can use a special ability they have. If the idea is good enough, give them another instance of advantage or you can even allow them to succeed automatically.

Hall of Tombs

A skeleton wrapped in RED thorns lies in a heap in the center of the room. A trail of plant matter leads to the Empty Tomb. Holds a polished steel sword (20gp).

- DC 12 Examination or Lore check, this is a dwarf Skel-



eton. Died in battle.

- If the skeleton is disturbed or the sword is taken from its hands, the thorns it is wrapped in recoil and retract back into a crack in the wall.

Cracks. It's important to foreshadow the connection between the vines and the cracked walls, this will become important later when the place begins to fall apart!

4 stone coffins rest in alcoves:

- Empty Tomb:** Large stone coffin lid pushed to the side.
 - Overgrown Tomb:** wrapped in vines. DC 14 Might check (advantage if a slashing weapon is used) to remove the vines to open the coffin. Inside: A small treasure.
 - Stone Carved Tomb:** Image of a warrior carved on the stone lid. DC 12 Perception check to hear SCRATCHING sounds from within a coffin. Inside: A hostile skeleton (use the **Ghoul** statblock) covered in RED VINES, 20 gp.
 - Undisturbed Tomb:** Decorated in a Unicorn crest. Carved stone hands hold an empty bowl on the immovable lid. Secret: filling the bowl with anything valuable causes the lid to open, revealing secret stairs to Leads to a secret areas/shortcut.
- On Puzzles.** *The above solution is only one possible answer to the puzzle. If the players are taking the world seriously or coming up with ideas that make sense or, LET THEIR IDEAS WORK! Reward their creativity, even if it isn't exactly the right answer.*
- ## Venus Fly Trap Room
- Large dome shaped chamber. Dozens of tombstones jut out from the dense foliage on the floor.
- Massive venus flytrap in the center of the room. When players enter the room it begins swaying its head and leaves around blindly looking for potential prey.
 - Stuck in its teeth: An **iron key** hanging from a chain (unlocks door to Storeroom).
 - About 1 dozen smaller venus flytraps grow throughout the room. A few are closed around what you can assume to be unlucky (or foolish) goblins. One is closed around a **treasure**.
- ## Acid Flooded Room
- Circular Room. A large statue on an ornate 20 ft. tall pedestal of a long-dead human king at the center.

- Enormous pitcher plants grow from vines that wrap around the statue. Acid trickles from their mouths flooding the room (2 ft. deep). Touching the acid does 1d4 damage/round.

- Naturecraft check: Plant matter floats freely on the surface and is unaffected by the acid.

- Crown on the statue is made of GOLD and can be removed (Priceless. Looks important). Climbing the statue is possible, but dangerous. Your choice of reasonable skill checks and consequences!

- 8 Pillars evenly spaced around the perimeter of the room have faces of unknown DWARVES carved into them.

- Attempting to traverse the acid awakens **X Briar-bane Seedlings** (1/hero) who shoot coconut sized seeds at the heroes. Attempting to knock them into the acid pool. 1d4 acid damage/round.

to blows.

- He has a Cloak of Lesser Windform. He will use it to flee combat if things get too scary, or will offer it to them in exchange for his own life or information about his brother.

If the players want to fight, let them fight! But this is also a great opportunity for the players to parley. If they spoke to his brother Sprig in the goblin cave he'd very much like to hear how he's doing. If they can come to terms, Pinky has a key to the iron door where Ruby's sister, Pearl is being kept. He will give it to the heroes if they can defeat Greenthumb (or right away, if they threaten him).

Locked Iron Door to Storeroom. (key can be found in the jaws of the giant venus flytrap, on Pinkie, or DC 16 Finesse check with a lock pick- you only get 1 shot at it though before permanently breaking the ancient lock!).

Ceremony Room

Ceremonial weapons & shields and ceremonial knives hung on the walls (unusable, merely decorative). Large stone block in the center of the room to prepare bodies for burial.

- You feel the heavy, thudding footsteps of **Rootbreakers** (1 for every 2 heroes) and the scratchy voice of a goblin (Pinky): "Hey! Get back here! If you escape He's going to sacrifice MEEEEEE!!"
- You see a pale goblin with a pinkish hue, chasing after a girl, no older than 10 years old bright red hair. Matches the picture in Marla's Locket, it's Ruby!
- She runs to the tallest hero hiding behind them, and sticks her tongue out at Pinkie, who stops in his tracks.

Parley With Pinkie. *Pinky is Greenthumb's assistant. A pink goblin, frail and overwhelmingly anxious (literally vibrating).*

- He left his goblin den to learn magic from Greenthumb, but is now afraid Greenthumb will use him as a sacrifice to become a lich.
- Pinky wants Greenthumb's praise and approval (which he will never get), to become a real wizard, and information about his brother Sprig.
- Knows enough botanical magic to control the monsters with him in the room and he will defend himself if attacked, but doesn't particularly want to come

Storeroom

Cold damp cave. Stalactites dripping water from ceiling. Vases and clay jars on shelves.

- Greenthumb's incompetent goblin assistant Pinky makes frequent to this room preparing spell ingredients for the ritual to become a lich.
- Inside the Jars. Oil, Gauze, Adhesive, long-since spoiled liquids, and a **Health Potion**.
- Pearl**, hiding high up on a shelf behind the door with the heaviest rock she could find. Will drop it on the first person who comes through the door (unless it's Ruby).

Wizard's Quarters

Floor covered in broken vials, potion bottles, and dead plant specimens. Shelves of old tomes and discarded experiments. A mattress and pillows made of shabby cloth stuffed with hay.

- Disheveled desk. Covered in ink stains and crumpled up parchment.
- Notebook lies on top of the mess open to a page detailing the care of a "Deathbriar" plant.
- Journal entry catalogues Greenthumb's

attempts to halt its rapid, uncontrollable growth. And his fears/thinking on becoming a lich.

The Reveal. We don't want the players going around not knowing why things are happening, we WANT them to know. The Journal contains any additional information you might want the heroes to know about Greenthumb and the Deathbriar.

Deathbriar Room

Large cave. Sunlight streams through cracks in the ceiling.

- Greenthumb, seems to be arguing with Deathbriar (it is does not respond): A black flower growing inside of a hollow rib-cage. Sprouting from innumerable red thorny vines that reach into the wall it is growing out of.
- Pitcher plants hang from its body. If it's set on fire, they burst and quench the flames. It will protect itself with walls of instantaneously growing red vines if attacked.
- Greenthumb notices the heroes and is relieved to see them (he considers them to be far better vessels for his lichdom than the children or Pinkie). Will attack at the slightest provocation.

Aftermath

Greenthumb will fight to the death. When he dies, the Deathbriar's red vines will take his body and absorbing him and gainin strength. This causes the walls be begin cracking even further, the entier place is about to collapse—with the heroes in it if they're not fast!

Skill Challenge: Escape the Ruins!

The heroes will now need to escape quickly, below are a series of danger that will need to be navigated carefully in order to succeed. The starting DC is 10 and increases by 1 for each check. If their idea is particularly good or if they spend some limited resource you can give them advantage or let them succeed automatically.

- **The Deathbriar Room.** Debris and giant rocks begins falling from the crumbling ceiling. Everyone will need to tell you what they're doing to avoid rocks

(e.g., Finesse check, Holding a shield over their head, using an ability to run extra fast, etc.).

- **The Ceremony Room.** If they both haven't been rescued yet you'll need to save them! If you left Pinkie in the Ceremony Room, Ruby has made friends with the Rootbreakers, and is sitting on one of their shoulders. A gaping crack has opened up in the floor and the Rootbreaker gently tosses her across as she squeals in delight. Landing safely on the other side. Pinkie is fumbling with his keys and she snatches them from him and unlocks the door for her sister Pearl: "took you long enough!" And they scamper off to safety together "Come on guys!" The party will need to figure out how to get across.

Kids and Danger. A BIG "no-no" for many people is putting kids (or pets) in danger. These kids will be just fine, no matter how poorly the heroes do. Like Marla Homebrew said, they can take care of themselves!

Failure States. Failing this check doesn't mean that hero can't get across, rather they get across but they take some damage, or drop an item down the pit, or it takes them longer to make it across. It's up to you what makes most sense.

- **Acid Flooded Statue Room.** Cracks begin appearing in the floor, draining most of the acid. (If the Heroes have already dealt with the Briarbane seedlings they all gain advantage on their checks in this room. If not, they are pelting the heroes with seeds, making navigating this room more challenging.) Dust and debris makes seeing in this room very difficult, what do you do to navigate?

- **Venus Fly Trap Room.** With all of the shaking in the ruins, it is easy to get disoriented and lost in this large room, what do you do to ensure you don't get turned around? (If the heroes discovered the secret passage way, they can use that and skip this room entirely).

- **Hall of Tombs.** The collapse of these ruins seems to be accelerating, it is going to come down on your heads any moment, the exit is nearly within sight. But rubble blocks the door out of this room! what do you do?

- **Blade Trap Hall.** The blades are swinging wildly, to and fro. How do you get past without being sliced to ribbons? YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!

- **The Mural Chamber.** You can see the sunlight! Not too far now! Everyone make a DEX save. Whoever gets the lowest trips and falls just as a huge piece of rubble breaks free from the ceiling directly overhead. They

are going to take 1d4 Wounds from this, unless the rest of you help. What do you do?

You all make it out of the collapsing ruins just in time, you lay safely in the grass and the rumbling soon ceases. Greenthumb is dead, the Deathbriar destroyed, the town of Merivale can rest well tonight thanks to your heroic efforts. Well done!

Feel free to allow the players to role-play here some if they want. You can ask how everybody is feeling, or describe how Ruby, Pearl (and optionally Pinkie) are now the heroes BIGGEST fans. Really make your players feel heroic—play it up, call out individual feats they pulled off—they'll love it! They are now quite famous in

Merivale, but they'd be unknown in the city of Farhope.

What next?

Does the deathbriar reanimate Greenthumb and use him as its puppet? Are one of the Farhope factions secretly working with the fiends of the shadowblight to take control of the region? Is someone trying to resurrect the Titan that gave rise to the Elderwild? Follow the adventure that you and your table want to create. You have more than enough tools at your disposal to craft a campaign that can last for many months or even years if you so desire. Play on!

Adventure On!

From here you should be comfortable enough as the GM to start thinking about making your own adventures. It's not too hard, and it can be some of the most fun you'll have playing TTRPGs. Don't worry too much about having a big overarching plot, your players won't remember that too much. They'll remember all the silly things they do, and the trouble the get themselves into and out of.

Show them the map and ask where they'd like to go next. Each region has enough information, NPCs, Points of Interest, Encounters, and Loot for your party to adventure for a very long time. Each one also contains an example adventure using some of the available details.

Tip! Use the monster builder charts to adjust the adventure difficulty to be appropriate for any level!

Level 3 Solo Botanical Wizard **Greenthumb, Lichling**

HP: 100

Armor: None

Saves: WIL+, INT+

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, move up to 6 spaces and then choose one:

- **Summon Briarbane Minion.** Summon a **1d4** minion/hero anywhere in the room.
- **Root.** Force half of the heroes to make a DC 11 DEX save or take **2d4** piercing damage and be Restrained by thorny vines (escape: DC 11 STR or DEX save, or any slashing or fire damage).
- **Thorn Shot.** (Range 10) Blast a volley of thorns for **5d4+5** piercing damage.

BLOODY: At 50 HP, Greenthumb gains magical bark, giving himself gains Heavy Armor

LAST STAND: Greenthumb is dying! 30 more damage and he dies. Until then, he chooses twice.

The Framework

What should you include in an adventure? Whatever you and your friends like, but below are some general guidelines on good elements to include.

What Really Happened? Most good adventures involve some sort of mystery that unfolds as the heroes play through. Think about what really happened/adventure background. An unexpected twist is always a good idea (but avoid making it over complicated or your players may get lost).

Think of some treasures the heroes can find, this is a big motivation for many players. 2-4 treasures is plenty (not all will be given/found). It's best if they're not typically powerful magical items. Items that can be used creatively are often much more fun.

2-4 Traveling/Exploration Events. Rather than simply narrating "you get to the adventure site" consider some interesting encounters that can happen along the way. These can give a flavor of the location, hint at lore or foreshadow something coming later, be obstacles to overcome creatively, situations to receive boons or suffer setbacks (take damage, gain Wounds, etc),

Adventure Locations. 6-10 room "dungeon" (grove, palace, ruins, ravine, cave, sewers, hideout, etc) (600 words, 30-80 words per room.)

Each room/area has a few words of descriptive text (max 1 sentence).

Each room/area has 2-3 things to interact with, learn, etc. Bullet points.

Recommended: not strictly linear, choices in which rooms to explore and in what order. Optional rooms, multiple entrances, secret passages, etc.

A trap/obstacle. Heroes can take damage or get creative to overcome.

Foreshadowing/information about the theme or direction of the adventure

Problems/Situations with no obvious solution the party can creatively solve.

A Combat encounter. (don't worry about stats, I'll handle that) What are the baddies doing when the heroes come? (NOT simply standing around)

NPCs: To fight (see above), to rescue, negotiate with, bamboozle, from another region/quest, to

kidnap & ransom, etc.

Dilemmas. If you take this path, you can't take the other path. If you ally with this faction, you cannot ally with the other

WEIRD things: Crystals that produce "anti-light", Mind controlling fungus, Walls made of hands, Paintings with eyes that follow, Room with no sound, Taste colors, feel smells...

Culminating in a challenging/hard battle of some sort (not always, but usually).

Change it up! If things start feeling too formulaic, change things up. Maybe there is a session without any combat and only exploration, and roleplaying. Or with lots of skill challenges, or ONLY minions. You've got a lot of tool in your GM tool box, use them all.

What's Next?

From here you and your heroes should have a good feel for how to play, so the adventure opens up to be more of a sandbox. After one more good sized quest they can level up to 4. And from there gaining a level every 2-3 sessions. Heading to Farhope may be a good idea to learn about the factions, and their various quests. The quest Vermin's Vengeance is a great one to take your players fomr level 3 to 4.

As for adventures, what interest you all? The rest of this book describes the local region, and a number of different quests the heroes can go on and provides enough content to take them all the way up through level 6. There are also plenty of adventure hooks and tools contained here for enough contet to play much, much longer if desired. The rest of the journey is up to you!

Once you've completed the starting adventure you can use the additional setting information to continue the fun in whichever direction you like. As you put together your own adventure keep the following tips in mind:

- Balance roleplaying, combat, and exploration:** Keep things varied. Some players will get

listless if there is too much yapping and not enough smacking! Even in combat-heavy sessions, let players use their social or exploration skills. Others really like using their creativity to overcome exploration challenges. Some of the most fun sessions are when little to no combat happens!

- Team dynamics & collaboration.** Nimble classes play the best when working together, set up situations where players need to cooperate and use their unique abilities together.

- Think about the heroes.** Do they have any personal quests? Backstory questions they want resolved? Favorite NPCs? Make sure you keep that in mind as you prep, so you can include moments for those elements.

•

Unique Encounters

- OOPS! All Minions.** Try making a very large encounter with only minions. The heroes can handle far more minions than you might think. Things will get crazy, but it'll run quickly and be quite memorable.

- THEY JUST KEEP COMING!** Try having minions appear every round (1-2 per hero) until their leader is killed, the portal is closed, or some other event happens!

Leveling Up

Levels 3-5 you might level up after each session or every other session; days or weeks of in-game time. Levels 6-12 after approximately every 2 or 3 sessions, or months/years of in-game time; and beyond that... you reach the rarified heights of truly epic heroes; leveling up perhaps only every 3-5+ sessions or years/decades of in-game time.

WORK IN PROGRESS



VALLEY OF HOPE

The Valley of Hope is a picturesque and fertile expanse, framed by rolling hills and majestic mountains. Amidst its natural beauty, the valley holds many secrets and ancient legends, offering adventure and mystery to those willing to explore it.

Points of Interest

King's Reach. The well-trod road that spans from the kingdom's capital through the Withering Dunes, Merivale, ultimately ending at Farhope. A major route connecting the heart of the realm to its furthest frontier. Safe enough to travel on as it is patrolled by the King's Men, though the patrols have been more and more infrequent in recent years. **Encounters:**

- **Crumbling mile-marker.** Stands half-buried in the dirt, inscribed with: "In this place, where kings and titans once trod, lies the bond of blood and stone. The valley remembers, the world forgets."
- **King's Men.** You come across a patrol of the King's Men resting by the roadside, their armor dented and swords worn from countless battles. They're swapping old stories of the days when patrols were more frequent and the road was safer. The pair confides they're on their last patrol before retirement.
- **A strange merchant.** Greets you with a smile, her cart overflowing with exotic wares. Offering unique items: a compass that only points to places you've already been, a lantern that lights up the darkest secrets of the holder's past, or a coin that always lands on its edge when asked a yes/no question.

Bramblecrag Foothills. A rugged expanse between the Elderwild and the Iceforge Mountains. Dense thickets and rocky outcrops make for challenging terrain. These foothills hide ancient cairns and forgotten trails, making them a popular destination for adventurers and those avoiding well-trodden paths. Rumors say that a hidden cave here serves as the hideout of an old outlaw. **Encounter:**

• **The Debt Collector.** You meet an anxious man at a crossroads in the foothills, looking frustrated and muttering under his breath. He asks if you know the way to a hidden cave in the area. He claims that a man hiding there owes him a large sum of money.

Sea of Tears. A landlocked salt sea at the heart of the valley with a shoreline encrusted with white salt crystals. Legends say the sea was formed from the tears of a sorrowful titan, drinking the briny water is dangerous, as the salt can cause visions of the past or illusions that test one's resolve or break the weak-minded. **Encounter:**

- **Hidden Cave.** By the salt-crusted shore, a line of footprints leads straight into the still waters, only to vanish without a trace. Examining reveals that an illusion conceals a hidden cave beneath the waves.

Highway of Flame. Ivory pillars topped with eternal flames stretch from Farhope through the Valley and beyond the Withering Dunes. Mages use these flames as foci for Firestepping, allowing swift travel. Rumors say the flames repel dark creatures (not true). **Encounter:**

- **Flickering Fires.** One of the eternal flames begins flickering erratically, casting odd shadows that seem to move on their own. Imps from the Shadowblight are trying to put the fire out. They will politely explain why they're doing it (cause mischief) and even ask for aid, failing that they will fight fiercely.

White Gate. A massive stone archway standing sentinel between Farhope and the Shadowblight. Guarded by a dedicated order of sentinels, the White Gate is the first line of defense for the valley's people. The sentinels keep at bay lesser fiends and horrors that sometimes spill forth from the twisted lands. **Encounter:**

- **Fiend on the Loose.** A sentinel at the White Gate is wounded and delirious, muttering about a fiend slipping past into the valley. Healing the sentinel allows them to regain clarity and provide you with a clue about where the fiend might be hiding.

The Stone of Seasons: A monolith inscribed with ancient runes stands in a wildflower meadow. Touching the runes triggers a temporary weather shift—summer heat, winter's chill or a sudden downpour. The stone's purpose and creators remain a mystery. **Encounter:**

- **Squabbling Couple.** A cheerful couple nearby is debating their ideal weather—one prefers warmth, the other a cool breeze. They spot your group and ask you to vote on which weather effect to trigger from the stone.



MERIVALE

A humble town in the serene Valley of Hope, surrounded by rolling hills and fertile fields. Quaint cottages dot the landscape, with a gentle river winding through its heart. Despite its modest size, the town is known for its warm, welcoming community, making it a favored resting spot for travelers on their way to Farhope.

NPCs

"Mayor" Tills. The respected elder and unofficial leader of Merivale. Tills is a treasure trove of local lore and history, making him the go-to for any strange happenings or old tales. If the party seeks answers, he's likely got them.

Marla Homebrew: The friendly innkeeper of the Valley's Rest, known for her hospitality and knack for gathering gossip. Marla keeps tabs on travelers and town rumors, making her the perfect source for information about recent visitors or the latest buzz.

Moonblossom. A tiny fairy living in the Fairy Tree at the town's center (which she rarely leaves). The townsfolk adore her, and if the party needs a bit of luck or a small favor from the town's guardian spirit, Moonblossom can help—if approached with kindness.

Captain Shortbow. The head of the town watch who insists he's *not* afraid of goblins (even though his twitchy eyes say otherwise). If the party needs help coordinating with the locals or wants an inside scoop on town security, Shortbow is their man.

Points of Interest

The Valley's Rest. A cozy inn run by the cheerful Marla Homebrew and her daughters, Ruby and Pearl. The warm common room smells of fresh bread and hearty

"manticore" stew (really just beef). Adorned with local crafts, it's a hub for travelers and townsfolk alike, sharing stories and enjoying Marla's famous Spiced Apple Cider, a comforting cure for weary bones. A favorite gathering spot for travelers and locals alike, where stories are shared, and songs are sung long into the night.

The Fairy Tree. A large golden elm tree that proudly stands in the middle of the town square. To the townsfolk, the Fairy Tree is a symbol of hope, good fortune—touching its trunk is said to bring luck. Hidden among the branches is Moonblossom, a fairy who grants small blessings to those offering fresh flowers or kind words. Locals gather here for guidance in troubled times.

Greenfield Provisions. A small, well-stocked shop run by Thom and Aelina Greenfield, offering everyday essentials for adventurers, travelers and farmers. Known for their Honeyroot Tea, a calming blend made from a local herb, it's a popular remedy for sleeplessness among weary adventurers.

Whispering Eddy. A peaceful eddy outside town, where the water's current seems to whisper. Surrounded by wildflowers, locals visit to relax or collect water. There's a superstition that if you whisper a wish into the water, it might come true. Travelers often fill their flasks here for luck on their journey to Farhope.

The Old Mill. A weathered, stone windmill on the edge of Merivale, still creaking along after decades of use. Though it no longer grinds grain, it's now maintained by young enthusiasts who host seasonal festivals here, decorating it with flowers and lanterns. Adventurers might find old relics or hidden notes tucked between the stones, left by previous travelers seeking good fortune or love.



FARHOPE THE LAST HARBOR

A restless port city perched on the edge of the realm, where the civilization's reach begins to fade into the untamed wilderness. Located on the farthest shore from the empire's capital, Farhope thrives as a beacon of opportunity for merchants, scholars and adventurers from all over the world, filling the docks with exotic goods and brave explorers ready for perilous expeditions into the vast unknown.

Farhope Key Locations

The Gilded Griffin. A popular haven for weary travelers, the Gilded Griffin Inn features warm hearths, cozy rooms, and hearty meals. Run by Elara, it is known for its signature dish, Griffin Stew, and a secret cellar reserved for important meetings or quickly secreting away whomever the city guard is looking to question or arrest.

The Docks. A bustling hub of trade, the Farhope docks are lined with ships from distant lands. Merchants haggle over goods, while sailors share tales of their travels. The salty air is filled with the sounds of creaking wood and the shouts of dockworkers, it's a lively place for adventurers seeking new contracts or information.

The Noble's Quarter. An opulent district where the elite of Farhope reside, the Noble's Quarter is characterized by grand estates and manicured gardens. However, beneath the surface nobles vie for power and influence in the city's affairs.

The Factions. Countless factions fight constantly for control over the city's resources, but only three hold real power:

The Golden Company



An order of soldiers, and merchants dedicated to the protection and prosperity of Farhope, they control much of the city's commerce and have significant influence over its governance. **Bladehall**, their grand citadel, stands at the heart of the city, a symbol of power and strength where they offer protection and broker trade deals. The Company has forged vital partnerships with the Dwarves of the Iceforge Mountains and maintains a crucial alliance with The Tower to safeguard the White Gate against threats from the Shadowblight.

Newcomers to Farhope are granted leave by the Company to explore all surrounding regions, except the Shadowblight, a place so perilous that even their noble mission may falter. Though their intentions are seen as being above reproach, their methods can sometimes be heavy handed. **Key NPCs:**

Marcus Thel. Grand Commander of the Golden Company: A seasoned paladin with a scarred face, Marcus is known for his unwavering resolve and ruthless tactics in the battle against darkness. His experience on the battlefield has shaped him into a formidable leader, respected by his comrades and feared by his enemies. Marcus believes in the necessity of harsh measures to ensure the safety of the realm.

Gideon Blaze. Chief Recruiter. A key figure in the Golden Company's efforts to recruit new members, Gideon draws in potential recruits with passionate tales of heroism and devotion. Behind his magnetic

smile lies a shrewd strategist, always calculating the best ways to expand the Golden Company's influence.

Sir Alric Vayne. Captain of the City Guard. Known for his strict sense of honor, the captain is highly valued by the city's nobility.

Sister Avelina. A compassionate healer respected by the common folk who secretly harbors doubts about the Company's methods.

The Tower



A powerful group of mages and spellcasters dedicated to the study of mysterious forces. They are obsessed with searching out truth and finding new applications for their magic. Their headquarters is a doorless and windowless ivory tower perched atop a cliff overlooking the city. It is both a place of magical learning and a bastion of innovation. **The Tower** seeks true understanding of the arcane and the mysteries of the world, but their hunger for knowledge can sometimes lead to dangerous experiments or the temptation toward fell bargains in exchange for knowledge. Those who seem worthy of their trust may be hired for capturing magical creatures in the Growling Marshes, recovering lost spells in the Withering Sands or arcane artifacts from the Elderwild. **Key NPCs:**

Elara Voss. The enigmatic head of the Tower. Her piercing gaze and intimidating presence makes her a formidable figure. Her mastery of the arcane arts gave birth to rumors of dark pacts.

Morgana Talus. Specialized in ancient artifacts, she is a master of deciphering runes and curses. While she can be brusque and impatient, she's often the first to unearth secrets hidden in the ancient texts and relics brought back to the Tower. Many adventurers rely on her to identify their finds, if they can afford her steep fees.

Lyra, the Oracle. A nervous but brilliant diviner, often used as The Tower's oracle. Her visions are accurate, but the toll they take on her mind has left her

fragile, making her both vulnerable and invaluable. Though she seems timid and haunted by what she sees, her insights are too valuable for the Tower to ignore.

Veylin No Brows. A pyromancer obsessed with profane magic. Veylin's erratic nature and penchant for dangerous experiments have earned him a mixed reputation, but his powers are undeniable.

The Explorer's Guild

The beating heart of Farhope's adventuring spirit, the Explorer's Guild drives expeditions into the wilderness in search of ancient ruins, lost civilizations, and untold riches.

However, it also serves as a haven for smugglers and rogues, fostering an undercurrent of intrigue and shadowy dealings.

The Guildtrove is a lively hub where adventurers of all stripes gather to share tales of their exploits, forge alliances, and acquire contracts that promise both danger and reward. In addition to legitimate quests, guild members often engage in the clandestine smuggling of precious crystals from the **Skyreach Isles**, sought after for their unique magical properties. Here, secrets are currency, and the line between heroism and villainy often blurs. **Key NPCs:**

Tink Dabblefizz. The cheerful and sly head of the Guild's expeditionary forces, this gnome excels at reading people and can spot deception or half truths a mile away. He trains new recruits to rely on clever tactics and cunning, turning challenges into triumphs through wit and subterfuge rather than brute force.

Grivnik, the Black. Grivnik is a goblin with a knack for stealth and negotiation. As the Guild's enforcer, he handles difficult contracts and troublesome adventurers with a mix of intimidation and clever bargaining—and failing that, violence! Beneath his tough exterior lies a soft spot for lost causes.

Jara Quickfoot. A nimble and witty halfling rogue who handles the Guild's information network. Quick with a smile and even quicker with a blade, she gathers secrets and intel the Guild needs to operate. She knows everyone's business in the city.

Keldon the Fixer. Always dressed in well-tailored attire, Keldon is skilled at making things happen behind the scenes. With an extensive network and a talent for cleaning up sticky situations, leaving others wondering how they ended up on his side. A great friend to have when in over your head.

Vermin's Vengeance

A verminous urban adventure for level 3 heroes.

What's Going On?

Farhope is infested. Everyday, more and more rats spill forth from the sewers, stealing food and trinkets all across the city, attacking any who try to stop them.

Meanwhile, the shady dealings of the Explorer's Guild are threatening to come to light. Crystals smuggled from the Skyreach Isles were making their way into Farhope by way of underground tunnels, disturbing the domain of the Rat Prince. Enraged by the ceaseless trespasses against him, he seeks to rise up from the muck and take over the city.

Questhooks

- **The Explorer Guild**'s shipment of crystals never made it to Guildtrove, and Keldon the Fixer needs adventurers to recover it so the guild's involvement remains a secret. If they can solve the rat problem too, then that's "just dandy."

- **Sir Alric, Captain of the City Guard**, wishes to quell the chaos brought by the rats and will hire any adventurers willing to delve below the city to find whatever has driven them above.

- **The heroes** find their home or base of operation within the city overrun with rats. They bite and scratch at anyone who gets in their way.

Rumors

- The rats were first seen near the Gilded Griffin. If asked, the innkeeper Elara, says that they've taken over the inn, and the entire street around it too. There is an entrance to the sewers in the basement.
- There's an old wives' tale about a "rat man" who once lived in the sewers. He dabbled in necromancy and was killed (this is the Rat Prince, he's alive and well).
- Farhope was built atop the corpse of a dark god of vermin and filth: the Verminarch. He's come back to life! The Rat Prince serves this false deity.

Traveling Encounters

While the characters are traversing the city sewers:

- **Devoured Remains.** The remnants of a corpse, picked down to the bone by tiny bite marks. It carries basic adventuring equipment and a Healing Potion (2d4+4). If touched, a rat emerges from its ribcage and bites the hero (1 damage, DC 10 STR save or poi-

sioned until until you heal any amount of HP).

- **Secret Message.** Scratched into the stonework is a message in Thieves' Cant: It details the path for the Explorer's Guild crystal smuggling (Examination check instead: it's some kind of smuggling route).

- **Wall of Eyes.** Narrow, winding tunnels. A living, shifting carpet of rats on the stone walls and ceiling with unblinking eyes. The rats part just enough to let you pass. Any damage done to them, they will flee then follow in the dark just beyond your vision: add 1 Rat Swarm to the next combat encounter.

- **Living Fatberg.** A colossal mass of waste and detritus blocks the path ahead (Arcana: an enormous sleeping Ochre Jelly with 11 HP /hero). Clever thinking may allow them to squeeze past without waking it. Brute force or failed checks wakes it, and it attacks first.

Adventure Locations

Fetid Stench. Heroes must make a STR save each time they traverse from one location to another or be poisoned while in that area. The increases as they go deeper.

The Path Below. A break in the sewer walls that descends into foul-smelling darkness. *Fetid Stench DC: 6.*

- Newly scratched into the wall beside the entrance are the words: "THE DOMAIN OF THE RAT PRINCE."
- As the characters descend, they happen upon a rogue on the brink of death. If aided, she provides intel that she was "moving merchandise" for a client and they dug their way into this rat nest before some "crazy old man" dragged her partner below and took the merchandise. Otherwise, she splutters an incoherent warning about the rat god before expiring.

Echoing Cistern. Noise of thousands of rats chittering. Sound here is greatly amplified. *Fetid Stench DC: 8.*

- Part of a sewer from a city much older than Farhope.
- 1 Rat Swarm/hero is here. If the heroes fail to be stealthy, the rat swarms attack at the same time. (Stealth to avoid making sound, with disadvantage since the room amplifies all sound). If they are stealthy, the rat swarms join combat across 2-3 rounds.

Feeding Chamber. Heaps of filth. A few rats eating, skitter away as you approach. *Fetid Stench DC: 10.*

- Rats were gnawing on corpses. Did... one just move?

- Corpses are alive! Inspection reveals flesh slowly regrowing. They offer information but can't move:

- Their cruel punishment for trespassing is being bound to ever-regenerating bodies to serve as endless food for the Rat Prince's army.

- The more bodies the Rat Prince collects the more rats he can feed. He plans on eventually reclaiming the topside kingdom with his rats.

- Destroying the filthy idol will free them of their undeath. *"Please, end this torment. Let us rest!"*

- **West:** The stench lessens. Leads to Smuggler's Tunnel.

- **East:** Smells... not right. Leads to Explosive Tunnels.

Smugglers Tunnel. *The smell of fresh air wafts in from behind a poorly reconstructed wall.*

- Behind the wall, a recently dug tunnel not a part of the sewers. New pickaxes and shovels lie nearby.

- Among the equipment are the boots and coin pouches of the smugglers taken by the rats, but no bodies (they're the zombies in the feeding chamber).

- The tunnel goes on to the north for miles, and exits in the wilderness north of the city. This tunnel system was used by the Explorer's Guild to smuggle Aerolith Crystals from the Isles to Farhope.

Explosive Tunnels. *Dark tunnel ahead, funny smell.*

Fetid Stench DC: 12.

- Numerous signs that read "**NO FIRE!**"

- Constant gas leak in this area. Fire or sparks ignite the gas, dealing 3d6 damage to any nearby creatures.

- Each hero may make skill checks, saves, or otherwise be creative to navigate in the dark (DC 12). Roll twice:

- **0 Failures.** How lucky! You gain inspiration (the ability the ability to reroll any single die, once).

- **1 Failure.** Gas makes you dizzy, -1 speed until you leave the sewers.

- **2 Failures.** Fumesick. Suffer 1 wound, poisoned, and -1 speed until you leave the sewers.

- Exits to Guttermaw's Lair or Shrine to the Rat God

Guttermaw's Lair. *Knee-high liquid fills this room, making it Difficult Terrain. Fetid Stench DC: 14.*

- A crate with glowing jewels sits at the far end of the room, *floating against the ceiling.*

- Guarding the crate is a Guttermaw: A hulking, abomination with a bloated, dripping maw lined with jagged teeth. Its twisted body, riddled with boils and rot. Use Mummy statblock with Reach 2.)

- If the heroes approach, it stands to full height (10 ft.)

and bares its many teeth. It attacks if they come closer.

- (Naturecraft/Insight: it is hungry, but tasked with guarding and cannot leave) It can be made friendly by feeding it a tremendous amount of meat.

Shrine to the Rat God. *A huge stalagmite, carved into the shape of a rat. Profane energy pulsing from it. Fetid Stench DC: 16.*

- A grime-covered, old man, chants a necromantic enchantment over an unconscious adventurer, while Hundreds of rats crowd around him and stare up in reverence (the Rat Prince).

- Destroying the Shrine will release the magic holding the people in the feeding chamber, but doing so will kindle the anger of the Rat Prince and his swarms.

- Combat: The Rat Prince and 1 Rat Swarm/hero.

- Opening Attack. "You soaplickers intrude further into the Rat Prince's domain... do you wish to become fuel for the army?"

- Gaining Upper Hand: "You will be our eternal feast!"

- Damaged: "You think you can hurt me? Drown in a sea of gnashing teeth!"

- On Death: "Even in death, I will feed the swarm..."

- Cutting through this room is a narrow tunnel that leads into darkness (it exits fifteen miles north of Farhope). Lying nearby is the guild's crystal shipment. To the right buyer, it's worth thousands.

Loot

- **Wand of Rat.** Action: Summon a rat. It can understand common and will do your bidding to the best of its ability for 1 evening. 3 charges. Recharge: bury the wand in filth for 1 week.

- **Pipecrawler's Charm.** A crude necklace made of rat bones. When worn, it allows you to squeeze through spaces as if you were 2 sizes smaller.

RATPRINCE LVL 1

Protect Master! Rat swarms can Interpose for him.

- **Filthblast.** 1d6+2 (Range 8). Then:

- **Feeding time!** Summon a 1d4 rat minion

RAT SWARM LVL 1

Swarm. When damaged, decrement the damage die then summon 1 minion. (d6 small » d4 tiny » dead).

Gnaw. 1d8



THE ELDERWILD

Grown from the corpse of an ancient titan, this vast forest of towering trees and exotic flora is infused with magical vitality. Inhabited by primordial creatures, including mischievous fae, enigmatic woodland spirits, and majestic beasts.

The forest is guarded by a secretive order of druids, who consider it sacred, and it thrives under their vigilant care. Those who enter must do so with reverence, adhering to the ancient customs: never wounding the sacred trees, never disturbing the eternal rest of the dead, and respecting the balance of life that permeates the woods. Whispers of forgotten magic echo through the branches, promising both untold wonders and dire consequences to those who dare to exploit its riches.

Yet, dark shadows loom over this enchanted domain as ambitious outsiders seek to plunder its secrets, and extract its resources.

Secret Plots

Ignatius Kain of the Explorer's Guild and Jurtan of the Tower illicitly harvest red sap, while hiding their operation with powerful spells. The Druids and Elderwild Hunters feel the cry of the forest, but they don't know where the scar is. Jurtan plans to imprison the forest's guardian, unaware of the catastrophe this would unleash on the Elderwild.

Adventure Hooks

- **Explorer's Guild:** Seeking novices to gather herbs near the first outpost.

- **Golden Company:** Negotiating with the forest's natives for a profitable arrangement.

- **The Tower:** is offering a large sum to anyone who brings in a living faerie.

- **Mysterious Wizard:** Searching for an artifact from the burial mound of a nameless prince.

- **Legends say:** the weapon that killed the titan is still lodged in its heart.

NPCs

- **Thorn Forkedfeet:** Leader of the druids. A riddle-speaking figure who speaks in cryptic phrases.

- **Liriel Greenwhisper:** An herbalist who brews potions if you bring her the right ingredients.

- **Weald's Guardian:** A winged elk who demands fealty in exchange for safe passage through the woods. Those who refuse will be teleported out of the Elderwild and into the sea.

- **Elder Briarclaw:** A giant treant. Feels the screams of the woods, hostile to all woodcutters.

Points of Interest

- **First Outpost.** Gateway to the deep forest, supplies small expeditions from the Explorer's Guild.

- **Second Outpost.** Located at the Titan's Head, this outpost was attacked by Elderwild denizens, the sur-

vivors fled back to Merivale.

- **Third Outpost.** Set up in the ruins of an ancient castle, currently at war with the Elderwild Orcs. Short on supplies, everyone here tired and famished.

- **Burial Mounds:** Whispering mounds said to house the spirits of the first humans and elves, with hidden treasures protected by ancient magic.

- **Hunter Village:** Home to the Elderwild Hunters, currently interrogating explorers for extracting red sap from the trees (they're not speaking).

- **Fairy Groves.** Mischievous and protective of their sanctuary; those who enter uninvited may find themselves trapped in playful illusions or led astray by trails of dancing lights.

- **Glowing Gardens.** Magical grass patches with healing properties, harvested for potion ingredients.

- **Broken Heart.** A huge crater encircled by a body of water. A tunnel leads to a large cave, where a golden spear is guarded by the Elderwild's Guardian. If the guardian falls, the forest will die.

Treasures

- **Glowing Grass:** Used to brew potent healing potions.

- **Red Sap:** Crystallized tree sap that grants strength but is dangerously addictive.

- **Yellow Mushroom:** A hallucinogen that facilitates spellcasting and dreamwalking.

- **Prismatic Frog.** A rare colorful frog that produces a deadly toxin. Highly valuable to collectors of exotic animals (and assassins).

- **Purple Berries.** Very sweet, a few of them is enough to keep a belly full for a day.

- **Cursed Stash.** A pile of cursed gold. Those carrying even a single coin of this pile will be affected with bad fortune in all their endeavors.

- **Golden Urn.** An ornate urn containing the ashes of an ancient warrior. Can be used to summon his ghost to battle.

Encounters

- **Blightbeetles.** A fallen log blocks your path, stretching endlessly in both directions and swarming with black beetles. (get too close or harm them, and they attack for $1d12$ unblockable damage before flying away).

- **A Sleepy Trick.** A faerie's tranquil song drifts through the air. INT save or fall asleep (disadvantage for each Wound you have). You wake to find your weapons replaced with flowers and 1 Wound healed. Searching reveals your equipment with scarecrows with your likeness.

- **Tithebriar.** A wall of sharp brambles block your path (Naturecraft: Tithebriar). Harm them, and they strike back for half as much damage before growing back thicker. Offer a gift (music, a flower, etc.) to pass through unharmed.

- **Fake Trap.** A thick vine stretched between two trees at ankle height across your path (it does nothing). Go around and stumble into well-disguised pit traps. Take $2d6$ damage on a failed DEX save.

- **Giggling Brook.** An opalescent stream. (Insight or Perception: rather than gurgling it seems to be giggling—and then waiting expectantly) The first hero to tell it a joke will be blessed with inspiration.

- **Seeking Shinies.** A raven is following you. Eying the person with the shiniest equipment. Caws loudly whenever you try to hide. Give it a shiny gift and it will happily leave.

- **Blinkshrooms.** A circle of mushrooms, small animal tracks lead into the circle and then disappear. Stepping inside the circle teleports you to an identical circle deep within the forest. Harvest and replant anywhere with adequate growing conditions.

- **Recuperating.** A party of adventurers camping in the woods. One of them is recovering from a serious injury. Might join forces or share info if helped.

Bug Druids

Bug Druids

THE WITHERING DUNES



Scorching desert sands and acidic winds here corrode all organic matter. Beneath the shifting dunes lie the buried ruins of a forgotten civilization, their secrets entombed in the desolate landscape. Lurking in the shadows of the underworld, giant scorpions wait for unwary prey, while cunning snakemen guard what remains of their lost empire. Those brave enough to face the desert's deadly traps may be rewarded in many unexpected ways.

Secret Plots

The Explorer's Guild doesn't have much interest in exploring the withering sands—the buried ruins may hold some valuable treasures, but the danger is too high to make the expeditions worthwhile. They do frequently find talent in **the Red City**, held longer than they'd like.

The Golden Company maintains a safe **caravan route** to trade with the Red City merchants. They are frequently hired to protect valuable caravans—Grand Commander Marcius Thel himself is known to assist with particularly high value persons.

The Tower is very interested in retrieving all the magical artifacts found in the ruins, as well as the lost knowledge of the fallen civilizations. **The Scorched Tower** is their base of operations in the region, do not approach uninvited.

Points of Interest

The Red City. A rich city that exists on the other side of the desert, situated at the riverbanks of the Snake River. It earned its name from the blood-red clay used to build its walls. The city is open and welcoming to all travelers, not out of generosity, but to lure in those with skills they can exploit or treasures they can confiscate.

Scorched Tower. A permanent mage's encampment, it rises from the heart of a cracked salt flat; its stone blackened and pitted from centuries of wild magic. The mages of the Tower gather here to test the limits of their craft, using the desolate landscape as a shield from prying eyes.

The Oasis of the Sun. A mythical lake of liquid fire that appears only under the hottest midday sun. Said to be the lifeblood of the ancient snake god, it can be harnessed to forge powerful weapons or create alchemical wonders, but any who dare touch it without the right incantation will be reduced to ash.

Ebon Gardens. Dark oasis surrounded by withered palm trees and dead animals. The waters can temporarily bind spirits to the mortal realm, attracting necromancers and those desperate to commune with lost souls.

Crystal Maze. A breathtaking field of crystal formations that project stunning mirages. An ideal place

to get lost or hide secrets.

Dynastic Vault. A grand mausoleum guarded by hollow husks and acidic stalkers. Each of the six tombs has a different cursed treasure.

Lost Library. An unending spire descending into the deep darkness. The walls are filled with scrolls and clay tablets, the air is cold and haunted by ghostly voices. Wear warming clothes or roll to avoid frostbite.

Golden Pyramid. An immense structure that can be seen from any point in the desert, those who look at it for too long may become mad. A mysterious place that can be developed into a megadungeon by the GM.

Adventure Hooks

- **Bladehall** is hiring veteran warriors to guard the caravans crossing the desert to the red city.
- **The Tower** is hiring escorts to protect their expeditions to find the lost library under the buried ruins.
- **Guildtrove** pays good rewards to rescue talented people out of the Red City.
- **The Red City** has a permanent bounty for the heads of snakeman raiders. Those who get rid of their nests are promised land and titles.
- **Legends say** the golden pyramid guards the treasure of an ancient god-emperor and the secrets to reach godhood.

Encounters

Ankhari, Undead Knight. A skeleton with blue eyes clad in armor demanding a fair duel with a mighty hero. Becomes a loyal servant if defeated, but can't leave the desert.

Xerathis, the Merchant. A snakeman covered in fine silk, sitting under a tent. Xerathis speaks the human tongue and sells traditional garb, jewelry, and random magical treasures.

Nameless Wanderer. A mysterious nomad bound to the desert. Wrapped in tattered robes holding a shepherd's staff, this entity knows many things about the desert and is glad to help those in moments of need.

Acid Stalkers. Giant scorpions with glowing carapaces emerge from the sands. Shoots a corrosive venom that melts armor and flesh.

Snakeman. Feral demi-humans with scaly skin and yellow eyes.

Sandsharks. Relentlessly pursue travelers. The only escape is throwing some meat behind.

Red Cloaks. Soldiers of the Red City. They follow sand tracks and are helpful to travelers.

Gritstorm. Towering clouds of sand corroding everything in its path. Take cover or risk being buried.

Lost Travelers. Poor souls dying of dehydration and desert fever. Some are having hallucinations and will attack the party (extra reward if they are not killed).

Zathurix the Desert Wind. A colossal sand serpent with eight wings. Revered by the snakemen, her dominion over the desert's weather is absolute, capable of conjuring storms that rain fire, poison, or acid.

Treasure

• **Scarab Mask.** A ceremonial mask of blackened gold, adorned with glowing runes that protects the wearer from poison.

• **Desert Cape.** A heavy cloak that repels heat and allows the wearer to blend seamlessly into the shifting sands.

• **Oasis Seed.** A sparkling blue orb that conures a small pool of freshwater when broken.

• **Profane Slabs.** An ancient tome of clay describing the rites to create phylacteries and becoming an undying lich.

• **Undying Heart.** A preserved still beating heart. Bring it to the Wanderer to destroy the desert's curse and free him.

The Lost Temple of Heytet-Seqat

An arid expedition for level 5 heroes: An underground temple, a god turned prisoner.

What's Going On?

The ruins of an ancient temple have been found beneath the sands of the Withering Dunes—but multiple expeditions have failed to return. What started as an exploration project is rapidly turning into a search-and-rescue. Inside the temple, starvation, infighting and madness are just as deadly as the monsters. Below the sands, the dark priests of Heytet-Seqat eagerly prepare to feed more interlopers to their imprisoned god...

Questhooks

- **The Explorer's Guild** is hiring adventurers for a rescue expedition. They offer any treasures the party discovers in the ruins as compensation—a breach of their contract with the Tower (but only if they find out).
- **The Tower** seeks capable adventurers for an artifact retrieval. They won't say what exactly they're looking for, only providing a tracking runestone that glows in proximity to the desired item. They will pay well for its safe and discreet delivery.
- **A villager** begs the party to rescue his father, who led the most recent rescue operation. He promised he would be back by now...

Traveling Encounters

- **Impending Sandstorm.** Caustic sands whip through the air. Players can shelter in place and take 2d6 acid damage on a failed STR save, or shelter in a cave that has an eerie sound (the caves are safe—winds of the sandstorm cause the caves to whistle).
- **Golden Pyramid.** This massive structure hauntingly shines in the distance. Heroes must make a WILL save or suffer sand madness as they are compelled to ceaselessly stare at its beauty. They have disadvantage on attacks and are unable to take reactions for 2 hours (until the end of the next encounter).

- **Ruined Caravan.** It sits in a heap of broken axles amidst the sand dunes. An Examination check shows clear signs of sabotage. A snakeman is playing dead dressed in women's clothing. An insight check reveals something is off-failing the check, the heroes will be surprised when a group of 2 Snakemen/hero (ban-

dits) strike.

- **Sleepy Oasis.** Beautiful palm trees frame a pristine lake. Slumbering jackals surround the water's edge. Drinking the water heals HP, but causes drowsiness (1 HP/gulp). If they drink more than 4 gulps they fall asleep. Sleeping in the heat of the day causes 1 Wound.

Adventure Locations

- **Mages' Camp.** Ransacked. Torn cloth and broken poles.
- Snakemen scales and a khopesh (sickle) lie amidst the rubble.
- A massive pitfall trap has been triggered. A severed rope dangles loosely from the side. The pit descends 50 ft. into the shadowy temple antechamber.
- Snakemen will return and destroy any method of egress (rope, ladder, etc) left by the heroes once they descend.

Temple Antechamber. Half-buried by desert sands accumulated over time.

- A corridor leads left, strong acrid smell. Metallic slicing sounds echo to the right.
- A haphazard tangle of symbols is scratched into the sandstone wall (Thieves Cant: "We went left")

Pillar Room (Left Corridor). A river of acid (20ft. across) interrupts the path ahead.

- The ceiling is partially collapsed, held up by ornately-decorated pillars.
- A pillar has been shoved over creating a makeshift bridge across. It is slowly being dissolved by the acid.
- Anything heavier than a single small creature crossing it will break it. The acid deals 10 damage per round.
- Another pillar is close to the river, but requires a Might check of 20+ to knock over (more than 1 creature can contribute). If pushed over roll 1d6. 1: All creatures on that side of the room take 3d10 damage from falling debris. 2-4: Creatures pushing it take 1d10 damage. 5-6: No cave in!

Trapped Gallery (Right Corridor). Sloped floor covered in sand. Metallic, slicing sound echoes below.

- Begin sliding down immediately upon stepping on it. Looks nearly impossible to climb back up.
- Leads to a corridor guarded by a series of 3 bladed

pendulums, perpetually swinging.

- A mural carved into the stone of a giant scorpion with ancient inscription (Lore: "THE FURY OF HEYTET-SEQAT" the name of the scorpion).
- (Insight: they follow a predictable pattern, gain advantage on save). DC 10 DEX save to slip past one. Suffer 1d8 damage for each failure.
- A DC 15 Finesse check can temporarily disable the mechanism, each time it is failed 1d8 damage as your hand is pinched in the mechanism.

Temple Library. Innumerable books & scrolls. At the center, sculptures of the former god-kings.

- An enchantment is cast over the library. Talking above a whisper deals 3d4 lightning damage.
- An insane mage writes frantically in the corner, recording all he can with an obsessive fervor. Any questions are answered with "ask the first gods," and "they know all."
- Examination: The sculpture features multiple snakemen fighting a giant scorpion. One lies down, stabbing a spear at its exposed, vulnerable belly.
- Insight: heroes one of the sculptures points to an innocuous scroll shelved on the wall: the Map to the Golden Pyramid.
- The books contain records of the snakemen's history with the Scorpion Queen. Once revered as a god, she is now being kept for colosseum-esque entertainment within her own temple.
- 5 starving survivors, all whisper-quarreling. What they know:

- GRATEFUL to see you. Do you have any food? Don't even LOOK at the ruby.
- The mages won't even tell us what treasure they're LOOKING for!
- Only way out is past HER.

False Treasure Chamber. A stone chamber lined with sarcophagi. MASSIVE ruby lies on a pedestal. Casting the room in red light.

- All creatures who do not avert their gaze before entering the room must make a WILL save or they are compelled to rush forward and grab it.
- Upon touching the treasure, the floor gives way and they falls through to the scorpion shrine below.

Scorpion Shrine. Bones line the path to the altar of the great scorpion queen, Heytet-Seqat. She slumbers blocking the staircase out, tail coiled around a Scorpion Egg.

- 1/hero Jeweled Scorpion Spawn scuttle forward, dealing 2d6 poison damage with their venomous tail attacks and 3d4 bludgeoning with their claws.
- Heytet-Seqat rises at the smell of first blood. 3d8 poison damage, 4d6 bludgeoning, and a ton of health. Melee attacks from prone creatures auto crit on her.

True Treasure Chamber. A simple sideroom, halfway up the stairs.

- The Monkey's Paw lies on a wooden altar. One of three fingers are curled down. The runestone glows brightly on approach.

ICEFORGE MOUNTAINS



A frozen expanse where snow perpetually blankets the landscape yet life thrives in the rocky peaks and hidden valleys. The surface is inhabited by hulking trolls and orcs, but the true rulers lies in ancient fortresses carved into the rocky depths.

Ever the masters of metal and stone, the Dwarves offer valuable goods for trading partners and invaluable services for loyal friends. At night, the skies above glow with the orange light of countless forges burning deep within the mountains.

Secret Plots

The Dwarven kin are slowly fading away as many of their strongholds fall to surface attacks and other underground dwellers. The Golden Company trades with the Dwarves regularly—but their prices have been rising since the dragon took their old mines. The Tower is secretly sabotaging relations further by hiring Bandits to harass and assault the trade caravans. They want more access to the Dwarven halls in order to learn the secret Dwarven forge techniques used to craft powerful artifacts.

Key NPCs

Queen Alethea Stoutheart. The reluctant human queen of the Dwarves. The legacy of her great grandfather—the Dwarves' first human king—weighs heavily upon her. While most hold her to be the queen under

the mountain, a growing faction that believes a human never should have held the throne.

Thrain Axehand. Captain of the Queen's guard, this grizzled dwarven berserker lost his hand to a troll. Just as well, replaced it with an axe.

Rina Frostwind. A Dwarven mage who likes to study the runes on walls of places she really ought not be. Those who stumble upon her unannounced will often be faced with her magical traps. She will always let them go if they promise to not tell anyone they saw her.

Bain Brightbottle. Traveling merchant, happy to give out free advice (to his customers).

Points of Interest

Serpent's Pass. A long and serpentine trail leading to the Stonefist Hold stalked by Trolls and Orcs.

Fallen Fortress. Heavily guarded by orcs. Many secret passages for those who know the landscape.

Troll Caves. Scattered over the mountainous surface, hidden by the never ending snow. Some have stolen goods from ransacked caravans.

The Great Glacier. A massive ice sheet that stretches across the northern face of the Mountains.

Stonefist Hold

Great bastion of the last tribe of dwarves in the region. Visitors stay at the surface level until they are

granted permission to go down to the trading district.

Trading District. A grand cavern lit by molten forges, with towering pillars and stone-carved stalls offering enchanted weapons, rare minerals, and crafted goods. Filled with the clinking of hammers and murmurs of trade. Rare plants fetch double the price here.

Mushroom Farms. An aquifer full of farms nestled in the lower caverns, the air is damp and earthy. Giant mushrooms grow in neat, tiered rows, many of which glow with the soft light of luminescent fungi.

Royal Bastion. An imposing structure of talented work carved from glittering stone, flanked by statues of ancient kings and ever-burning braziers.

The Depths

New Tunnels. Miners have been working here since they fled from Gloomwing. Strong characters may spend a full day mining here to gain 2 gp.

False Labyrinth. An extensive series of tunnels and staircases created to prevent underground dwellers from reaching the main hold. The only way to pass through is with the aid of a dwarven compass.

Sealed Mines. Richest mines of the summit, with veins still full of gold. The dragon sleeps under the treasures to ambush invaders.

Primordial Kiln. Long engulfed by shadow, the first ember still glows. With this ember the dwarven smiths will produce magical items again.

The Abyss. Entrance to the realm of darkness, its denizens ever hungry to snuff out the light.

Adventure Hooks

• **The Golden Company** is hiring arms to protect their caravans and offering a good prize for Troll heads.

• **The Dwarves** are hiring competent warriors and assassins to expel the orcs from their fallen fortress.

• **The Tower** is secretly hiring scoundrels to discover a way to pass through the False Labyrinth.

• **A powerful dragon** is trapped inside the old mines, but the queen forbids anyone from entering it.

• **Marla Homebrew** wants someone to acquire a couple of iron goats from the mountains for her inn.

• **A mysterious wizard** is hiring escorts to the lower depths of the abyss, he refuses to reveal the objective.

Encounters

• **Thrain Axehand.** Sharpening his hand, surrounded by bodies of headless orcs. Will give the location of

the fallen fortress's secret western entrance if they show interest in recovering it.

• **Cave Muskrat.** A plump rodent that burrows through the underground soil, considered a delicacy.

• **Cooking Time.** A Frost Giant preparing to cook a handful of dwarves alive in a stew. May free the dwarves in exchange for an iron goat for each one.

• **Iron Goats.** Sturdy creatures with a hide tough enough to be used as armor, herded by dwarves for their very nutritious milk and tough iron-like hide. Typically only friendly to dwarves, will ram others, knocking them down the mountain.

• **Rain of Spears.** Cave starts shaking, causing wickedly sharp stalactites fall from the ceiling.

• **Orc Bandits.** Group of orcs walk out in front of your path, an equal number appear from behind. You're ambushed, negotiate your way out of it or fight.

• **Merivale Caravan.** A group of lost and frostbitten merchants trying to find their way to the Stonefist Hold. Will trade goods at a great price if helped.

• **Gloomwing the Cruel.** First comes the thunderous sound of sickly, labored breathing, like wind through a hollow crypt. Then the air fills with the stench of rot and decay. Finally, you see it: a colossal, emaciated dragon, its scales decomposing and jagged dorsal spines and too many teeth. It's too late to run.

Treasures

• **Forgefather's Crown.** A run-etched crown of black iron, grants wearer command over fire and metal.

• **Grimbeard's Warhammer.** A mighty hammer with a head of adamantine and a handle wrapped in dragonhide.

• **Endless Cask.** A dwarven cask made of enchanted oak. refills itself with potent brews that heal wounds and bolster courage.

• **Frostwarden's Shield.** A large, ice-blue shield that glows faintly in the dark. Radiates a cold aura, freezing enemies who strike it.

• **Deepstone Charm.** Carved from a single piece of obsidian. Allows the wearer to pass through stone as if it were air for as long as they can hold their breath.

• **Dwarven Compass.** A magical device that helps dwarves navigate underground mazes and detect nearby gemstones. Useless to non-dwarves unless properly trained.

• **Mourning Heart.** A massive ruby gemstone that pulses with a deep, inner light. Believed to contain the essence of an ancient dwarven god.

The Vanishing Caravans

A Treacherous Journey for **Level 4** Heroes: Greed and Betrayal in the Mountain Pass

What's Going On?

The Tower seeks to edge out the Golden Company as the trading partner for the Dwarves. They've secretly hired mercenaries to harass and delay some trade caravans from the Golden Company. However, the bandits grew greedy, escalating from harassment to theft of trade goods and murder. Now camped in the foothills of the Iceforge Mountains they hoard their loot. The Golden Company wants answers and justice; The Tower didn't intend on it going this far and will pay even more to keep their dealings quiet.

Questhooks

- **A worried villager** in Merivale seeks help to find her missing friend Fornin, a caravan leader overdue from a trade run to the Dwarves.
- **Golden Company.** The Dwarves demand answers about missing shipments. If not resolved, they threaten to seek new trade partners.
- **The Tower.** Thieves have stolen a signet ring and taken refuge in the mountains. Retrieve it quietly to avoid scandal. They stress secrecy.
- **Some unsavory types** are overheard talking about easy money to be made in the mountains robbing caravans. They claim they even have permission from some higher ups in Farhope!

Traveling Encounters

- **Traveling Dwarf Merchants.** Have info to share (with customers). Will tell any common knowledge about the area: very proud of their human queen. They sell well-made common equipment designed with traditional Dwarven motifs.
- **Melting Glacier Face.** Dangerously slick, may break apart when touched. DEX save to climb safely (LVL d6 damage on failure), or go the long way around around and risk frostbite (STR save or gain a Wound).
- **Discarded Bones.** Belonged to a large animal, marrow sucked out. A skilled outdoorsman can recognize them as a tell-tale sign of mountain trolls. An animal lover or Dwarf may recognize these to be bones of an Iron Goat—sturdy creatures, herded by dwarves for their hides (tough enough to be used as armor) and incredibly nutritious milk.

- **Blizzard.** Sudden winds stirred up from the peaks. Get creative or make a STR save to avoid taking LVL damage or 1 Wound from exposure.

Note: As always, allow heroes to propose their own ideas (use skills, items, teamwork etc.) Depending on how good/bad they are, grant advantage/disadvantage on rolls, allow them to succeed automatically, or come up with your own outcomes!

Adventure Locations

The Glacial Crevasse.

- Through the glacial melt.
- Wagon marks and mule prints in the thawing snow make it easy to track down.
 - A wagon lays half-crushed by a large ice chunk.
 - If no one is looking out for falling ice, everyone rolls initiative, lowest roll suffers d10 damage!

Western Camp.

- Small group of goat hair tents.
- Bandits (1 Bruiser + 2 Bandits/hero) interrogate a captive for info on future caravans (they threaten to submerge them in the glacial river).
 - Tent contents: a Dwarven Compass (stolen, belongs to Fornin), furs (worthless). Lots of food (also stolen).

Glacial River.

- LOUD waterfall of melting ice, 2 spaces wide.
- EXTREMELY cold. Soaks through clothing if walked through or pushed in. -1 speed until dried out.
 - STR or WIL save to not shout in pain at the cold, alerting Eastern camp.

Mule Corral.

- 6 mules, 1 dead. Obviously malnourished.
- One of the mules seems to be motioning to you (a shapeshifted druid merchant). Willing to heal the heroes if they can clear out the nearby western camp. Can offer a temp boon, heal HP, a Wound, etc.
 - Can give info about his friend Fornin being held captive in the bandit captain's tent.

Stolen Caravans.

- 4 large caravans, laden with goods (grain, lumber, furs, cloth, etc.)
- Marked with insignia of the Golden Company.
 - Wheels chocked and chained together. The ground slopes toward the Eastern Camp. Quietly releasing them will take out 1 Assassin hiding in his tent.

Eastern Camp

Bandits arguing.

• **1 bandit/hero (+2 Assassins hiding).** "Thorne said we'll kill em." "No, no, we're to ransom them!" "Ransom gets messy! We might get double crossed..."

• **Loot.** Hidden in a tent: a dwarven hand axe with a troll ivory handle and silver inlay, very well made (belongs to Fornin), may grant advantage on interactions with Dwarves if it is freely given.

Captain's Tent. Warm, well appointed. Wood stove, a captured Dwarf chained to it (Fornin).

• Legendary encounter: **Thorne Quickblade.**

• Thorne tries to bribe or recruit the heroes, offering double their reward to join him, bragging about his "connections" and reveals he expected betrayal from the Tower and stole a signet ring as leverage. If refused, he turns **hostile**.

• **Opening Attack.** "You should have taken my offer. Now, I'm afraid I'll have to make this hurt!"

• **On Crit.** "Oh, did that sting? Good! I want you to remember it."

• **Gaining the Upper Hand:** "I'm almost starting to feel bad for you—almost."

• **Bloodied:** "You think this is over? I'm just getting warmed up!"

• **Last Stand:** "Do you really think I'd fight fair? You have no idea who you're dealing with!"

• **On Death:** "You think this ends with me? You're in deeper than you know... You've just made enemies

in very high places.."

Aftermath

• **Loot.** Silver Rapier "Heart Piercer," a well-made crossbow "Stormquill," and a golden signet ring.

• **Fornin.** The politics is all above his paygrade, he's eager to finish the job he was paid to do and deliver the caravans. Will let the heroes keep his axe, in exchange for rescuing him, but NOT the compass.

• **Conclusion.** It is up to the party whom they side with and what information they bring back to Farhope. Freeing Fornin and recovering the caravans earns the heroes the favor of the Iceforge Dwarves. Defeating Thorne paints a target on the heroes backs with the criminal syndicate he was aligned with.

Bandits

Parry: Treat attacks against you that roll 2 as a miss.

BANDIT LVL 1/3 12

Stab. 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 8).

BANDIT ASSASIN LVL 2 24

Sneak. You are invisible until you attack.

Poison Blade (2x). 2d8+2, on damage: Dazed.



SKYREACH ISLES



A breathtaking landscape of islands suspended in the sky by **Aerolith crystals** that grow here and grant the islands flight. Connected by a maze of rope bridges, wind powered elevators and zip lines, this floating archipelago is home to the birdfolk. Despite their peaceful nature, they found themselves in constant conflict with **sky pirates** and **smugglers** who keep sneaking into the archipelago to extract the crystals, an activity that puts the lives of all islanders in danger.

Secret Plots

The Explorer's Guild's biggest source of income comes from smuggling Aerolith crystals and selling them to the Tower—who pays generously without asking questions. Keen to protect their valuable resource, the Guild is careful not to over-harvest, unlike the reckless sky pirates they constantly clash with. In an ironic twist, the birdfolk have hired the Guild to help develop security systems and traps to stop smugglers (the Guild was happy to offer them a fantastic rate).

The Golden Company once had permission to mine the crystals, but it was revoked when the birdfolk saw the harm it caused their islands. Now, the Company sponsors expeditions to eliminate the over-harvesting pirates, hoping to earn back their mining rights.

The sky pirates are using captured birdfolk to help

navigate the treacherous skies, exploiting their knowledge to evade patrols and infiltrate previously secure areas of the archipelago.

Key NPCs

Captain Stormsong. A ruthless bard and the cunning leader of the elusive sky pirates aboard the Cloudpiercer. With a smile as sharp as his blade and a voice that can summon tempests or compell even the most stubborn foes to cast themselves willingly into the open sky below.

Eyrab. A one-legged fisherman with a deep hatred to the sky kraken. He flies in a small raft, carrying rotten bait and a giant harpoon. This man refuses to die as long as the kraken is still alive.

Harla Galeheart. A former sky pirate, she now works tirelessly to protect the mines from smugglers, driven by a desire to atone for her past misdeeds when she once plundered these very skies.

Cutter Finn. A one-eyed rogue who serves as the Guild's top smuggler, his knowledge of the islands is second only to the native birdfolk. Has a silver tongue and a knack for escaping tight spots.

Rook. Stoic leader of the birdfolk patrols, a master of wind and lightning magic. Ruthless when it comes to dealing with sky pirates: a blight on the sanctity of the islands. He sees himself as the mortal extension of the Wind Sovereign's justice.

The Wind Sovereign. A gigantic human-faced bird, its wings blot out the sun, and its lightning charged talons can crush entire airships. Venerated by the birdfolk, and mortal enemy of the sky kraken.

Points of Interest

Birdfolk Hamlets. Wind-blasted villages built amongst the feathered trees. Receptive to foreigners, but not for long. Invaders captured by the birdfolk watchers are sure to face swift justice.

Aerolith Mines. Located at the core of the islands, protected by the wind wardens. Those on the outskirts are still vulnerable to smugglers, closer to depletion and on the verge of crashing to the ground.

The Cloudpiercer. A giant floating pirate skyship, always hiding always moving. No one enters or leaves its docks unnoticed.

Tempest Reef. The lair of a storm drake and her clutch of (valuable and delicious) unhatched eggs.

Sunrise Aerie. A secluded birdfolk monastery perched on the highest peak of the highest island. A place of knowledge, meditation and training. Entry requires a series of deadly aerial trials.

Ship Graveyard. A narrow circle of islands where the winds flow violently, creating a maze of currents filled with broken ships.

The Drowned Keep. A half-submerged ruin drifting amidst dense, ever raining cloudbanks. Remnants of a civilization older than the birdfolk, now infested by sky serpents and wyrms. Home to lost treasures.

Royal Nest. A vast ring of floating boulders and shattered islands, nesting grounds of griffins and giant hawks. Sought after by serpent men.

Encounters

Skyfish. Brightly colored fish that swim through the air. They're easily caught and used for food and bait to catch bigger fish.

Birdfolk Patrol. A group of watchers dedicated to catching crystal smugglers, they harness the power of winds and lightning.

Sky Pirates. A small flying boat crewed by a captain and loyal sailors. Greedy and unscrupulous, these scoundrels can never be trusted.

Winged Eels. Long serpentine creatures with feathered wings. They glide silently through the isles, camouflaged against the clouds.

Stormhawk. Birds of prey with lightning charged

feathers. Often spotted in storm clouds, hunting anything that moves in the sky.

Flying Monkeys. Loyal servants of the sky pirates, these tiny rascals are specialists in ambushes and stealing objects for their masters.

Living Wind. A dangerous mass of elemental wind and cloud. Often spawned in crystal caves after a long period of mining.

Storm Drake. A formidable predator with scales that shimmer like clouds.

Sky Kraken. A gargantuan beast with multiple tentacles trailing from a floating body. It lurks near the edges of the isles, using its tendrils to snatch unwary ships from the air. Conjures dark storm clouds to escape when threatened.

Treasures

Aerolith Crystal. A translucent gem that hums with the power of the wind. Allows the user to manipulate air and reduces falling speed. When enough are artfully installed into a large object it can gain flight.

Windcloak. A colorful cape woven from enchanted feathers. Grants the wearer limited flight and the ability to glide between islands.

Windforged Mail. A piece of light armor crafted with rare skyreach minerals. Greatly reduces damage from lightning.

Stormcaller. A polished orb filled with swirling storm clouds. Activating it summons a thunderstorm for a short period.

Zephyr Boots. Boots made from the hide of a storm drake, enchanted with the power to walk on air for short distances.

Flying Carpet. A beautifully woven rug illustrating the history of the birdfolk. It moves and flies as if it had a soul of its own.

Sky Scourge Crown. A rusty garland encrusted with barnacles. Night reveals glowing runes, giving its wearer the ability to summon obedient ghost pirates until sunrise.

Heart of the Sky. A large gem that glows with yellow light. Holds the soul of the Wind Sovereign, greatly empowers lightning spells.

The Cloudstrider's Tome. An ancient tome filled with powerful rituals for controlling the skies. It is bound in wyvern hide and sealed with arcane locks.

Raid on the Royal Nest

As a sacred prophecy is realized, a hatchery comes under siege by an army of serpent men.

GROWLING MARSHES

A treacherous region divided into two distinct landscapes. The **lowlands** form a labyrinth of bogs and swamps, where murky waters and tangled vegetation thrive amid a thick mist filled with the sounds of unseen creatures. Named for the eerie rumblings that echo through the fog, the marshes are the domain of **witches**, fen serpents, and crabmen, who navigate the swamp's twisted channels with ease. Adventurers brave enough to enter are lured by the promise of rare magical creatures, whose organs fetch a high price among alchemists.

Rising above are the **highlands**, muddy knolls and root-covered ridges where the ground firms and the air thickens with decay. Here, **necromancers** command undead legions to protect their twisted experiments. Towering Bog Giants, covered in moss and draped in vegetation, guard the highest points. Adventurers drawn by rumors of powerful relics often fail to return.

Secret Plots

The Bone War. The witches of the lowlands and the necromancers of the highlands have been locked in a bitter rivalry for decades. While the witches draw on the land's magic, the necromancers wield death and decay, sabotaging each other's rituals to gain control of the marsh. The witches seek to curse the undead to rot into oblivion, while the necromancers experiment with dark magic to siphon the witches' life force directly into their undying armies.

The Tower has secretly allied with the necromancers, trading forbidden knowledge for rare components harvested from magical corpses. **The Golden Company** views this conflict as advantageous. Playing both sides against each other, keeping them both preoccupied. Meanwhile, **the Explorer's Guild** works with the witches to leverage their knowledge of the flora for profitable ventures and map the secret regions to create hidden caches.

Key NPCs

Fenwick the Crabman Trader. A merchant with a love of haggling (despite being terrible

at it), he operates a small trading post in the heart of the lowlands. His pincers are adorned with trinkets, and his shell is painted vibrant colors. Well-informed about the marsh's secrets, he often mediates between the witches and adventurers.

Vesha, the Beauty. A cunning witch skilled in illusion and enchantment. She bears delicate tattoos that shift with magic. She plans to unleash a curse to rot the necromancers' undead minions from within. However, she must contend with the jealous Blackwater Hags.

Vael, Undying. An emaciated figure draped in tattered robes, his face obscured by a copper mask. He commands a legion of undead minions and is obsessed with obtaining more bodies. Willing to bargain for information but those who cross him or ally with the witches risk becoming part of his twisted army.

Points of Interest

- Putrid Tower.** A massive tower that looms over the highlands where necromancers conduct twisted experiments. Heavily guarded by undead minions.
- Hag's Mire.** Home of the Blackwater Hags. Effusively complimentary adventurers may receive their blessings instead of being eaten.
- Blackreed Thicket.** A dense grove of tall black reeds, easy to hide and get lost. Home of rebel crabmen who want to overthrow the Bog Tyrant.
- Crabman Warrens.** A sprawling network of tunnels and caverns deep in the marsh, ruled by the Bog Tyrant. The warrens are filled with traps, treasure, and enslaved creatures.
- Greenfire Glade.** A clearing shrouded in ghostly flames that never burn out. Magic spells and rituals effects are enhanced in this place.
- Veil of Mists.** Lair of the Mist Wyrm, source of the mist that flows to the whole marsh. Killing the drake will make the fog abate.
- Crimson Hives.** Bog wasp nest, where the blood they drink is matured into a delicious & deadly honey.

Adventure Hooks

- Bladehall** is hiring veteran scouts to find their paladins who got lost in the marshes.
- The Tower** pays high rewards for those who bring them preserved magical organs. The prize for living monsters is even higher.
- Grivnik, the Black** is sending recruits for an initiation rite in the marshes. Those who return with valuable information will be admitted to the inner circle.

The Explorer's Guild has intel on mist drakes, they want you to confirm. They are supposed to have organs that produce Fenstones, small stones that are highly prized by alchemists and mages.

Encounters

- Snirp, the Rebel.** A one-armed crabman walking slowly and dripping blood, then he falls into the mud. Snirp just tried to kill the Bog Tyrant and failed, barely escaping alive. Can become an ally if helped.
- Rothgar, the Creeper.** A towering creature covered in moss and tangled roots. Then you see your body surrounded by vines. Roll to avoid being captured. Rothgar will bring you to the blackwater hags.
- Direfrogs.** Giant toads with eyes that glow in the dark. Their croak sends waves through the water. Always hungry, will eat a man whole.
- Blackwater Hags.** Powerful witches. They are jealous, petty, and VERY susceptible to flattery.
- Crabmen.** Humanoid crabs eating a corpse. One of them turns in your direction.
- Monster Poachers.** Desperate scoundrels trying to ambush and capture monsters.
- Mist Wyrm.** A wingless black dragon with scales that shimmer like oil. Fiercely intelligent.

Treasures

- Witch's Eye.** A shriveled eye encased in amber. Allows the bearer to see through illusions.
- Reed Flute.** A musical instrument carved from a rare swamp wood. Calls forth harmless swamp creatures to serve as guides.
- Lung of the Mire.** A green flower that glows faintly in the dark. Very valuable to alchemists.
- Moonshadow Cloak.** An enchanted cloak woven from the silk of swamp spiders. Grants the wearer invisibility under moonlight.
- Venomfang Dagger.** Carved from the fang of a mist drake, this small blade is permanently coated with a deadly poison.
- Crablord's Crown.** A helmet made from the shell of a colossal crab, adorned with barnacles and seaweed. The wearer can command lesser crabmen.

The Hag's Legacy

A muddy mystery of betrayals and deception for level 4 Heroes.

Secrets: What's going on?

Malphara the Vile, a cruel hag, is dead. She lived in the Bubbling Quagmire with her enslaved assistants: **Jona** (an aging troll) and **Borrick** (whose mind she swapped with a donkey). Jona, after years of witnessing Borrick's abuse, broke free from her hex and killed Malphara. Locals and other hags sense the hag's fading magic and are emboldened to invade her land. To deter them, Jona disguises herself as Malphara.

Quest Hooks

- Villagers say a hag kidnaps those that live off the marshes. They want to get even now that she's weak.
- A necromancer posing as an alchemist pays well for the preserved organs of a hag.
- A local needs proof of the death of his missing uncle, Borrick, in order to receive his inheritance.

Treasures

- Hex Hand.** Malphara's withered hand. Casts Gravecraft. Can make a spoon or ladle stir without touching.
- Lientern.** Lantern fueled by lies. Frowns when lit.
- Homunculus Dough.** Lump of grey dough. Spill blood on it and it grows, taking the form of the invoker in dough, whom it obeys. Lasts a week, then gets stale.

Traveling Encounters

- Monster Hunting Traps.** A sprung trap with fresh blood (Lore: troll's blood). 3 other traps hidden amongst foliage and muck. Roll saves to spot/dodge until all 3 have been seen or sprung (1d10 damage).
- Trapped Sprite.** Stuck in purple sap, its wings flutter spasmodically. (Naturecraft: purplethumb tree). Touching the sap: STR save or muscles lock up painfully. If freed, she thanks heroes with information (rumors) or a gift (one d20 reroll today).
- Swamped Ruin.** Half-sunken corpse inside. Human female in Golden Company garb. On her: rusted mail, 13 gp, poisoned apple. (Those inside, 50% chance leeches attach; minor damage until noticed).

Adventure Locations

- Vampire Bramble.** Thickets surrounds the hag's swamp.
• 2 dead villagers tangled, drained of blood, naturecraft

or arcana to know about the plant.

- If pricked, suffer 1d4 damage & blood begins to be drained. Finesse check to remove thorn, repeat damage until success (or magically healed).
- Crimson fruit. Edible; iron taste. Borrick's favorite.
- 4 Slashing attacks can break through. But briars go flying everywhere. Roll 1d6, pricked by briar on a 1-2.
- Fire can burn through, but fruit will explode, dealing 2d6 damage to creatures nearby and alerting Jona.
- Leads to Inner Swamp (wet) or Ghost Light Trail (dry).

The Inner Swamp. Quagmire of crooked trees and bubbling mud. Careful or they'll pop! (each hero rolls 1d6):

- Clumsy you!** Roll again twice.
- Fetid Gas.** STR save or Poisoned for 2 encounters.
- More Stirges.** 3 Freshly hatched (hungry) Stirges.
- Monster Grease.** Covered in grease (flames or sparks nearby ignite. 2×LVL damage, ending this).
- Stirges.** 2 Freshly hatched (hungry) Stirges.
- Just a wet pop.** Lucky you.

Ghost Light Trail. Spectral fires that resemble faces lead into the mist. At least it's somewhat solid ground.

- Following them leads to a pond, water clear and still. A golden glint at the bottom.
- All who look: What would you most like to see? INT save or they are drawn into the water, seeing that.
- Repeat until save. Suffer 1 Wound for each failure as you drown. After 2 failed saves, at the bottom you see nothing but skeletons, gain advantage on the save.

The Warning. Tree in the middle of a clearing. "KEP OWT" freshly carved into the trunk.

- A severed arm sticks out of a hole in the tree. Pointing back out of the swamp, slightly moving. (Perception: faint skittering) Silver ring on a finger (30 gp).
- If touched, the arm falls out, covered in centipedes who attack immediately (d4 minions, 6 of them).
- Deep raspy voice, (Insight: straining to sound high pitched) Jona's voice compels "Leave and scatter, nosey trespasser!" The hidden troll attacks from cover: casting Gravecraft with the Hex Hand, opening pits and staining the heroes' clothing with muck

and blood before limping back home.

- Silhouette of Spiderhollow can be seen ahead in the distance, heroes can hear a man's voice yelling for help to the west (Donkey Chase).

Donkey Chase. Screams in the distance, ground shakes, a giant chasing a donkey yelling with a man's voice.

- Bog Giant (use Hill Giant stats. Can't see, VERY good hearing. Attacks whatever makes the most noise).
- Donkey (with Borrick's mind) yells and runs around a rock. If saved, Borrick asks for help recovering his real body. Can guide to the back entrance: the Flooded Cesspool (he escaped during the fight between the hag and troll and anxious to know their fates).

Spiderhollow. Malphara's home. A grotesque and hollow trunk, with crooked roots resembling arachnid legs.

- Countless bonechimes. Will jangle if not treading carefully (Stealth check) alerting Jona and spiderbats.
- Front door: opens to Brewing Hearth.
- Perception: hole in roof to Bat Roost. Easily climbable.
- Secret entrance in the back (Flooded Cesspool).

Flooded Cesspool. Sewage 5ft. deep, awful stench. STR save or vomit.

- Tadpoles swim amidst the sludge. A toad croaks a familiar song from one of the heroes' childhood.
- Leads up to the latrine in Disheveled Bedroom.

Bat Roost. Attic, filled with cobwebs, piles of guano.

- Coop for spiderbats (d8 minions, 2/Hero).
- Psychedelic mushrooms grow among guano (VERY valuable to an alchemist). In the detritus: The Lientern. Exits to outside or down to Disheveled Bedroom.

Disheveled Bedroom. Pile of hay and bones.

- A man lays in hay (Borrick's body with donkey mind). Hot-tempered, prone to kicking. Cannot talk, only bray.
- Loot: A Reed Flute, Homunculus Dough. Examination (will wake "Borrick"): hidden scroll to reverse his curse.
- Latrine behind a curtain to Flooded Cesspool. Lad-

der up to Bat Roost. Wooden door to Brewing Hearth.

Brewing Hearth. Myriad of ingredients and jars.

- Large cauldron, room for one person. A leather hag mask hangs from a hook. Unless alerted, Jona is treating her wounds from the Monster Hunting Trap.
- Jona attacks intruders in her home. In a fight, each round a magical ladle targets 1 hero to push into cauldron (DEX save). 1d20 fire damage/turn. "Borrick" will wake and kick intruders (1 damage, 10 hp). At 40 HP, Jona (use Troll stat block) will beg to be left in peace.
- She is willing to part with curios. Among the clutter: Pickled hag organs, an mysterious amulet (helps with one of the hero's problems).
- After the fight, echoing cackles surround the den. Jonna recognizes the voice: Dregatha, Thrice-Chinned, (Malphara's younger sister). She foresaw the death of her sibling and comes to take the Hollow for herself.

DREGATHA, THRICE-CHINNED LVL 5

Spit Curse. When Crit: DC 12 INT save, or 1 Wound.

- Bug Swarm.** Summon 5 minions (d4), then:
- Claw (2x).** 1d4+8, on damage: Dazed.

Opening Attack: Heh, I didn't even like Malphara, but blood runs thicker than mud!

On Crit: He-he-he! Squirrrrm like a maggot!

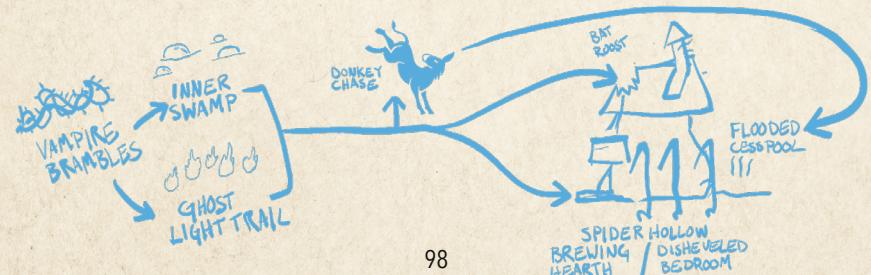
Gaining the Upper Hand: Sing, little toads, siiing!

Bloodied: No fair, I deserve my turn!

On Death: Your future is dark, worm... *occult mumbling* (Whoever landed the killing blow: WIL save or become cursed; half as tall until cured).

Aftermath

- Jona.** If the heroes intercede for her, she makes peace with the locals and becomes a herbalist.
- Borrick.** If his curse isn't broken, or either body is lost, he will choose to remain with Jona.
- Dregatha.** If she becomes the new mistress of Spiderhollow, she turns out even worse than her sister.



Meat for the King Crab

Dare to Defy the Bog Tyrant: A Challenge for Level 5 Heroes!

Secrets: What's Going On?

- The Bog Tyrant's power grows. With each pound of flesh he consumes, his size increases. In time, the crab king's strength will outmatch even the mightiest of the Growling Marsh's necromancers or witches.
- The Bog Tyrant assumed power after an outbreak of **necromantic disease** destroyed a portion of the crabman warrens, killing half the population and transforming them into horrid abominations called **Huskwalkers**. These mindless, undead monstrosities that seek new flesh to incorporate into their mass and the Bog Tyrant does little to combat them.
- The crabmen are **gullible** and easily fooled. Most crabmen serve the Bog Tyrant out of fear alone.

Questhooks

- The Explorer's Guild**'s most valuable caches have been unearthed and raided by the Bog Tyrant's soldiers. They need adventurers to breach the tyrant's horde and steal back their valuables.
- The Necromancers** wish for the Bog Tyrant's demise so that they can reanimate its corpse as a weapon to wield against the witches.
- The Prince of Blackreed**, leader of the crabman rebels, seeks to dethrone the Bog Tyrant and free his people from the tyrant's claws.
- The Witches** see the Bog Tyrant's hunger as a dangerous imbalance of natural hierarchies. Sadly, culling the mad crab is the only way.

Traveling Encounters

- Buried Dead.** Unliving corpses trapped deep in the mud. As you walk through the area, their rotting hands burst from the mud and try to drag you down (DC 14 Finesse/Might check each round. 3 successes to escape the area. Failing 3 times, you are pulled below, and take 1 Wound per round).
- Meat Patrol.** A platoon of crabmen patrol the area. They seek meat for the Bog Tyrant, chittering chants of "mEaT fOr ThE KiNg cRaB" Perception check to hear them above the din of the swamp. On success, advantage on Initiative, on failure, surprised.
- Swarm Scouts.** The characters stumble across a great hollow log by the water's edge. They hear bog

hornets droning overhead (3/hero, use Ghoul statblock). Naturecraft reveals they're scouting for new hive locations and hiding in the log is a BAD idea.

- Witch Trader.** A bog witch banished from the covens. She has grotesque magical trinkets for sale: a rotten finger that always curls north, a pouch that fills with a swarm of angry wasps each dawn, and a preserved leech that deals Necrotic damage to plants it touches. If the characters buy something, she can also tell them one of the Secrets.

Adventure Locations

Warrens Entrance. Large, crab-shaped hole in the ground, guarded by crabmen (1/hero).

- The crabmen here will attack unless the heroes are overtly friendly. They can be fooled into thinking the heroes are here to pay tribute to the Bog Tyrant.
- "YoU aRe hEre tO pAy MeAt TriBuTe tO kiNg cRaB?"

Warrens Proper. Large cavern, dozens of crabmen.

- The crabmen here peer curiously at the characters, then go about their business (unless told otherwise, they assume that the heroes are meant to be here).
- If combat occurs, a dozen crabmen fight while the rest burrow into the mud and flee.
- They are happy to openly tell the heroes everything they want to know (to the best of their ability).

Feeding Pools. A dozen murky wading pools.

- Each pool is a tiny ecosystem of algae and shellfish (Naturecraft: they're rudimentary agricultural work).
- One of the pools contains the Old Gulf Claw, a crabman claw imbued with the magic of the bog. While worn as a gauntlet, it can cast the utility spell "Bogify" once per day (like "Beautify" but bog-related: can conjure mud, small crabs, reeds, and bugs).
- Taking the Old Gulf Claw awakens a Shambling Mound in the pool (use Troll statblock). It is beholden to the Bog Tyrant and attacks any non-crabman.
- Signs pointing: fOoD roOm (the pot), that way: nlcE wALK (the Deep Bog).

The Pot. Enormous stew pot set into the floor. Attended by large crabmen throwing meat of all sorts in.

- None are allowed in these chambers and the crabman brute cooks attack on sight (2/hero), chanting calls for "mEaT! mEaT! mEaT!" as they do.

- Anything pushed into the stew takes 1d20 Fire damage and again each time they begin their turn there
- The stew is surprisingly good and provides 2 Hit Dice worth of healing when consumed.

The Deepbog. A maze of fetid water, roots, and rot. Smells not only unpleasant, but as if it's been "befouled."

- Easy to get lost here, after wandering for some time a Huskwalker bursts out of the ground and attacks.
- After which, make a Naturecraft check to find the exit or become lost and encounter another a Huskwalker. After a successful Naturecraft check or after 3 more Huskwalker encounters the heroes find the exit.

Royal Protectors. A curtain of reeds hangs before the entrance to the Bog Tyrant's throne, guarded by crabmen brutes (2/hero).

- If they come from The Pot: "whErE iS mEaT? aRe yoU mEaT?"
- If they come from The Deepbog: "wOw, yoU STroNg. ArE yOU nEW CraB kiNg??"
- These guards will accept nearly any excuse to be let into the Throne Room.

Throne of the Bog Tyrant. Nestled upon a throne of reeds and discarded bones amid a pool of rancid water is a crabman the size of a farmhouse.

CRABMAN LVL 1 26
Claw (2x). 1d8+1

HUSKWALKER LVL 5 80
Greatclaw (2x). 1d4+10, on crit: knock Prone.

CRABMAN LVL 2 BRUTE M 40
Bash (2x). 2d8+1 damage. On hit: push 2.

• "You come to give your meat to the great Bog Lord?" (If the heroes convincingly play along, they gain advantage on Initiative)

• **Opening Attack:** I make your meat, MY meat!

• **Gaining the Upper Hand:** "Bog Lord too strong! You no fight, only squish!" "You too soft! Need tougher shell!"

• **Bloodied:** "You stronger than stew meat..."

• **Last Stand:** "No more play... You food now!"

• **On Death:** "My... my meat..."

Aftermath

- With the Bog Tyrant slain, the crabmen are free from his rule. Many are confused and directionless, unsure of how to live without his oppressive control.
- Without the Bog Tyrant's negligence, the crabmen may unite to fight against the undead Huskwalkers, now seen as the true threat. They may need assistance from the heroes to form strategies or create defenses.
- The Bog Tyrant's treasure trove is left behind, filled with stolen riches from the Explorer's Guild and other factions. The heroes can return the goods to their rightful owners—or keep some for themselves.
- The necromancers may seek the body of the Bog Tyrant for their own dark purposes.
- The witches may reward the heroes with blessings or rare poultices.

Level 5 Solo Crab King The Bog Tyrant

115 H STR++

Easily Confused. Will always attack the last creature that damaged him.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose one:

- King Claws.** Move 4 then attack (2x) for **1d20** damage.
- Skitter & Spit.** Move 8 then spit bone (range 6) **1d20**.

BLOODIED: Cracked Shell. At 75 HP, armor is reduced to **M**.

LAST STAND: The Bog Tyrant is dying! 50 more damage and he dies. Until then, whenever he attacks he also bites the nearest creature for 1d20 damage.



SHADOW BLIGHT

A nightmarish wasteland scarred by deep canyons and shrouded in poisonous gas that seeps from the broken earth. This cursed land teems with cultists, fiends, and eldritch beings, its twisted terrain a gateway to malevolent dimensions beyond human comprehension. The only expeditions permitted to traverse its borders are ones led by a powerful cleric or wizard. Though some daring scoundrels and desperate adventurers risk everything for the chance to claim dark power and favor from these profane entities.

Secret Plots

The veil between the mundane world and the horrible beyond was torn by a group of powerful mages long ago. This breach unleashed a wave of dark energies, twisting the landscape and corrupting the very fabric of reality, giving rise to the Shadowblight. Mages of **The Tower**, believe they can dominate the forces of the nightmare realm, so they fight against lesser fiends while bargaining with greater eldritch beings in exchange for power.

A rogue within **the Explorer's Guild** is secretly a spy for the cultist group within the Shadowblight and feeding the Guild false information.

The Golden Company is aware of increased cultist activity in the Shadowblight, threatening the stability of the region. Grand Commander Marcus Thelis is contemplating a secret expedition to eliminate the cult leaders.

Points of Interest

- **Blightward Sanctum.** An ancient temple full of broken idols at the entrance to the Shadowblight. Powerful clerics devote their lives to prevent underworld abominations from reaching the surface.
- **The Crimson Veil.** A thick wall of red mist that shifts and moves as if alive. Those who enter risk becoming lost forever, unless guided by a bearer of a trueflame.
- **Havocspire.** A ruined fortress that defies gravity, with twisted spires floating in mid-air. It shifts and groans like a wounded beast, the stone bleeding molten lava and whispering incantations of chaos.
- **Desolated Fields.** A massive crater that blows poisonous fumes and flames. Rumored to be the site of a battle between eldritch entities.
- **Fiend Graves.** A maze of twisting canyons filled with the bones of long-dead warriors. Haunted by wailing hordes and lesser fiends.
- **Nightmare Vortex.** Extridimensional fissures where the horrors from beyond leak through. A paladin or wizard must perform a long ritual to close it, bringing attention to all nearby fiends.
- **Ashen Peaks.** A range of black mountains scraping the underworld ceilings. Infested with all sorts of demons, few clerics ever returned.
- **Erebus Vaults.** Poisonous caves filled with all sorts of valuable jewels. Touching its treasures always triggers either an encounter or a curse.

- **Bonefields.** Filled with half-buried titanic bones, this wasteland is a perfect place for necromancers seeking to raise unstoppable armies.
- **Scalding Fissure.** A deep chasm filled with boiling steam and rivers of lava, each surrounding a different eldritch gaol. Those wearing armor take heating damage.
- **Eldritch Gaol.** Timeless prisons of ancient entities. They offer their own powers in exchange for being released from their shackles. If released, each entity brings a different disaster to the overworld.
- **Undying Pire.** A massive crater perpetually burning with a hungry passion, longing to reduce the world to ashes.
- **Howling Grave.** A vast canyon full of bones and a fetid atmosphere. Walking through it may awaken all sorts of chimeric skeletons.
- **Choking Pass.** Horrid trenches spread over the region, where ambushes are a constant threat.
- **Nightmare Vortex.** Extridimensional fissures that must be closed.

Adventure Hooks

- **Bladehall** is sending reinforcements to gehenna's mouth to aid their devoted paladins, who are getting fewer in number each day.
- **Eldritch beings** are contacting villagers of Merivale in their dreams, promising wealth and power in exchange for their freedom.
- **Elara Voss** is concerned that the tower in the Highway of Flame closest to the Shadowblight continues to be snuffed out, even after being relit.
- **A cohort of paladins** went to the Eldritch Gaol and never returned. Bladehall is worried they may be dead (or worse).

Encounters

- **Sir Kasmiel, High Paladin.** A tall cleric in radiant armor and morningstar, performing a ritual to close a portal while his 12 acolytes fight a horde of fiends.
- **Zelindra Voss.** A black haired woman in the Tower garb restrained in enchanted chains. If released, she asks to join the party until she finds a Great Evil to bargain their souls in exchange for power.
- **Sinew Titan.** A monstrous creature formed entirely of a grotesque lattice of shifting fibers binding it together without muscle or bone. Moves with unnatural fluidity.
- **Fickle Imp.** Trapped in an enchanted bottle, begging

to be released. Gives useful information if players tricks him, flees when released.

- **Ashspawn.** Winged fiends spreading fire and looking for creatures to torment.
- **Plaguebringer.** Mass of necrotic fiends covered in oozing sores, withering the ground wherever it steps.
- **Charnel Serpe.** A giant skeletal snake wreathed in blue flames, burrowing through the ash canyons.
- **Wailing Hordes.** A legion of vengeful spirits marching through the wasteland, screaming and devouring every soul they touch.
- **Fallen Celestial.** A six-armed giant of shadow and flames, wings seared off. In perpetual war against fiends.
- **Wretched Souls.** May become humans again if a paladin manages to perform a cleansing ritual.
- **Abyssal Lord.** A massive demon with diamond scales, burning eyes and a thundering voice. Surrounded by a cluster of demons, each demon killed makes him stronger. He wants to escape to the surface and expand his domain.

Treasures

- **Soulshard Amulet.** An ominous black gem. Empowers Necrotic spells but corrupts the wearer.
- **Ashen Harp.** A delicate instrument made of burned bones and tendons. Its melody puts fiends under control of its musician.
- **Hellish Blade.** A carved obsidian sword wreathed in ghostly flames. Hungers for demonic blood and grows stronger with each one it slays.
- **Grimskull Helm.** Crafted from the skull of a demon lord. Wearing it grants resistance to fire and necrotic, but may cause insanity.
- **Vortex Sigil.** A pulsing medallion that absorbs light. Creates portals to the shadow realm, which can be used as dangerous shortcuts.
- **Doomcaller's Horn.** A twisted horn that, when blown, summons a storm of ash and fire. Summons demons if used under a blood moon.
- **Obsidian Gauntlets.** Made from dark glass engraved with runes of power. Enhances the physical strength of its wearer but demands a sacrifice of blood each dawn.
- **Trueflame.** Fire that burns with bright pure white light. It dissipates fog and illusions, but fiends tend to harbor extra animosity toward flame bearers.

Beyond the Crimson Veil

A fiendish adventure for 14th level heroes.

Tip! Use the monster builder charts to adjust the difficulty to be appropriate for any level!

Secrets: What's Going On?

- The Crimson Veil, a great wall of blood red fog that blankets much of the Shadowblight, is spreading. Every day, its borders reach further like clawing hands.
- As many prophets have feared, **Azriel, the Lord of Pain & Flame** has taken command over the Veil. He aims to blanket the world in the Veil's mist.
- Azriel is using **Infernal Blood Engines** to create the mist, destroying them will end the plague.
- Azriel has imprisoned the eldritch being **Mrtav, The Dead One Dying**, in a great engine. Freeing Mrtav would cause an even greater calamity.

Questhooks

- Golden Company:** Paladins seek heroes willing to risk death (*or worse*) by venturing into the Crimson Veil and slaying whatever fiendish power has claimed dominion over it. It begins to spread into neighboring regions. They request you put a stop to its spread.
- The Tower:** The mages know it is the fiend Azriel that has taken hold of the Veil and wish for the characters to strike a bargain with him on their behalf. They believe that they can join forces with him against a common enemy.
- Elukka the Ravager:** a fiend bested by Azriel centuries ago, seeks powerful individuals who can best his old adversary.

Trueflame. The questgiver also gives an obsidian torch lit with Trueflame: The bearer has advantage on all attacks against fiends, but fiends tend to harbor extra animosity toward them.

Traveling Encounters

- Poison Vent.** A crack forms in the earth, spewing toxic fumes all around (STR save or take 1/2 LVL Poison damage and become Poisoned for the next 2 traveling encounters). Bearer of Trueflame has advantage.
- Bodies.** The remnants of a past expedition into the Shadowblight. The corpses are being picked clean by a pack of preoccupied **Spiny Fiends** (3/hero). The

corpse of the wizard bears a staff (blackwood) and spellbook (contains 1 utility spell, and 1 spell scroll).

- Spire of Filth.** A horrid spire of filth, capped with a burning iris of green flame. Unless they quickly hide from it, heroes suffer 30 psychic damage. If they attempt to hide, reduce this damage by an amount equal to their Stealth roll. Trueflame bearers have disadvantage on the roll.
- Profane Idol.** A crumbling shrine to the eldritch being, Mrtav the Dead One Dying. It tells (in Primordial) of Mrtav's terrible power and the grave risk to the world if he should be freed. It has recently been defiled with Azriel's mark.

Adventure Locations

Traversing the Veil. Heroes moving between locations in the Veil risk becoming lost (DC 16 Naturecraft check or stumble into clearing where fiends attack, roll with advantage if the party bears Trueflame).

Duel Before the Veil. A wall of scarlet fog that reaches to the sky above. A host of fiends emerge.

- Glabrezus** (1/2 hero) and **Stench Fiends** (3/hero)
- I am Uldraz, Champion of Pain. You have come to serve Azriel, yes? Send forth your strongest champion to face me—one-on-one. Prove your worth and we will let you pass.
- The Duel: If accepted, the other fiends can cheer/jeer twice (granting/forcing 1 reroll). The heroes may do whatever they like to aid their ally in the fight but if they deal damage, the rest of the fiends will attack.
- Victory: If the hero bloodies Uldraz: "You have earned your passage, mortals. Go before I change my mind."
- Loss: If the hero drops to 0 HP, Uldraz: "Weak, as I suspected. Now you all shall fall!" They attack.

- The Black Gate.** An onyx door blocked by magic. Its surface reads "By fire or blood."
- The door can be opened by spilling blood here: LVL

damage per hero (divided as they choose).

- Alternatively, touching Trueflame to the door opens it, extinguishing the flame. Once open, the door provides access to "Captives" without *Traversing the Veil*.

South Blood Engine. A nightmarish machine that churns with captive creatures, processing their blood into crimson mist.

- A group of stench fiends turns the cranks and levers on the Blood Engine, being whipped and cajoled by task-masters (2/hero, use the below statblock).

INCUBUS/SUCCUBUS LVL 4

50

Infernal Allure. At the start of their turn, heroes make a DC 15 WIL save or become Allured (GM spends 1 of your Actions). Gain advantage for each failure this encounter.

Claws & Whip (2x). 1d8+5 damage.

- The taskmasters are treacherous and will fight for only as long as they outnumber the heroes. Will provide information in exchange for their lives.
- The stench fiends are cowards and will not fight, they continue operating the machine only as long as their task masters are around.

Blood Vats. An untold number of voices scream within bubbling vats of crimson liquid.

- Mad cultists babble cryptic verses interspersed with fiendish tongues: "Dead One dies for death to spread!" "Red ocean drowns the sea of green!"
- They stir and mix the vats with enormous onyx ladles (2 cultists, 1 fanatic, & 1 doomsayer/hero; the screams reduce hearing range to 4 spaces).

Captives. 2 cages, each with over a dozen captive civilians, desperate and begging to be released.

- Captives from cage 1 warn not to release open cage 2, they are disguised fiends rightfully being punished (this is false). Captives from cage 2 claim likewise (this is true).

- They both claim to be from a local village that was engulfed by the crimson veil. The real civilians can't think how to prove they are telling the truth; but if asked, know details about their village the fiends don't.

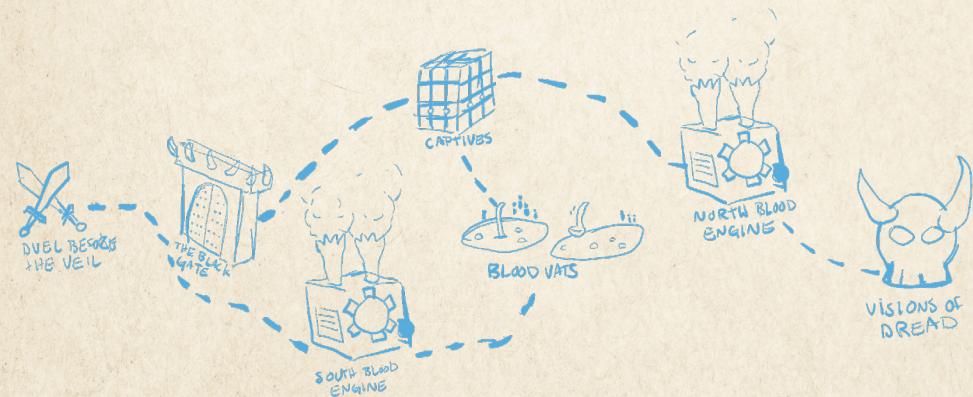
- Any skills, spells, or abilities that can see through lies or illusions can detect the fiends.

North Blood Engine. 10 stench fiends bumble around trying to fix the apparently broken machine. They ignore the heroes and work tirelessly as a frog-fiend watches over their work.

- A frog-fiend the size of a small house nervously gobbles about the malfunction. "Ideas! I need IDEAS or Azriel will put ME in it next!"
- Given enough time, the stench fiends will fix the machine. But if their taskmaster is scared away or otherwise dealt with they will cease work.

Visions of Dread. A colossal machine, thick with congealed black blood, billows forth thick mist.

- Legendary encounter Azriel, Lord of Pain & Flame. As you approach, Azriel projects visions of dread into your minds—scenes of destruction, suffering, and the world consumed by the Veil. "Speak. Why have you entered my domain?"
- Opening:** "Tremble at your doom, mortals!"
- Gaining the Upper Hand:** "Is this all your pathetic world can muster?"
- Last Stand:** "I am PAIN, suffer with me!"
- On Death:** "You cannot kill flame..."



Appendix of Inspiration

Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master by Michael Shea—Step by Step guide on how to prep and run a TTRPG.

Knave 2 by Ben Milton—Lots of great tables for getting the creative juices flowing.

Forge of Foes

The Monsters Know What They're Doing by Kieth Ammann—how to bring more life to your combat encounters.

Flee, Mortals! by MCDM—Super crunchy, exceptionally well-balanced monsters.

Mausritter—A lightweight, charming TTRPG that has deeply inspired my own design.

Oz and Neverland by Andrew Kolb—5e compatible settings. Absolute masterpieces of layout, design and creativity.

5e CONVERSION

Monsters

You can use any 5e compatible monster stat block with Nimble with minimal tweaks on the fly. Run them exactly as written, using their move, action, bonus action, etc. as normal, with the following exceptions:

- **Monster Attacks.** Simply roll their damage dice to attack. They miss on an attack by rolling a 1 on their Primary Die, and crit by rolling the maximum.
- **Monster Armor.** 5e monsters that have **14-17 AC** have **Medium Armor**, less than that is unarmored, more than that is Heavy. **Example:**

5e Goblin

Armor Class. 15 **Hit Points.** 7

Scimitar. +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5(1d6+2) slashing damage.



5e Goblin (Converted)

Armor Class. 15 **M Hit Points.** 7

Scimitar. +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5(1d6+2) slashing damage.

A note on armor: Encounter balance in Nimble is much more forgiving than other games. A GM can adjust armor up or down quite freely without breaking encounter balance. If too many monsters have the same AC, the GM can upgrade/downgrade their armor for variety. Unarmored should be the bulk of monsters your party encounters (~60%), Medium should be uncommon (only about 30% of the monsters in any given session) while Heavy should be quite rare (~10-20%).

Additional Optional Tweaks

- **Monster Saves.** For speed of play, default to rolling saves without any bonuses. Rather than having to track a multitude of stats for every monster, simply roll a d20 and let that result stand. If a monster is particularly Strong/Frail, Fast/Slow, or Smart/Dumb they can roll those respective STR, DEX, & WIL/INT saves with advantage/disadvantage. Legendary monsters can have advantage on some or all saves.
- **Player Agency.** When a monster would take away agency in some way from Heroes (incapacitate, paralyze, petrify, or stun) consider the new Dazed status instead (-1 Action for 1 round).
- **Promote One.** If an encounter calls for 8 vanilla goblins. You can make one of them the leader by doubling his HP, giving him Heavy Armor, add 1 damage die, and give him 1 more attack.

5e Spells

It is not recommended to use 5e combat related spells with Nimble (but if you'd like, most of them should be easy enough to use with Nimble as is), but some of the more unique utility spells could make the game more interesting. Use common sense, but here are some rules of thumb:

- The spell's level is how much mana it costs. Range is shorter in Nimble (typically 16 spaces/80 ft. max)
- Cantrips, Bonus Action, Reaction, or other simple, non-damaging spells cost **1 Action**; other leveled spells cost **2 Actions**, large AoE spells cost **3 Actions**. Examples:

Magic Missile Tier 1, 2 Actions

Range: 12. **Damage:** 1d4+1 (3x). Can target a different creature with each die. Does not miss on a 1. **Upcast:** +1d4+1 damage.

Longstrider Tier 1, 1 Action

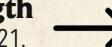
Give a creature you touch +2 speed for 1 hour. **Upcast:** +1 creature.

5e Magical Items

Divide any main ability stat bonuses in half (round up). Stats are less game-breaking in Nimble.

Belt of Hill Giant Strength

While wearing this belt, your STR is 21.



Belt of Hill Giant Strength

While wearing this belt, your STR is 6.

5e Races & Classes

- **Race & Background:** pick a Nimble ancestry & background and flavor them however you like.
- **Classes:** For the smoothest experience, it is recommended to use a Nimble class; however, you can use any 5e compatible class. Simply swap in the Nimble attack and armor rules. Don't attempt to mix & match 5e and Nimble spells, feats, or other options, stick with either/or.

Saving Throws

- CON save → use STR instead.
- WIS/CHA save → use WIL instead.

Skill Checks

- Animal Handling/Nature/Survival → Naturecraft
- Athletics → Might
- Deception/Persuasion/Performance → Influence
- History/Religion → Lore
- Investigation/Medicine → Examination
- Sleight of Hand/Acrobatics → Finesse

Using 5e Legendary Monsters

You can run 5e legendary monsters as written just like other monsters! Acting once per round, and simply rolling their damage dice to see if they hit or crit. However, you can easily adapt them to act after each player's turn like Nimble legendary monsters if you prefer.

For instance the 5e **Adult Black Dragon**, turn its Acid Breath into a single use ability that recharges when it is Bloodied. Instead of its Multiattack, after each hero's turn choose one: Fly up to 80 ft. and make a Bite; OR Make a Claw attack and a Tail/Wing attack. For its Last Stand ability, it can choose twice each turn. Very scary!



CHAOS

ARTIST: ALEMA

Unless otherwise noted, ongoing effects last for up to 1 minute or until Chaos is triggered again.

- 1 Elemental Eruption.** Creatures within 6 spaces of you must make a DEX save. Taking INT d10 fire damage on a failure, half on save. You fail the save.
 - 2 Backfire.** Gain 1 Wound. The spell you just cast also targets you (or an enemy if it was a beneficial spell).
 - 3 Aww, Nuts!** You polymorph into a cute squirrel until you take damage. Your TOP priority is to find acorns (squirrels can't cast spells).
 - 4 Summon Aetherlings.** At the end of each of your turns, summon INT hostile aetherling minions adjacent to you that act immediately after you (size: d6).
 - 5 Graviturgical Grace.** A random enemy is pulled adjacent to you at the end of each of your turns.
 - 6 Liquefy Legs.** You fall prone, cannot stand, and your speed becomes 0 while out of water.
 - 7 Elemental Entanglement.** An enemy controls 1 Action for you at the start of each of your turns.
 - 8 Ethereal Cocoon.** You are enveloped in a magical cocoon until the end of your next turn. You fall prone, are unable to move or speak and are immune to damage. You must spend all of your Actions casting cantrips at the nearest other creature.
 - 9 Manastorm.** The last spell you cast is cast again for free, against a random target.
 - 10 Reality Warp.** Everywhere around you within 6 spaces is difficult terrain.
- 11 Displacement.** Teleport. 1d4:
 1. The worst place! (GMs choice)
 2. UP! 6 spaces (3d6 falling damage)
 3. Player's choice, 6 spaces
 4. Player's choice, 12 spaces
 - 12 Chaos Step.** Swap places with any creature you see.
 - 13 Mindfire.** An enemy with the lowest INT within 16 spaces. takes INT d6 psychic damage (ignoring armor), and gains the Smoldering condition.
 - 14 Emerge beautiful.** You sprout butterfly wings from your back, gain a flying speed.
 - 15 Unbiggen.** Your size is halved, gain advantage on Stealth checks and attacks against you are made with disadvantage.
 - 16 Embiggen.** Your size is doubled. Gain INT d10 Temp HP and advantage on STR saves instead of disadvantage.
 - 17 Awakening.** A 3rd eye appears on your forehead, gain advantage on the Assess action and all attacks.
 - 18 Diamond Skin.** Multiply your Armor by INT; you can Defend for free each round.
 - 19 Mighty Mana.** Your spells (including the one that triggered this effect) are empowered and are cast as if you spent 2 additional mana on them.
 - 20 Elemental Overload.** Enemies within 12 spaces of you take INT d8 lightning damage. You regain INT Mana at the end of your turns (this mana expires at the end of combat if unused).

