Nimble

A fast, tactical TTRPG

Game Master's Guide

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ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

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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 (or at least skimmed) the *Core Rules* book, stop here and do that now. You don't have to be an expert–you'll get a better hang of them as you play through the adventure.

2. **Get some friends together.** A typical group is 3–5 players–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 (see "LET'S PLAY!" on pg. 63)! 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.

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.

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 skill check. 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?"

> ***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." Ask your players to stick to the story you've got prepared for now. In time, you'll be able to let them wander off and do anything they can imagine, but for now, let's play the adventure that's at hand.

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 anyway*. 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.

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 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.).

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, on a 20+ check to Create an Opening, they could get an additional die of damage as well!

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 like 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. You MUST be clear about danger: you are their eyes and ears. They cannot make meaningful decisions if they are in the dark about how deadly a situation is. 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… (See pg. 12 for more).

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ADVANCED GM TOOLS

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Skip It! *If you've never ran a game as a GM before, feel free to skip this section and come back to it after running the starter adventure "GARDEN OF DEATH" on pg. 64.*

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 generally want to avoid your *players* feeling 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's doing, why, and hopefully hate him more when the time comes to face him!

Flashbacks

Reveal snippets of backstory or context through brief flashbacks. For example, show an NPC's past struggles or a hero's forgotten memory.

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.

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! Start making some DEX saves!

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.

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

Split Perspectives

Whenever the party splits up, narrate their actions in parallel. Jump between groups whenever there is a cliffhanger to build tension and excitement.

Undetected Traitors

The party meets a new non-player character (NPC) or gains a new companion. Narrate a scene where this companion is 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!

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 act on it, you might not be able to use this technique too often.*

Heroic Vignettes

Out of all the ways to start a new campaign, heroic vignettes (or playable backstories) are one of the BEST. Campaigns are at their most fun once players have really gotten to know each other's heroes, but introductions can often feel slow and awkward. Vignettes fix that! These brief, one-on-one scenes (no more than 5 minutes each) help you fast forward to the fun. Before the campaign, talk with your players about their heroes. Some may have detailed ideas, while others might just say, "I'm a dragon dude with a big axe." Either is great! Work with them to shape a vignette if they have ideas–or surprise them if they don't.

Example 1

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

You crouch in a thorny bush, surrounded by twigs, leaves, and the suppressed giggles of your best buds, Doppo and Twigs. Hunger gnaws at your bellies.

The sound of wagon wheels and horse hooves grows louder. **Doppo:** *"Aw man, this is gonna be so good! You think they have sandwiches?"* **Twigs:** *"If not, we can eat them. Their deaths will not be in vain."* **All:** **hehehehe**

What skill do you want to use to ambush the travelers?

With a swift leap, you and your companions spring into action. Doppo and Twigs tackle the driver and passenger while the horses panic, sending the cart flying. You snatch a satchel and vanish into the shadows. Excitement buzzes through you as you tear into the satchel… only to find PAPERS. INEDIBLE PAPERS. What do you do?

Ben: *I pull them out and take a look.*

Your kobold pals crowd around, eyes wide with curiosity. The papers are covered in strange symbols and incoherent words. You can't read them, but they feel… different. POWERFUL.

Ben: *"Look at me, I'm human! I can read! I can wri–" marks an X on the papers*

A surge of power races through you as a shadowy figure bursts forth. The papers disintegrate into ash.

Mysterious Figure: *"THE PACT IS SEALED!"*

Your friends. are. TERRIFIED. **Doppo:** *"AHHHH! It's BAHAMUT! We're doomed! Kerrik made us do it! Eat him, not us!" In your limited kobold intellect, what does Kerrik believe to be happening?*

Ben: *"Bahamut has chosen ME to be his servant! I have powers now!"*

With your chest puffed out and a heart full of pride, you clutch the satchel and declare yourself Bahamut's chosen. Inside, you find strange words like "UNIVERSITY" and "ADMISSIONS."

With your awestruck kobold buddies in tow, you set off on a divine mission to uncover what it all means… and maybe find some sandwiches along the way.

Note that Ben is ***in on*** the vignette. This is not like an adventure where we don't know exactly what's going to happen–you 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 have narrative consequences: if he rolls low or high, tweak the narrative to accommodate, but either way, he still jumps out of the bushes, attacks the wagon, and signs the papers.

Example 2

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

Where are you hiding as you overhear your mother activate her speaking mirror and start a conversation–about you?

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

Perfect. From there, you can hear your mother clearly, but the other side of the conversation is muffled:

"Thank you for this favor, Professor, regarding my daughter–… Yes, I know she failed the entrance exam, but there were extenuating circum–"

She's INTERRUPTED. Twice. Has this ever happened?

Nicole: *NEVER! She's just letting that happen?!*

Give me an Insight check. Not only does she allow it, but her voice quavers ever so slightly. She's AFRAID.

*"Professor, I trust you understand the importance of this. 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 thrive surrounded by dedicated classmates. Magic runs in our veins." *Indistinct response**

"I see." (Disappointed) "…That favor you asked for. I'll need to pull some strings, but… what if it could be done?" Your mother falls completely silent as the Professor speaks again. Give me a Perception check. How much can you catch?

Professor: *"An unfortunate accident will soon befall a student, leaving a spot open. I believe I can take a personal interest in your daughter's admission. Her lineage and potential are a rare and compelling combination. She will need to begin classes within the week."*

You can use her vignette to introduce important NPCs, and give her personal goals, and raise some questions for her as well. Why is her 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. You 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 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 nations also sending spies as fellow students trying to ferret him out. You can even have the Shadowblades attempt to recruit him!

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Making Your Own Adventures

An adventure should have a mix of all 3 RPG pillars: Combat, Role Playing, and Exploration. 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! 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's guaranteed that your players will come up with ideas you never considered. Encourage them to be creative and allow anything that sounds reasonable. They may have to roll a save or a skill check, there might be consequences, or their hare-brained idea might be so good that it just works!

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.

Bad Guys to Fight

Roughly 1–2 combat encounter per hour of play is typical. Having some fun fights is a great way to let the heroes do their cool things. But make sure the bad guys aren't merely standing around waiting for heroes to come slay them. What are the baddies doing when the heroes come? Arguing, sleeping, arm wrestling, cooking, hiding, fighting something else, digging, planning, partying, building a trap, etc.

> ***No combat?*** *Sessions can vary–some might feature no combat, while others are action-packed. If you and your players are having fun, don't worry too much!*

Optional Encounters. Some combat encounters can be optional–heroes can choose to engage if they're itching for a fight, or avoid combat (by sneaking past, by clever negotiation, or any other means).

Vary Difficulty. While most encounters may be fun, fair fights–in a realistic world not *everything* will be perfectly "level appropriate". Some encounters will be easy and allow the heroes to flex their muscles. Some monsters will occasionally 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 you are also CLEAR about danger, though. You shouldn't spring a super deadly total-party-kill (TPK) encounter on your players when they are expecting an easy one. Warn your players when something is actually dangerous. Remember: 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).*

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

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 PROFANE TOMB OF THE WORLD GORGER"* is better still. The places you present can include secret entrances, spots to hide and sneak around in, places to gain the high ground and set up traps for the bad guys, cool loot, and importantly, they should include WEIRD things unique to this area: crystals that produce "anti-light", mind controlling fungus, walls made of hands, paintings with eyes that follow, a room with no sound…

Traveling Events. Sometimes simply narrating "you get to the adventure site" is fine, but usually an adventure will be more engaging if you can set the stage by including a few interesting encounters that happen along the way. How is this place the

heroes are headed to different from all other places?

- A desert may have sandstorms, challenges with extreme heat, an oasis, or hidden sand worms.
- A mountain range may have snow, glaciers, or an ancient dwarven fortress taken over by ice trolls.
- A forest may have tricky fairies, wild beasts, protective druids, hunting traps, or gnome merchants.
- A dark cave may play with light as a resource. Who is holding the light source? Are the cave denizens angered by the light, afraid of it, or curious?
- An open valley or hillside may have marauding gnolls, huge predators soaring through the sky, or simply wide open views of the surrounding landscape heroes can see and learn about.

These encounters are a great time for heroes to use their skills and should give a flavor of the location, hint at lore, or foreshadow something coming later. They can include obstacles to overcome creatively, situations to gain Boons, learn rumors, or suffer setbacks (take damage, gain Wounds, etc.).

Adventure Locations. This is the meat of the adventure. Typically a 6-10 room "dungeon," though it need not literally be a dungeon of course. A grove, palace, ruins, magical hills, ravine, cave, sewers, market, hideout, ship, etc. could all work great. Any place with discreet locations your players can explore. Each room/area should have a few words of descriptive text (max 1 sentence) to remind you what it is about. This introductory information should contain just enough for the players to start asking questions or taking actions. Give additional information after the heroes interact with what you've presented. Each area will typically have 2–3 things to interact with, learn, or answer to "why this room is here."

A Note on Dungeon Layout. *The best dungeons are usually not strictly linear; they allow the heroes some choice in how to navigate it. They include switchbacks, optional rooms, multiple entrances, secret passages, etc.*

Others to Influence

Social interactions can be a wonderful highlight of any RPG session: fun NPCs to role-play with, dumb bad guys to bamboozle, a quirky granny to charm, cuddly animals to befriend, jerks to offend, troops or citizens to rally, people to make into their rivals or allies, or merchants to trade and bargain with.

Traps and Challenges

The best traps and challenges are relatively obvious (rather than well-hidden). Spotting a trap isn't the fun part, creatively overcoming one (or failing to) is usually where the fun is. For example:

- Traps that are already triggered for foreshadowing or as a decoy.
- Traps that halt movement (a closed portcullis, a caved-in hallway, a net that pulls them into the air).
- Traps that divide the party (temporarily or for an extended period of time).
- Traps the heroes can create themselves or existing ones they can turn on their enemies.
- Traps that make noise and alert nearby bad guys.
- Traps that apply a condition or embarrass (e.g., temporary polymorph into a creature or object, apply a stench/glitter, poison, blinding fog).
- Traps that simply deal damage.

A Note on Trap Damage. *Too much or too little damage can be unfun. It is unheroic to lose a character to an extremely deadly trap, while minor damage is merely a bookkeeping annoyance. Aim for a damaging trap to do about as much as a single monster attack.*

Lore, Secrets, and Plots

Information can be a fantastic reward as well: the location of a safe resting place to recuperate, knowledge of the bad guys' plans, secret passageways, answers to a mystery from a hero's backstory, a monster's weakness, history of the region, etc. It need not be immediately actionable either, the more your players know about the setting, its people, and history in general, the more likely they will care about the campaign and develop their own personal stakes in the story.

- **Foreshadowing/Information.** Clues about the theme or direction of the adventure: LARGE claw marks, hinting at a big beast; bodies, drained of

blood; exploded, infernal runes; traps that have already been sprung, a cryptic note "do NOT trust HER smile."

- **What Really Happened?** Most good adventures involve some sort of mystery that unfolds as the heroes play through. Think about what really happened in the background that requires the aid of the heroes. This is what they will learn as they play through the adventure.
- **A Strong Questhook.** Get the heroes right into the action as soon as possible. A "hot start" is often preferable to a slow build-up. Something they can't say "no" to: Their beloved town is on fire, an item of theirs is stolen (be careful with this one!), a once-a-decade festival, The Great Dragon Migration, Bad guys challenging them publicly.
- **Complex Situations. Simple Plots.** *If your players are ever confused as to why they are doing what they're doing, they're likely not having fun.* The challenges can (and often should) be difficult; however, the *story* and its stakes must be clear and easy to understand for players to stay invested: Bad guy wants X because Y. Someone wants you to find A because B. An occasional unexpected twist can be a good idea (but avoid making it overly complicated or your players may get lost). Most bad guys have fairly simple motivations: money, power, revenge. The specifics of how they plan to attain their goals can be very complicated, but the goal should be crystal clear to your players.

Dilemmas

Situations where, if the party makes one 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, the creature will wake!

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.

A good adventure has a satisfying conclusion. A challenging/hard battle of some sort is a good option, but not always necessary. You can instead setup a tense role-playing moment with a negotiation or surprising revelations.

Aftermath. Think about the aftermath, what happens after this adventure? Does one faction grow in power, do the heroes make a new friend or enemy, how are they hailed when they get back to town? What of the person who sent them on this quest?

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.*

Compelling Treasures

Yes, a great adventure has treasure, it's a BIG motivation for many players. Prepare 2–4 treasures that players can find per session (not all will be given/found). It's also best if they're not typically powerful magical items; here are some better examples:

- **Creative Items.** The best treasure often doesn't have an obvious use, but can be used creatively by the players or the GM as *adventure fuel*. Your players will have a great time using these to solve puzzels and get out of trouble in unexpected ways. For example: A key that opens ANY red door. A glass sphere that can change the weather. Slippers that grant invisibility but only on holidays. A vial of liquid that can dissolve ANY metal or stone. A cauldron that brews clouds. Rocks that can scream.
- **Single/Limited-Use Items.** Healing potions, magical scrolls, wands, elixirs that grant temporary Boons, a whistle to call a powerful ally–once. You can also consider a time limit to encourage heroes to use them instead of hoarding them.

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

- **Cosmetic Items.** Equipment with a compelling description or name: The Pale Baron's Rapier. An axe that makes your eyes glow with flames while wielding it. Seeds that grow ever-blooming flowers. An unsettling cap made of teeth. An illusory cloak with ever-shifting colors.
- **Gold!** Like a giftcard, it can be spent to purchase whatever they want. Alternatively, items that are valuable only to the right buyer can be very handy. Finding that buyer can be a fun sidequest and help widen the number of NPCs the heroes know.
- **Quest Starters.** Items that can start a new quest: An exotic pet or kidnapped person with no memory of how they got here. An obscenely expensive looking crown. Blessed items, cursed items–how do we get rid of this thing? A zombified hand that always points in a single direction–where is it pointing? 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!
- **Mundane Items.** You'd be surprised how often these simple items can catch the eye of heroes and lead to unexpected places! Potatoes, a board game (with missing pieces), a hand-stitched sweater (ugly), a single shoe, WAY too many spoons, a love letter (lightly perfumed).
- **POWERFUL ITEMS.** Every few sessions you may want to give out a powerful magical item, for more on that, see "Adventuring Rewards" on pg. 18.

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 tools in your GM tool box, use them all!

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.
- Chasing someone through an urban environment.
- Sailing through a dangerous storm.
- Negotiating a peace treaty.
- Playing a team competition (e.g., a fantasy sport, baking competition, etc.).

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 such as 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 Challenges:

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 a 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 a skill challenge might look like, see "Skill Challenge: Escape!" on pg. 72.

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 the first two doors they come across in a dungeon are trapped, they may stop opening doors entirely. 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.

Don't let your players 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 SUPPOSED 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.

Don't rule too rigidly

Be careful! Before you say "No, you can't do that…" consider letting it happen. Chances are, it won't break the campaign. 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 or just allow them to succeed. If you're concerned about some strange thing happening over and over again, you can even say "because that idea is so cool, I'll let it happen, just this once. But it might not work in the future!"

Don't roll too frequently

Ask for rolls (skill checks or saves) only when they add tension, uncertainty, or narrative weight to the story. Rolls are most impactful when they occur during moments of:

- **Tension:** There's time pressure or immediate danger (e.g., enemies are chasing the party, the door they're trying to unlock is trapped, they are climbing on a precarious cliff in a windstorm).
- **Uncertainty:** The outcome is genuinely in question, and failure creates meaningful consequences (and you are okay with either outcome).

The fewer rolls there are, the more meaningful each one becomes. If a task is straightforward, with no risk or stakes, let it succeed and keep the game flowing. When NOT to Ask for a Roll:

- **Trivial Tasks:** When the task is easy and has no meaningful consequences for failure (e.g., lighting a campfire in good weather, recalling common knowledge, buying standard supplies).
- **Repetitive Tasks:** If the task can

be attempted repeatedly without penalty until it succeeds (e.g., breaking down or lockpicking a simple, unguarded door).

- **Story-Critical Moments:** When failure would halt the story or create an unacceptable outcome (e.g., if failing to spot a clue prevents the party from continuing their adventure).

Save rolls for moments that heighten drama, challenge the players, or bring the story to life.

Be brief, not stingy.

In order for players' decisions to be meaningful, they need enough information to work with. Asking "Do you go left or right?" is too stingy. That's not enough information to make a meaningful decision, the players might as well flip a coin. Here are some better examples:

- Do you save time and take the dangerous shortcut, or go the long way around and risk arriving late?
- "To the left, an awful smell, to the right, you can hear the sound of thousands of tiny footsteps. What do you do?"

That might be plenty of information for certain players to make a decision; others may ask more questions, or they may want to attempt something or come up with their own ideas, make a skill check, use an ability, or something else. This is all far better than reading a long narrative that loses their attention.

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

Don't cheat*

Maintaining fairness and trust at the table is one of your most important responsibilities as a GM. Players rely on you to uphold the rules and world logic, so avoid altering encounters or outcomes in ways that feel artificial or contrived.

Adjusting Rolls or Outcomes. Changing dice rolls, hit points, or results behind the screen to save players–or make things harder for them–can feel like cheating, even if you're doing it with good intentions. It robs players of the consequences of their choices, good or bad. Let victories and failures happen naturally. Heroes should win because they earned it, not because the GM "let" them.

***If you must "cheat", it has to make sense.** Sometimes you may realize that an encounter is too punishing or too boring. If you absolutely need to tweak something, give a good in-world reason for the adjustment. If an encounter is too easy, it's okay to escalate the challenge slightly; for example, reinforcements could emerge from behind cover, hidden passageways, through a summoning portal, or be called from further in a dungeon as an alarm is raised or an enemy flees for help. Or if it is too hard, a dumb ogre may "waste" his turn fighting an ally and say "HEY! i WaS gOiNg tO eAt tHat ONe!! " A more intelligent wizard or criminal won't. Though they may monologue when in a commanding position. Or try to negotiate a truce in exchange for something else they want, rather than killing the party.

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 them. 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 **memorable moments**, nor do they provide the characters with any **interesting choices**. The most memorable and interesting magical items are a bit strange, have some trade-off, are temporary, require creativity, or provide another opportunity for the players to create memorable moments.

A Note on Rewards. *Some players prefer straightforward rewards, while others enjoy complex options. Tailor your rewards to your table: if they enjoy variety and complex strategy, consider handing out intricate magical items, Boons, Utility Spells, wands, etc. more often–just be sure to adjust the challenge accordingly.*

However, rewards don't need to be powerful or complicated to feel meaningful. A simple item with a cool name and description can be just as exciting. For example, to a player who loves Dwarves, a plain 1d6 hand axe becomes unforgettable if it's named Trollsbane*, adorned with dwarven runes, and garners respect from other Dwarves. The story and flavor around an item often matter more than its mechanics.*

Release Valves

A total party kill (TPK, 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, when it's NOT the fault of the players (it's unexpected, unfair, or unintended), a TPK should NOT happen. It's good for the GM to have a release valve to get themselves out of trouble. This gives you some leeway in encounter design, freeing you from worrying too much about perfect game balance.

Having extremely dangerous threats that players can stumble into (and escape from!) is a great way to show that the world is realistic and to 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 willing creatures magically bound to it. Crush one (1 Action) in case of emergency to instantly teleport ALL who are bound 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), it creates a solid form of ice, filling any number of unoccupied consecutive spaces up to 6 spaces away and 2 spaces high. The ice lasts for 1 hour before melting. Extreme heat or damage may cause it to fail prematurely. 1/Safe Rest.

Phoenix Helm

On Death: You are reborn as a golden fiery phoenix. Enemies within 6 spaces take **LVL d10** fire damage on a failed **DC 10+KEY** DEX save (half on save). Gain the following stats and abilities:

- Gain a fly speed of 10, 10 Armor, and 10 × LVL HP.
- Creatures that touch you take LVL fire damage.
- **Fiery Talons.** 1 Action, 1d10+LVL damage.

After 10 minutes, this form ends, the helm is no more and you return with 0 HP and all but 1 Wound.

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

ARTIST: WARMTAIL

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, whether to follow–or even trust–this in-world source, or not.

The Grimoire of Truths

This sentient magical book possesses an extensive knowledge of the world, past events, people's motivations, and even possible future outcomes. It eagerly converses with its owner, presenting itself as a helpful companion. However, its true goal is to gain their trust, offering just enough useful insight to ultimately lead them into great trouble.

> *"Ah, another mortal thirsting for knowledge."*
>
> *"Power comes at a cost. But then, so does ignorance."*
>
> *"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."*

Hear-ring

A simple piece of jewelry 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 taking a Safe Rest, use this cauldron to brew a single potion of your choice, which must 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, but it can also help your players develop their backstories, and can even serve as a 'redo' button should that ever become necesary.*

Combat Items

Create combat-related items with a drawback so there is a choice to be made. It can be a one-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 friends 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 perpetually cheerful expression. She is a one-time use item that, when activated as an action, will deal **LVL 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*

Resting & Healing

When a party rests is up to you, as the GM. Offering one-time healing or directions to a hidden oasis where they can rest can be great quest rewards. Make sure you reward different classes, too. The Hunter can spot rare medicinal herbs, the Stormshifter could befriend an animal that shares the location of a safe hideaway, the Shepherd or Oathsworn could cleanse and rededicate a holy site, etc.

Secret Spells

These spells are either incredibly powerful and banned from common knowledge, or ancient and simply lost to the ravages of time. They may not be appropriate for heroes to wield freely but can make for excellent quest rewards when found on scrolls, imbued in wands, or taught by a rare NPC. The mere existence of these spells can drive entire storylines and enrich your game world.

Revive. (Tier 3 Radiant spell, casting time: 1 hour.) Bring a dead creature back to life, provided they've been dead no more than 10 days and have not been revived by this spell before. Attempting to revive a creature already brought back with this spell risks raising a mindless, zombified husk instead.

> ***Why is this secret?*** *Freely returning to life can lower the stakes and sap excitement from near-death encounters. On the flip side, it's a powerful tool to maintain momentum in a campaign struck by bad luck or to create dramatic story moments (such as reviving a villain).*

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

> ***Why is this secret?*** *This seemingly harmless cantrip led to a wave of mysterious thefts, as stormy nights became prime time for mischievous first-year students pilfering coins and valuables. Quickly banned, it remains an infamous spell in magical academies.*

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 slip through any space that wind can pass through.

Radiant Bond. (Tier 3 Radiant spell, Concentration: up to 10 minutes.) Telepathically communicate across any distance with a creature that holds a gift you have freely given.

Speak With Dead. (Tier 4 Necrotic spell) Temporarily animate a corpse, allowing it to answer up to 3 questions before returning to rest. The corpse must answer, but it isn't required to be truthful if it dislikes the questioner or the questions.

Hearth & Home. (Tier 3 Fire spell, casting time 10 minutes.) Conjure a welcoming inn, complete with sturdy wooden tables, plush chairs, and a soft rug underfoot. At its heart burns a cozy fire in a fireplace, filling the space with warmth and light. The inn lasts for 12 hours and vanishes without a trace afterward.

> ***Why is this secret?*** *Safe resting anywhere is incredibly powerful. This spell is notoriously tricky to cast manually, so it is most often imbued in wands for wealthy travelers. Allow it cautiously, as it can easily break game balance.*

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

Cryotomb. (Tier 8 Ice Spell, 4 Actions.) Range: 12. A target must make a STR save or become incapacitated in an icy tomb and immune to harm. This lasts as long as you remain alive, or until the ice melts or is otherwise destroyed. The creature may repeat the save once every 10 days. Huge or larger creatures have advantage on the save. A Small or Tiny creatures, disadvantage. **Upcast:** +5 spell save DC.

> ***Why is this secret?*** *Being able to instantly trap any boss who fails a single roll is incredibly useful. Cryotomb is even more useful as a narrative linchpin though. For example, the king may have a terrifying monster sealed in ice beneath the palace—and the tomb is beginning to crack…*

Memory Veil. (Tier 3 Necrotic spell, Concentration: as long as the caster remains conscious.) Conceal or change all memories of an event for up to 12 creatures within 2 spaces on a failed WIL save for as long as this spell lasts.

> ***Why is this secret?*** *This can have profound ethical and narrative implications. Often used by shadowy organizations or rulers to cover up secrets best left buried.*

Gold

Gold is a versatile reward that gives heroes the freedom to choose their own rewards. While some gold will be spent on necessities like lodging, its primary appeal is to purchase exciting upgrades: better weapons, armor, potions, wands, or magical items.

How Much Gold? The table on the right outlines the average amount of gold each hero will typically gain per level. A quest for a noble cause or from a poor villager might pay modestly (one or two levels below average), while one from a wealthy noble with questionable motives may offer a more extravagant reward (one or two levels above average).

On Buying Magical Items. Most adventurers can save up enough to purchase uncommon or rare magical items, often found in specialty shops in large cities. However, very rare or legendary items are typically far too expensive to buy and must be earned through adventuring.

LEVEL	GOLD	LEVEL	GOLD
1	25	11	5,000
2	40	12	7,000
3	80	13	10,000
4	150	14	17,000
5	280	15	25,000
6	450	16	40,000
7	750	17	60,000
8	1,200	18	90,000
9	2,000	19	130,000
10	3,000	20	200,000

Too Much Gold? An overabundance of gold has its challenges and it may attract unwanted attention:

- **It's Cumbersome.** You can only carry so much gold before your pockets and bags are full. Large amounts must be transported via caravan or ship and safely stored somewhere while adventuring.
- **Bandits & Thieves.** Pickpockets, ambushers, and even organized crime may want a cut.
- **Jealousy.** Rival adventurers, "old money" nobles, resentful poor, debt collectors, etc.
- **Corruption.** Government looking for bribes, fake "opportunities," suspicious authorities.
- **Curses.** A cache of gold or jewels cursed by dark magic, greedy spirits, or treasure guardians.
- **Fame.** Opportunists, sycophants, bounty hunters, or warlords all may want a cut.
- **People In Need.** A destitute village, public works projects, beggars, allies in need.
- **Greedy Monsters.** Dragons and other powerful beings are drawn to large hoards of gold.

Lodging Boons

Spending extra gold on lavish accommodations can provide valuable temporary benefits. These perks might include quicker recovery, valuable contacts, additional resources, or unique opportunities. The specific benefits depend on the quality of the lodging and the amount spent. You can roll from the table, or award a Minor, Major, or even EPIC Boon based on how much the heroes pay and where they rest:

- **A Minor Boon:** Typically costs around 10 gp.
- **A Major Boon:** Typically costs around 100 gp.
- **An EPIC Boon:** Typically costs around 1,000 gp.

1d8	Temporary Boon
1	Recover 2 additional Wounds
2	Gain LVL temp HP
3	Gain KEY temp Hit Dice
4	+1 Speed
5	Inspired (reroll any die, once)
6	Advantage vs. Fear/Charm/Etc.
7	Learn an important rumor
8	+KEY mana

These Boons are temporary and last only until the heroes take another Safe Rest. Adjust the cost and impact to suit your campaign and the party's level of wealth.

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

- **Alert.** +1 to Initiative.
- **Bright.** +1 max mana.
- **Experienced.** +4 HP.
- **Feisty.** +1 max Hit Die.
- **Fiery.** +1 fire damage.
- **Intrepid.** +1 speed.
- **Skilled.** +1 skill point.
- **Simple.** +1 VS Charm effects.
- **Stand Tall.** +Height (slightly).

Major Boons

- **Ancestry Trait.** Selecting another Ancestry trait (if it makes sense) can make for a great Major Boon.
- **Aggressive.** On your first round of combat you can spend 1 Action from your next turn.
- **Battle Hardened.** +2 Armor.
- **Brave.** +2 to damage while you have the most enemies adjacent to you.
- **Expansive Mind.** +4 max mana.
- **Good Patient.** Whenever you would receive healing, you heal an additional KEY HP.
- **Hardy.** Whenever you would roll your Hit Dice to increase your max HP, roll with advantage 2 instead.
- **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.
- **Lionhearted.** +2 Armor while you have the most enemies adjacent to you.
- **Natural Talent.** Learn 1 Cantrip in a school you don't know.
- **Resolute.** When pushed, you are pushed 1 space less. Whenever you would be knocked Prone, you can instead be moved back 1 space. 1/turn.
- **Resilient.** If you would take any Wounds, you may become immune to them this turn instead. 1/Safe Rest.
- **Smart, Not Book Smart.** –KEY max mana. Gain 1d4 mana whenever you roll Initiative; this expires if unused at the end of combat.
- **Sniper.** Advantage on attacks when no enemy is adjacent to you; disadvantage otherwise.
- **Stalwart.** +1 max Hit Die, +2 Might.
- **Tenacious.** +2 max Hit Dice.
- **Tough.** Whenever you gain temp HP, gain 5 more.
- **Unflinching.** Your focus is unbroken even in the face of danger. Advantage on Concentration checks.
- **Unnatural Talent.** Learn any 1 Utility Spell.
- **Veteran.** +10 HP.

EPIC Boons

- **Epic Agility.** Gain 1 action. 1/encounter.
- **Epic Criticals.** Whenever you roll for critical hit damage, you may replace one die with a d20.
- **Epic Defense.** Your shields gain +3 Armor.
- **Epic Foresight.** Gain +5 to Initiative rolls and advantage on your first attack each encounter.
- **Epic Knowledge.** 1/day, you can call upon a moment of profound insight to gain hidden knowledge about a legendary person or object.
- **Epic Mana.** Whenever you are healed, you may instead recover 1 mana for every 5 HP you would have been healed.
- **Epic Mind.** +8 mana.
- **Epic Stamina.** Rolling 4 or higher on a Hit Die during a Field Rest heals 1 Wound.
- **Epic Speed.** +4 Speed, +4 Initiative.
- **Epic Stats.** Increase 3 different stats by 1.
- **Epic Senses.** Gain Blindsight 6 or Darkvision 16.
- **Epic Resistance.** 1/encounter. Whenever you would suffer damage or fail a save you can choose not to instead.

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 the sum of the 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.*

Dealing 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.

> ***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. Heroes, on the other hand, have only one 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**, have **speed 6** (can replace an attack to move again, or replace either one of those to retry a save), attacks have **Reach 1**, and roll **1d20 for all saves** (though some monsters may have advantaged/disadvantaged saves or checks when appropriate).

> ***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 stab (or shoot) in either order. Whenever an attack misses him, his special ability triggers.

- ♥ The creature's **Hit Points**.
- 🛡 The creature's **Armor** (M or H).
- ➢ The creature's **Speed** (fly, burrow, etc.).

Flunkies & Minions

Flunkies. Flunkies are like regular monsters, but with one key difference: they **can't crit**. This makes them ideal opponents for new or low-level heroes, offering a challenge without overwhelming them.

Minions. Minions are low-threat monsters that are easy to kill individually but dangerous in numbers. They add dynamic movement and excitement to battles without bogging down gameplay. Minions have:

- **No HP to Track.** Any damage kills a minion.
- **Easy Attacks.** Each minion attacks with a single damage die, cannot crit, and misses on a roll of 1.
- **Simplified Defense:** When multiple minions attack a single target, their damage is combined and counts as a single attack, so heroes can Defend or Interpose against them all at once.

> ***Act Together!*** *If your heroes are facing down a pack of goblin minions, rather than moving them one at a time, all minions attacking a particular hero should move and attack at the same time. For example, 5 minions move next to Grudge and attack him. Roll and add up 5d6 (ignoring any 1s). Fast and easy!*

ARTIST: EARL LAN

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 hard but fair fight; less than that: medium or easy; greater than that: deadly, or very deadly.

> ***Example:*** *A griffon is a level 4 monster. So a 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 **1–4 monsters per hero** (excluding minions). For an epic fight against a single bad guy, 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. 1–4 monsters per hero is the sweet spot for most encounters.*

Encounters Per Rest. Typically, a session includes 2–5 combat encounters, but this is flexible. If your players are enjoying the game without combat, don't force it—especially if they've cleverly avoided it or it doesn't fit the story. If the story calls for more than five encounters, go ahead! The key is to ensure the game remains fun and engaging—avoiding encounters that are trivial, frustratingly difficult, or repetitive.

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 1–2 easy encounters in a typical session.

Medium. When the monster's levels are around 75% of the heroes', expect some HP loss and moderate resource expenditure. Heroes will get hurt but shouldn't drop to 0 HP. Use 1–2 medium encounters in a typical 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. Use 1 hard encounter in a typical 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 extremely well optimized (or are multiclassing) and play exquisitely, they will almost certainly need to retreat—or die. Use only when the heroes made a bad mistake: you telegraphed danger and they fail to heed.

Resting and Recovery. It's common for heroes to return to a home base or town to rest after each session, but this isn't a rule. Be adaptable. If your players are accumulating too many Wounds, consider introducing an opportunity for a Safe Rest, such as finding a friendly cleric or a hidden oasis. If a Safe Rest isn't an option, you can ease the encounter difficulty to keep the adventure moving. Otherwise, heroes might need to cut their journey short to recover.

Armor Variety

While these ratios can vary, too many armored foes can bog down combat. Use armor to add flavor, not frustration. For a balanced session, aim for roughly:

- **60% Unarmored.**
- **30% Medium Armor.**
- **10% Heavy Armor.**

Fine Tuning Difficulty

Start Easy. Creating perfectly balanced encounters takes practice. It's better to err on the side of "too easy" than "too hard." As a GM, you have many ways to increase difficulty during play, but few ways to lower it without breaking immersion.

Balancing With Tactics

- **Focus Fire.** Concentrating attacks on one or two heroes makes encounters feel harder. Conversely, spreading out damage or sending monsters in waves can make the encounter more manageable.
- **Movement.** Monsters that move each turn force martial characters to reposition, limiting their attacks. This also opens up opportunities for reactions like Opportunity Attacks. To lower difficulty, reduce monster movement.
- **Target 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.
- **Adjust 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.
- **Relax!** Heroes have plenty of tools to handle tough situations, so don't stress over getting every encounter perfectly balanced. You'll improve with experience, as will your players.
- **Hero Death Isn't the End.** If some (or all) heroes die, it's not necessarily a failure. Encourage your group to make new characters and dive back in.

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

Balancing with Minions

Minions excel as battlefield filler, allowing heroes to showcase their strengths. Armored defenders can hold off waves of attacks, while spellcasters can annihilate groups with a single spell. They help combat feel dynamic and give heroes the chance to shine, all while keeping the pace fast and exciting.

Waves of Minions. Start with an easier encounter and introduce minions in waves to dial in the challenge. Minions might emerge from hidden positions or be summoned mid-battle.

- 1 minion/hero: Slightly more difficult, but will greatly increase the tactical options.
- 2–3 minions/hero: Noticeably more difficult.
- 4 minions per hero: Much more challenging.

Overkill Damage. *While minions lack HP, you can optionally use their die size as a measure of durability. Excess damage from an attack can carry over to other minions in range. For example, a 20 damage attack could take down two d10 minions or five d4 minions.*

Suggested minion die size by party level:

Level	Die Size	Level	Die Size
1-3	d4	10-13	d10
3-5	d6	13-17	d12
5-10	d8	17-20	d20

Unique Encounters

Most encounters start with heroes and bad guys aware of each other, within one or two moves apart, and feature 1–4 level-appropriate enemies per hero who fight to the death. While this formula works, changing it up from time to time can make for a more memorable encounter. Here are some ways to spice things up:

- **Ambush (Bad Guys)!** A easy encounter becomes much more difficult and exciting when the bad guys get the drop on the heroes. Place hidden enemies close to the party, and let them act first (just be careful that there is a good story reason for the ambush or you give them a chance to spot it!).
- **Ambush (Heroes)!** An extremely hard encounter, but the heroes get plenty of time to scout, research weaknesses, set up traps and obstacles, or even choose the battleground (on top of getting a full turn to act before the bad guys can act).
- **Backdraft.** Heroes take damage whenever they take a certain action (e.g., cast spells, use weapons, move, or use special abilities).
- **Betrayal!** Have an allied NPC suddenly turn on the heroes mid-fight (temporarily or permanently).
- **Can't Reach Me!** Where a relatively weak group of bad guys are at an unfairly advantageous height, and able to drop heavy things onto the heroes. Or out of range of melee attacks from the heroes and with excellent cover against range.
- **Capture the Flag.** The heroes must take (and keep) possession of an item that the bad guys desperately want.
- **Charmed Allies.** Enemies cast powerful charms or illusions on one or more party members, forcing the heroes to fight their own while trying to break the spell.
- **Defend the Fort.** Heroes must defend a location for a certain number of rounds until reinforcements arrive.
- **Divided Loyalties.** Two enemy factions are fighting each other when the heroes arrive. The party can choose to sit back and let the factions weaken each other, manipulate the chaos to their advantage, or attack both sides.
- **Environmental Ally.** Heroes gain an advantage from the environment, a rampaging beast, a structure collapsing, or a natural disaster to help turn the tide. Just make sure you properly foreshadow what is coming and allow them to set up a cool moment, otherwise they can feel cheated.
- **Environmental Catastrophe.** The environment itself is the main challenge: rivers of lava, throwable explosive mushrooms, collapsing caves, a sinking ship.
- **Enraged Baddies.** Each time something happens (a bad guy takes damage, they lose an ally, etc.) their damage increases.
- **Ethereal Enemies.** The bad guys are ghosts, shadows, or other ethereal beings that phase in and out of the material plane. They're immune to damage during certain phases, forcing the heroes to adapt their timing and tactics.
- **Grudge Match.** An otherwise easy encounter but all of the bad guys ONLY attack one hero. Perhaps that hero has a bounty, or has offended a warlord, or is cursed? Make sure your players know ahead of time what is going on so it doesn't feel unfair. Players will have to greatly change up their typical tactics to survive this encounter.
- **Illusory Enemies.** Bad guys that create illusions, making attacks miss more often, or that can redirect attacks against allies. Special care must be taken to see through the illusions and ensure you are hitting the right targets.
- **Impending Doom.** Try an encounter that would be otherwise far too difficult, but the heroes get an extra round or two before the enemies can properly engage. Enemies with no ranged attacks starting very far away, enemies that need to wake up or "charge up" before acting.
- **Interlopers.** Another faction arrives while the heroes are engaged in combat already. The bad guys ask for assistance–the heroes could fight both sides or convince the newcomers to join their side instead.
- **Manastorm.** All spells have a reduced mana cost, even as low as 0 mana. Casting spells may damage the caster instead (e.g., 1d6/mana spent).
- **Mid-air Combat.** Enemies that fly, heroes that don't is a great classic. Particularly when the bad

guys can pluck the heroes off the ground, fly high, and then let gravity do the rest. Alternatively, giving heroes flight and letting them strafe and pick off the bad guys is likewise great fun.

- **Mounted Combat.** Heroes fight while mounted on beasts that are running, climbing, flying, or swimming!
- **Moving Hazard.** Heroes fight on a collapsing bridge, in a building that is burning down, or on a battlefield under attack by siege weapons. Heroes have to continually move–or die!
- **Non-combatants.** Bad guys interspersed with innocent bystanders or other precious resources that must not be harmed.
- **Oops, All Minions!** Heroes can face a TREMENDOUS amount of minions. This setup shines when heroes have access to area-of-effect (AoE) abilities and rewards players who position themselves strategically.
- **Pitch Black.** Monsters attack in the dark, heroes can't see, any light sources are magically snuffed out. Cannot Interpose or Defend against unseen attacks.
- **Poor Tactics (Dumb Enemies).** A very hard encounter, but the enemies do their best to spread damage out equally across the heroes and otherwise make obvious tactical blunders.
- **Push 'em Off!** Battle at very great heights, the most efficient way to win (or lose) is to push others off the edge or where forced movement is otherwise greatly incentivized.
- **Puzzle Combat.** A puzzle that must be solved mid-fight: Enemies that are invulnerable while standing in a certain place, or until a device is turned off or destroyed, or a ritual is disrupted.
- **Reinforce!** Enemies run away for reinforcements when bloodied or half of their numbers are taken down.
- **Split the Party!** Physically split the party in an interesting way: melee heroes on one side, ranged heroes on the other; make them fight in ways they normally don't.
- **Stealthy Take Down.** Loud noises attract more enemies!
- **Thorns.** Enemies have very few HP; any overkill damage is dealt back at the heroes.
- **Tight Quarters.** Unusually small room/platform, or a location crowded with obstacles.
- **Traps Abound!** A location filled with traps and environmental hazards that can be used against the heroes or bad guys.
- **Turncoats.** Bad guys (honestly or dishonestly) negotiate to aid the heroes against a common foe or threat.
- **Vehicular Combat.** Heroes fight bad guys while piloting a vehicle traveling at speed.
- **Waves Upon Waves.** Heroes can face FAR more bad guys if they appear over time rather than all at once. Add more enemies each round and watch your heroes rack up the kills! Just make sure you have a good reason for the baddies to show up over time (summoning portals, they're spread throughout a hideout, an arena challenge, etc.).
- **We Give Up!** Enemies who give up and run away once their numbers are fewer than the heroes (they may or may not return during the next encounter).

Dessert, not main course. *These unique encounters should be used sparingly, not as the norm. Heroes have plenty of variability with their abilities, spells, tactics, and monsters–getting fancy too often may feel too chaotic. There should still be baseline "typical" encounters more frequently.*

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

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 for a different kind of monster. For each special ability added (e.g. the Kobold's "Noooo!" ability), lower the HP or damage 1 step or treat the monster as 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 give the mage a teleport ability, it'd be as strong as a level 6 monster. For a tanky, defensive 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* (2×) 1d8+1	10	1/2
2	34	27	20	13	2d8+4 *or* (2×) 1d8+3	11	1
3	41	33	25	15	2d8+6 *or* (2×) 1d8+4	11	1
4	49	39	29	18	2d8+9 *or* (2×) 1d8+5	12	2
5	58	46	35	19	2d8+10 *or* (2×) 1d8+6	12	2
6	68	54	41	21	2d8+12 *or* (2×) 1d8+7	13	3
7	79	63	47	24	3d8+10 *or* (2×) 2d8+4	13	3
8	91	73	55	26	3d8+12 *or* (2×) 2d8+5	14	4
9	104	83	62	28	4d8+10 *or* (2×) 2d8+6	14	4
10	118	94	71	30	4d8+12 *or* (2×) 2d8+7	15	5
11	133	106	80	33	5d8+11 *or* (2×) 3d8+3	15	6
12	149	119	89	35	5d8+13 *or* (2×) 3d8+4	16	7
13	166	132	100	38	6d8+11 *or* (2×) 3d8+6	16	8
14	184	147	110	40	6d8+13 *or* (2×) 3d8+7	17	9
15	203	162	122	43	7d8+11 *or* (2×) 3d8+8	17	9
16	223	178	134	45	7d8+13 *or* (2×) 4d8+5	18	10
17	244	195	146	48	8d8+12 *or* (2×) 4d8+6	18	11
18	266	213	160	50	8d8+14 *or* (2×) 4d8+7	19	12
19	289	231	173	52	9d8+12 *or* (2×) 4d8+8	19	13
20	313	250	189	54	9d8+13 *or* (2×) 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 (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.** Melee attackers take half the HP lost in return as acid damage.
- **Aggressive.** +X speed 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 Daze the target.
- **Disintegrating Armor.** Starts with Heavy Armor, on crit degrades to Medium, then to none.
- **Doom.** Attacks also Wound the target.
- **Explosive Death.** Explode on death, dealing 2d6 damage to creatures within reach.
- **FAST.** Reaction: 1/round. Force a reroll with disadvantage on an attack.
- **Fearsome.** Frighten enemies within Range on a failed WIL save. 1/encounter.
- **Flying.** Flying speed and immune to Opportunity Attacks. May FALL when crit (1d6 damage/10 ft. fallen, and lands 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: 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.
- **Mounted.** Faster movement and deals extra damage after moving toward an enemy.
- **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.** Attacks 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 requires the voice).
- **Sneak.** Invisible until they attack.
- **Spiked.** When hit by a melee attack, the attacker takes 1d4 piercing damage in return.
- **Standard Bearer.** Buffs nearby allies, reducing the damage they take or increasing the damage they do (see Kobold Clanger or Doomsayer Cultist).
- **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 (roll 1 additional die).
- **Warping Touch.** On hit: teleport target X spaces.
- **Webslinger.** Can immobilize a target with webs when hit or crit.

BESTIARY

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

Kobolds

Small, maniacal dragonlings. Fiercely protective of their own.

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! *When an ally dies, you may move up to 6 spaces before using your Nooooo! ability.*

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 (2×). (Range 8) 1d4+2.

Trap! *When an enemy moves adjacent to you or an ally, they trigger one of your traps! (1/encounter each).*

- **BEEES!** Deal 5d4 damage (doesn't miss). Half as much to ALL adjacent creatures.
- **HIDDEN NET!** Restrained (escape DC 10).

Kobold Denwarden LVL 1 — 20 M

Hold! *Adjacent allies gain Medium Armor.*

Stab (2×). 1d4+2 (or Sling, Range 8).

Sample Encounters *(per hero)*

For an easier encounter use the line 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 4 to 1, Between 1 and 4 monsters for each 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, and thriving on chaos, Goblins are quick to flee and even quicker to mock you mercilessly if given the chance. They tend to live on the margins of society and the edges of civilization, not because they must–but because that's where the fun is. Goblins find joy in causing chaos, they trap caves and byways for laughs, steal anything not nailed down (and sometimes even things that are), and view any sign of order as an irresistible target for sabotage.

Disorganized by nature, Goblins can be forced into temporary cohesion when bullied by a stronger leader–typically a cruel Taskmaster or a Bugbear. But even then, their discipline is tenuous, held together with threats (and only while the boss is watching). They're at their best when they're left to scurry, squabble, and scavenge, always laughing, always scheming, and always just one insult away from starting another fight. Their favorite game? "Throw Rocks at Your Friends"–a pastime with no rules, no teams, and a dubious win condition.

Goblin Lore

- **Goblin Minion.** The cannon fodder of goblin society: lazy, sneaky, and only slightly more threatening than a thrown boot. Their job is mostly to get in the way, shout insults, and die in amusing ways. They function less as warriors and more as living obstacles (and they're proud of it).
- **Goblin.** The backbone of any raiding party, especially when it comes to setting up makeshift traps, stealing food, and heckling anyone who will listen.
- **Goblin Ratrider.** Riding into battle atop mangy giant rats, these goblins are thrill-seekers and scouts. Their mounts are as diseased and unpredictable as their riders.
- **Goblin Taskmaster.** The rare goblins mean enough to boss others around and survive the attempt. They often work under the heel of Bugbears, screaming secondhand orders and threats they usually can't deliver.
- **Bugbear.** Big, brutish, and deeply grumpy, Bugbears are the heavy muscle of Goblin society. They despise noise and disorder–Bugbears tolerate Goblins' antics in exchange for servitude and a steady supply of things to hit.
- **Bugbear Chieftain.** Chieftains rule with fear, iron clubs, and a zero-tolerance policy for goblin antics (except the useful kind). Under their leadership, goblins become surprisingly efficient raiders–at least for a few weeks.
- **Nilbog.** Every Goblin's dream is rising to the rank of Nilbog–a rare Goblin so chaotic that, when one appears, the tribe descends into madness or worship. Minions throw themselves off ledges in reverence and Taskmasters weep in frustration.

Adventure Seeds

- **Urban Goblin Colonies.** Gobbos will sometimes infest a city's underworks like rats, stealing anything that can be reached by a mad dash from the sewer access points: shoes, small animals, etc.
- **Slork's "Things I Found" Pop-up Shop.** He can show up anywhere, with various items ranging from the magical to mundane. Always very poorly described: "Slork finded stick" could be a magical wand, a rare key, a venemous snake, or an actual stick. At least his prices are reasonable.
- **Goblin Civil War.** Two warrens fighting over a crossbow that's been out of bolts for weeks. "We stole it first!"
- **Goblin Fortress.** A hill fortress made entirely of junk, chicken wire, and angry rodents. Booby-trapped beyond reason. The Goblins claim it's "impregnantble."

Goblin Loot:

Live mouse (a snack for later), moldy bread, smooth stones, sharp sticks, teeth (forcibly removed), arrows, LOTS of blades (jagged, but effective), dead captive (forgot to feed him), shiny junk (bits of metal, broken glass, and buttons), slug farm (a jar of slimy, wriggling slugs), unidentifiable jerky. A notebook tracking bizarre trades and bets, boots (too big).

RUNNING GOBLINS

Goblins are chaos. They prefer to stab close up, and run away afterwards to attempt to provoke Heroes into making Opportunity Attacks (increasing the odds of triggereing their "Haha, Missed Me!" ability). They'll attack from Range but only if all enemies are too far away.

Goblins work best in dense terrain: caves, ruins, alleyways–anywhere they can set up ambushes or bait you into chasing them into a trap. Their goal is rarely total victory–they mostly want to humiliate, loot, and live long enough to tell the story.

Goblin Encounters

- **Minion Tutorial.** (VS level 1 heroes) Composed only of Goblin Minions, use this group to teach the basics of combat: initiative, movement, and attacking. These Goblins use the most basic tactics.
- **Raiding Party.** (VS levels 2–3 heroes) Composed of regular Goblins, Minions, and the occasional Ratrider for extra movement. Goblins will actively move into melee range and run away before their turn ends to provoke Heroes into wasting their actions on less efficient opportunity attacks.
- **Ambush Party.** (VS levels 3–4 heroes). Something (e.g., Goblins, treasure, "hostages") are used as bait to draw Heroes in and Goblins jump out, followed by Bugbears when the party is occupied. Sprinkle in a trap or two for maximum chaos.
- **Rat Force Strike Team!** (VS levels 3–5 heroes) Lead by a Taskmaster, this team has numerous Ratriders who charge in trying their best to knock heroes over. ALL the Goblins gang up on whomever goes Prone.
- **Alpha Squad.** (VS levels 3–6 heroes) Lead by a Cheiftain and multiple Taskmasters, this party uses the most intelligent tactics: they gang up on vulnerable Heroes, and use powerful weapons like the Ratapult to great effect. Taskmasters stay at Range behind a good-sized Spikefield, and Pit Traps are used to separate and slow the party.

Increasing The Difficulty

- **Goblins.** If a hero is less than 6 spaces away, run up to them, stab then run away in hopes of triggering an Opportunity Attack. Goad heroes into it with verbal taunts: "You can't catch me!" feigning fear (especially if you miss, or seeing them survive your best stab) "Ahh! Run awaayy!"
- **Bugbear.** Bugbears are patient ambushers,t- They almost always start combat hidden and will jump out, attacking any hero who has strayed too far from his party, or their back lines. Heroes who assess intelligently may spot them before they jump out from behind the back lines. They prefering to attack last in a round after heroes have already Interposed & Defended.
- **Taskmaster.** Are the rare Goblin that is happy to stay in the back lines, calling minions to battle and shooting from Range. They always keep a minion within Interpose range. These are VERY tempting targets for heroes to chase down (into a trap!).
- **Ratrider.** Hunt down backline and isolated heroes. With their incredibly fast speed they can regularly stay out of reach of melee heroes, and can set up powerful attacks for Bugbears when they knock Heroes Prone.

Traps

A way to increase the difficulty without adding more monsters. Use them as single use monsters, only where it makes sense and only occasionally. The threat of a trap is almost as good as a trap itself.

Decreasing The Difficulty

- **Bugbears.** Attack from Range to deal less damage, and can spread their damage around rather than focusing on badly injured heroes, or ones that have already Defended.
- **Goblins.** Very injured Goblins can run past multiple heroes, and less injured Goblins can remain adjacent to melee heroes rather than running away to same them an action moving.
- **Taskmasters.** May "run out" of minions to call to the battlefield or their minions may be out of position to Interpose for them.
- **Ratriders.** Can stay more stationary or spread their damage around.

TPK Alternative

- **Ransom.** If the Heroes lose, Goblins are happy to take them hostage and hold them for ransom if that seems like more fun than killing them.

Knock Unconscious. *Monsters can knock unconscious instead of dealing a hero a final Wound.*

GOBLIN STATBLOCKS

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 15

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

BUGBEAR LVL 2 M 30

- **Cleave.** 2d6+4. OR:
- **Javelin.** 1d6+2 (Range 8).

BUGBEAR CHEIFTAIN LVL 4 M 40

Cleave. (Reach 2) 2d6+10, can also damage a 2nd target within Reach.

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 30 10

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

Bite & Stab (2×). 1d6+2. On crit: Prone.

NILBOG LVL 3 30

Backwards Chaos. *Attacks that would hit a Nilbog instead miss, attacks that would miss, hit instead.*

Neener Neener! Reaction, when a hero's attack misses a Goblin or when a hero *could* opportunity attack a Goblin, but *doesn't*: Deal 4 psychic damage.

GOBLIN HAZARDS

TRIPPING HAZARD LVL 1/2

Hidden Trap! *Hasty Movement.Creatures who move more than once are knocked Prone on a failed DC 10 Perception check!*

GOBLIN SPIKEFIELD LVL 1 (PER HERO)

Obvious Hazard! *When a non-Goblin moves, they suffer 1 damage per space unless they treat the area as difficult terrain.*

GOBLIN PIT TRAP LVL 1

Hidden Trap! *When a Medium or larger creature steps into the area. DC 12 Perception to spot it and halt movement, otherwise DEX save.*

- **1–9.** 8 damage, fall 10 ft. land Prone.
- **10–14.** 4 damage, fall 10 ft.
- **16+.** Leap harmlessley across.

Escape. *Standing up costs 3 spaces of movement, climbing out costs 4 more.*

RATAPULT LVL 2

Static Weapon. *Instead of attacking, a creature can trigger this. Single use; a strong creature (e.g. Bugbear) can reload.*

Smell Ya Later! (Range 8) Launch a dead Giant Rat: 8 Damage, Prone, and Poisoned 1 minute (roll 1d6).

- **6–5.** DC 16 DEX save for half damage only.
- **4–3.** DC 12 DEX save for half damage only.
- **2–1.** Misfire. Enemy chooses where rat lands.

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 — 12
Stab. 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 8).

Bandit Bruiser Lvl 2 — M — 24
Bash. 2d8+4.

Bandit Captain Lvl 4 — M — 36
Slice (3×). 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 8).

Bandit Hunter Lvl 1 — 22
Battlebow. 2d8+2 (Range 12).

Bandit Assassin Lvl 2 — 24
Sneak. *You are invisible until you attack.*
Poison Blade (2×). 1d8+4. On damage: Dazed.

Bandit Mage Lvl 4 — 41
Spark Step. *When damaged, teleport up to 4 spaces.*
Arc Lightning. 3d8 (Range 12). Also strikes the next closest creature. On miss: damage self instead.

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, wagon load of some commodity (salt, nails, wool, etc.), coded letter from a secretive client.

Snakemen

Aggressive Hissing Noises

Coiling Strike. *On melee crit: Grapple (escape DC 10).*

Snakeman Minion Lvl 1/4
Strike. 1d6 melee/ranged (follows minion rules).

Snakeman Lvl 1 — 26
Slash. 1d6+6 (or Spit, Range 8)

Cobra Captain Lvl 4 — M — 36
Slash (2×). 1d6+6 (or Spit, Range 8)

Giant Cobra Lvl 8, Large — M — 80
Crush. 2d6+20. Advantage vs. smaller creatures.

ARTIST: FORREST IMEL

Dungeon Denizens

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

Stirges

Evasive Flier. *Attacks against stirges are made with disadvantage.*

Stirge LVL 1/2, TINY ♥ *10* **Latch On.** 1d4+2. On hit: Latched On.

Greater Stirge LVL 6, SMALL ♥ *60* **Latch On.** 1d12+10. On hit: 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.

Small Mimic LVL 2 ♥ *41* *(Backpack, Shield/Weapon, Chair, Crate, Tree Stump)*
Pseudopod. 1d6 (escape DC 11) OR: **Bite.** (a Grappled creature) 1d20.

Medium Mimic LVL 6 ♥ *79* *(Table, Treasure Chest, Barrel, Bookshelf, Door, Bed)*
Pseudopod. 1d8 (escape DC 13) OR: **Bite.** (a Grappled creature) 2d20.

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 (2×).** 1d6+**2**.

Ochre Jelly LVL 4, LARGE ♥ *52* **Acidic Touch (2×).** 1d6+**3**.

Black Pudding LVL 8, LARGE ♥ *90* **Acidic Touch (2×).** (Reach 2) 1d6+**5**.

Elder Ooze LVL 12, HUGE ♥ *150* **Acidic Touch (3×).** (Reach 3) 1d6+**6**.

Goopy. *When crit or dealt any slashing damage: 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, indigestible items (bones, gems, magical trinkets), a leather-bound journal (water-damaged pages), lockpicks, a treasure map (only half), boots (suspiciously untouched by corrosion).

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

Hill & Field

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

Gnolls

Frenzy. *Advantage against Bloodied creatures.*

Gnoll Lvl 1 — 28

- **Ravage (2×).** 1d10. OR:
- **Shoot.** (Range 12) 1d10.

Gnoll Packleader Lvl 4 — M — 39

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

Worg Lvl 1, Large — 28 — 10

Savage. *Always crits when attacking a Grappled creature.*

Rip Apart (2×). 1d6+2. On hit: 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 are Grappled (escape DC 14) and take 1d12+20 damage (half on save).*

- **Drag Below.** (A Grappled creature) 2d12 then drag below and burrow away. OR:
- **Leap & Bite.** (If not grappling) leap 6, and attack for 1d12+20. On hit: Grappled.

Blue Drake Lvl 2 — 34 — Fly 12

Shocking Bite. 1d12+5 (ignores metal armor).

On Death. *Deal 1d12 damage back (ignores metal armor).*

Griffon Lvl 4, Large — 50 — Fly 12

- **Talons.** 2d6+10, on hit: Grappled (escape DC 14) OR:
- **Fly & Drop.** (if grappling) Fly upward 12 and release (6d6 fall damage).

Roc Lvl 17, Gargantuan — M — 195 — Fly 20

- **Pluck Up.** (Reach 4, target up to 2 creatures) 3d12+20. On hit: Grappled (escape DC 18). OR:
- **Crush & Drop.** Fly upward 20 spaces, deal 20 damage to Grappled creatures, then release (10d6 fall damage).

Hill Giant Lvl 12, Huge — 140 — 8

Brute. *On hit: Knockback Primary Die spaces.*

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

Troll Lvl 10, Large — M — 100 — 8

Regenerate. *Does not die at 0 HP. Only fire, radiant, or a crit while at 0 HP can kill it.*

Choose twice:

- **Claws.** (Reach 2) 1d4+10. On crit: Prone.
- **Bite.** (A Prone creature) 1d4+20.

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

Undead

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

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)

Zombie LVL 1/2 — 15
Crunch. 1d4+4. On damage: Grappled.

Ghoul LVL 1 — 20
Sickening Claw. 1d4+8. On damage: Dazed.

Specter LVL 3 — 30 — FLY
Deathly Touch. 1d4. On damage: set HP to 0.

Ogre Zombie LVL 5, LARGE — 46
Greatclub (2×). 1d4+8. On crit: Prone.

Mummy LVL 6 — 54
Slam (2×). 1d4+8. On damage: Dazed.

Giant Zombie LVL 8, HUGE — 73
Decaying Swipe (2×). 1d4+10. On damage: knockback Primary Die spaces.

Wraith LVL 10 — 94 — FLY
Soul Rend (2×). (Range 8) 1d4+10. 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 (2×).** 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.

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

Forest Denizens

Every shadow hides a predator, every branch and leaf conspires against you, the forest is alive–and you are not welcome.

Duskprowler Lvl 6, Large — 70

Illusory Aura. *Attacks against the Duskprowler have Disadvantage 2. Damage supresses this effect until the end of the next hero's turn.*

Ravage (2×). 2d8+2.

Basilisk Lvl 7 — H — 48

- **Stone Gaze.** Daze 1 creature within sight, then:
- **Envenom.** 1d8+10, advantage vs Dazed targets.

Flesh to Stone. *Creatures Dazed by the Basilisk remain so for 10 minutes. Dazed 3 times = Petrified.*

Druid Lvl 8 — 90

- **Beastshift.** +4 speed, gain Medium armor this round. 4d4+10. OR:
- **Hurricane.** (Reach 3) 4d4+10 to all enemies within reach. On damage: move targets anywhere else in Reach.

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. (Range 6) 2d6+2

Acidpod Lvl 1, Small — H* — 8

Caustic Eruption. *On death: 4d6 acid damage to ALL adjacent creatures.*

Grab. DC 12 DEX save or Grappled.

Tangler Lvl 2 — H* — 20

Tangle (2×). (Reach 6) 1d6+2. On hit: Grappled (escape DC 12, or any fire or slashing damage).

Rootbreaker Lvl 5, Large — H* — 50

Slam. 3d6+6. On crit: knockback 2.

Treant Lvl 14, Huge — H* — 170

Enrage. *Attack with advantage when unarmored.*

Choose twice:

- **Slam.** (Reach 3) 2d6+10. On damage: Prone.
- **Stomp.** (Hampered target) 2d6+20.

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

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. OR:
- **Blood Boil.** (Range 12, Bloodied creature) 3d6+6.

Fanatic Lvl 3 — 41

- **Oblation of Blood!** If undamaged, attack self for 2 damage. Adjacent enemies are inflicted with Despair. OR:
- **Whispers of Madness.** Contested STR check or Grappled (reroll to escape, or any radiant damage); if successful, deal 3d6+6 psychic damage (cannot be Defended or Interposed against).

Doomsayer Lvl 5 — 58

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

Putrid Cloud. *On Death: 2d6 poison damage to enemies within Reach 2.*

Spiny Fiend Lvl 4 — 49

Spines. *Melee attackers take 3 damage.*

- **Claws (2×).** 1d6+6. OR:
- **Shoot Spine.** (Range 12) 1d6+6.

Glabrezu Lvl 14, Large — H — 110

- **Doomclaw (2×).** (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 creature 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).

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

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 any slashing/fire damage). OR:
- **Bite.** (Hampered target) 2d8+4, Poisoned (magical healing ends).

Ettercap Lvl 4 — 49

Web Garrote. 1d8+2. On hit: Grappled (escape DC 13), Silenced 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.** (Hampered target) 3d8+6 and Poisoned (magical healing ends).

Great Worm Lvl 16, Huge — H — 140 — Burrow 8

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.*

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. On Hit: 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. *Enemies make a DC 15 WIL save at the start of their turns or Confused this turn. Gain advantage 1 on the save for each failure this encounter.*

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

Confused. *The GM spends your next action.*

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, luminescent fungus, molted carapace, rusted tools, ancient coins, echo stones (faintly hum when tapped).

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

DEATH KNIGHTS

Once noble champions, Death Knights are fallen paladins or warlords who betrayed their oaths and now serve death itself. Cursed by dark necromantic forces, they rise clad in blackened armor, their souls forever bound to undeath. Death Knights command legions of the lost and often guard profane relics or cursed ruins. Their presence blights the land, and their very name inspires dread—each one a tale of tragic fall and terrible wrath.

Encounters & Tactics:

Deathknights have fewer HP than equally leveled monsters, and thus rely on their armor and Squires Interposing to keep them going in battle.

- **Hollowfile.** (VS levels 4–5 heroes) Composed of 2–3 Hollow Knights, Squires, and Crows. Hollow Knights use their speed to pick off creatures with the lowest armor first if possible. Crows stick together, attacking whatever is closest or most damaged. Squires stick close to their knights, and are quick to sacrifice themselves at their first opportunity.
- **The Pale March.** (VS levels 5–12 heroes). A pair of Death Knights/Marshals/Barons/Regents with 2 Squires each and enough Crows to make up the difference in level.
- **The Vowless Crusade.** (VS levels 12+ heroes). 1 Regent and 2 or more Barons/Marshals, each with 2 Squires. Death Knights can block line of sight against Ranged attacks for their minions. They can move adjacent Squires with them when they Gravewalk.

Increasing The Difficulty

- **Squires.** Have the Squires spread out somewhat to avoid AoE damage, ready to Interpose only against any attack that would bypass their Armor or other above average attack/effect.
- **Gravewalk.** Save it for when an when a hero is being healed outside of your Aura's radius to stifle the healing and deal damage instead. That'll make the heroes respect you!
- **Crows.** Have them spread out and attack Dying heroes to inflict wounds more quickly.

Decreasing The Difficulty

- **Squires.** Have them clump up, and Interpose even against small attacks, or push their Knights into disadvantageous positions when Interposing.
- **Gravewalk.** Use it for mobility, or get closer to bank rank Ranged or undamaged heroes. Move out of Interpose Range of your Squires.
- **Crows.** Have crows clump up and attack heavily armored or high-health heroes that can easily shrug off their meager damage.

What to say in combat!

- **When dealt Radiant damage.** "Even in undeath… I fear the light."
- **When the Heroes fail at an ability.** "Steel breaks. I do not."
- **Reveal tactics.** "Crush the healer. The rest will kneel."
- **Egg them on.** "I will snuff out your hope."
- **When the Heroes fail at an ability.** "Steel breaks. I do not."
- **When a Squire dies:** "They serve with dark devotion." Squire:"Tell… the others… I stood."

Knightly Names:

Sir Alric Blackthorn, Dame Vexmoor, Sir Thaddeus, Dame Morwyn, Sir Hollowvale, Lord Breckenridge

Squire Names:

Tallow, Edrin, Halwain, Toman, Pytt, Bones, Jorik

Parley

When clearly losing, Death Knights may reveal to the most honorable of heroes some flickers the last ember of their former selves deep within:

- "Please, end it quickly, before I recall who I was."
- "I still hear the rusting echo of honor I once had. I cannot face my broken oath."

Do they parley as a ruse or sincerely? It's up to you! Heroes may seek to redeem them (a fun quest!).

Grave Crow Minion, Lvl 1/2

- **Doom Peck.** 2 damage

Grave Squire Minion, Lvl 1

Dark Devotion. *Can Interpose for knights.*

Dread of Death. WIL save instead of rolling for Initiative against Death Knights.

Touched by Death. *Damage from Death Knights also causes 1 Wound.*

Hatred of light. *Vulnerable to Radiant. Immediately strikes back for half as much damage.*

Hollow Knight Lvl 5 8 M 40

Hollow One. *Cannot crit or be crit (ignore any additional dice/effects that happen when crit).*

- **Doomblade.** 1d10+10 (Req: DC 12 WIL save to Interpose).

Death Knight Lvl 9 H 50

Merciless Aura. *Enemies within Reach 1 cannot regain HP, when healed they instead suffer 1d10 damage.*

- **Doomblade.** 1d10+20 (Req: DC 14 WIL save to Interpose). Then (optional):
- **Call Servant.** (Single use) Summon 2 Grave Crows or 1 Grave Squire within Reach 6.

Reaction *(single use)* **Gravewalk.** Instantly descend into the earth and errupt from the ground up to 6 spaces away. Creatures within Reach 2 are knocked Prone on a failed DC 14 DEX save.

Death Knight Marshal Lvl 12 H 80

Merciless Aura. *Enemies within Reach 2 cannot regain HP, when healed they instead suffer 2d10 damage.*

- **Doomblade.** 1d10+25 (Req: DC 16 WIL save to Interpose). Then:
- **Call Servant.** Summon 2 Grave Crows or 1 Grave Squire within Reach 8.

Reaction *(single use)* **Gravewalk.** Instantly descend into the earth and errupt from the ground up to 8 spaces away. Creatures within Reach 2 are knocked Prone on a failed DC 16 DEX save.

Death Knight Baron Lvl 16, Large H 120

Merciless Aura. *Enemies within Reach 3 cannot regain HP, when healed they instead suffer 3d10 damage.*

- **Doomblade.** 1d10+30 (Req: DC 18 WIL save to Interpose). Then:
- **Call Servant.** Summon 2 Grave Crows and 1 Grave Squire within Reach 10.

Reaction *(2 uses)* **Gravewalk.** Instantly descend into the earth and errupt from the ground up to 10 spaces away. Creatures within Reach 3 are knocked Prone on a failed DC 18 DEX save.

Fey

Fey are wild-hearted spirits of nature, driven by impulse and whimsy. They love practical jokes, and relish a well-laid prank or caper. However, Fey rarely consider the consequences of their actions, and their antics can quickly take a sinister turn.

Fey Lore

- **Sprite:** Sprites are minor fey that appear to mortals as a winged ball of light. They enjoy a carefree life, but may resort to violence if someone intrudes on their fun.
- **Faerie:** Faeries are tiny, mischievous winged humanoids that go about their jokes and schemes with boundless enthusiasm. Being the butt of their jokes is often exhausting, and sometimes dangerous.
- **Faerie Troubadour:** Faeries love music. A Troubadour's magical tunes escalate whatever chaos other Faeries are causing nearby.
- **Faerie Merrymaker:** Ferry Merrymakers always carry a bag of tricks. Their Pyrotechnics are a welcome addition to any party.
- **Faerie Trickmage:** Trickmages use illusions to drag bystanders into their convoluted plots. They tend to hide their true motives until the final reveal. "The more elaborate the setup," says the Trickmage motto, "the better the punchline."
- **Gremlin:** Ugly, pot-bellied little troublemakers. Left to their own devices, Gremlins will spend all day moving and hiding household objects and insulting anyone they come across. They are eager to start fights, despite their small size.
- **Gremlin Wrestler:** Gremlin Wrestlers are nasty bullies that immobilize much larger opponents with a mix of practical martial-arts and fey magic.
- **Gremlin Roastmaster:** Roastmasters are high-status Gremlins that lead a gang of their peers using insults and intimidation. They use dirty tricks and cheap shots against anyone that threatens their gang.
- **Bogey:** Bogeys are distant cousins of Gremlins. Their lanky, hulking forms bely their cunning nature. Unlike most Fey, Bogeys are overtly malicious, taking cruel satisfaction in the pain and sadness of those they lure into the dark.

The Wildscapes

The Wildscapes are an alternate realm that overlaps places in the mundane realm where natural energies are strongest: the heart of an ancient forest, a riptide in the ocean, or a snowy mountain peak. Fey can cross into the heroes' world from these points. Inside the Wildscapes, heroes will encounter wild amplifications of nature: groves of 1000-foot trees, a coral-reef castle, or a never-ending blizzard atop a bottomless sea of snow.

Adventure Seeds

- **Workshop Trouble.** A local tannery grinds to a halt after a string of bizarre mishaps: tools misplaced, belts snapping, vats boiling over. The foreman begs for help finding the unknown saboteur (a gang of surly Gremlins) before an accident claims a life.
- **Sleepwalking through Life.** Whenever the heroes sleep they sleepwalk, wandering off while humming a haunting tune. Their nocturnal movements point them to a grove of twisted trees deep in the forest, where an ancient hermit needs the heroes' help driving off a Bogey.
- **Family Feud.** Two noble families teeter on the brink of war after months of sabotage, scandal, and misplaced heirlooms. Suspicions run high, but the truth is stranger: a mischievous Trickmage delights in their frustration. Expose the mastermind before violence erupts.
- **The Winter Queen.** The Winter Queen's palace is hidden deep in a forest of perpetual cold. She lures travelers into her domain as entertainment for her subjects. Winters have been getting longer, and the reach of her snowstorms are expanding by the day.

Fey Loot

Sneezing powder, stink bombs, cayenne pepper, whoopie cushions, scrolls containing jokes or poetry, a double-headed coin, tiny and ornate weapons, tiny crowns set with gems, and slightly-cursed magical items including: Headband of Rapid Hair Growth, Bell of Constant Ringing, and Gloves of Gesticulation.

RUNNING FEY

GM Note. *Fey are hard to kill outright. Reducing one to 0 HP banishes it back to their home in the Wildscapes (often times in a puff of colorful smoke, glitter, or a pile of buttons & shinies they've collected), where it may take years to find a way back to the mortal planes.*

Faeries are quick and evasive, and love harassing heroes with hit-and-run tactics. Faeries generally don't want to hurt the heroes–they think their battles are all in good fun–instead they use Fey magic to make heroes look foolish, exhaust their energy, and wear down their resolve. On a big hit, you might as ask, "What's so embarrassing that you take X psychic damage? In contrast, Gremlins are bullies that fight dirty and target weak opponents. They relish a good scrap, and find joy in really putting a hurt on their enemies. Gremlins and Faeries sometimes put aside their differences to work together and multiply their "entertainment."

What are these buggers up to?

1. Bullying/pranking a creature.
2. Dancing in a circle, singing a limerick.
3. Arm-wrestling or knife-throwing contest.
4. Drawing crude graffiti with fey magic.
5. Playing a child's game like jacks or hide & seek.
6. Pretending to sleep. Surprise!

Fey Encounters

- **Improv Team.** (VS levels 1–2 heroes) Faeries attack from a distance while Sprites fly in and out of melee range to bait opportunity attacks from players, which are particularly bad against them.
- **Surprise Party.** (VS levels 3–4 heroes) A Faerie Troubadour, hiding behind some Faerie Merrymakers. The heroes must spread out and silence the Troubadour before things get out of hand.
- **Rough-Housers.** (VS levels 3–5 heroes) Gremlins and Wrestlers. Gremlins rush ranged heroes and Taunt, while Wrestlers pin down melee heroes.
- **Comedy Club.** (VS levels 5–6 heroes) A Gremlin Roastmaster and a swarm of Faeries Merrymakers. Protect the Roastmaster–it's very easy to miss against Faeries, so his special ability will be doing a lot of work in this encounter.
- **Trickmage's Master Plan.** (VS levels 6–7 heroes) A Trickmage supported by Troubadours and Ferry Merrymakers. The Trickmage can protect the Troubadours using *Stop Hitting Yourselves!*, allowing them to share their buff longer.
- **Bogey Men.** (VS levels 6–12 heroes) 1–2 Bogies and several Gremlin Wrestlers. The Wrestlers lock down weaker heroes and drag them towards the Bogey, who wants to be surrounded by targets. Add a Roastmaster or Troubadour taunting from the back line for an even more demanding battle!

Increasing the Difficulty

- **Ambush.** Fey are great at hiding–ambush! Or add more with hidden reinforcements!
- **Faeries.** Flying Fey can abuse cover and environmental hazards: fly into a tree's branches for cover, across a river, or out a window. Targeting ranged heroes first can clump up the heroes better for the Troubadour and Trickmage.
- **Gremlins.** The Gremlin furthest away from melee heroes Taunts, the rest go after the heroes least able to escape their grappling.

Decreasing the Difficulty

Fey are easy to frighten. They might panic and issue a retreat after a sufficient display of force.

- **Faeries.** Love being the center of attention–backline fighters may get tired of being ignored, and approach the heroes to gloat or showboat.
- **Gremlins.** Have the most dangerous Gremlins taunt brazenly, so the heroes can focus their damage efficiently.
- **Bogeys.** Love a good challenge! Focus and Grapple the melee fighter or the tank, once they see how strong they are. "OoO, yOu sTrOnK!"

TPK Alternatives

Most Fey don't really want the heroes dead in the first place! Instead of causing their last Wound, heroes are simply knocked unconscious. Fey might take their equipment and dress crude scarecrows with them to further mock the heroes when they come to. Evil Fey may instead present the defeated heroes a magical contract, entwining them in the Fey's schemes against a more dangerous foe.

FAERIE STATBLOCKS

Spritely Evasion: *Attacks against Faeries are rolled with disadvantage and miss on 2 or less.*

SPRITE Lvl 1/2, Tiny — 12 — Fly

Fae Trick. 1d4+4.

FAERIE Lvl 2, Tiny — 20 — Fly

Tricksy Magic. (Range 6) 1d4+10 psychic damage.

FAERIE TROUBADOUR Lvl 3, Tiny — 26 — Fly

Invigorating Presence. *(Reach 4) Fey gain medium armor and advantage on attacks.*

Clamorous Chorus. (Reach 4) Enemies make a WIL save, each takes 15 psychic damage minus the results of the save.

FAERIE MERRYMAKER Lvl 4, Tiny — 38 — Fly

Prank Bomb. (Range 4) 2d4+10. On hit, choose 1:

- **Sticky Gum:** Slowed for 1 Round.
- **Smelly Gas:** Poisoned for 1 Round.

FAERIE TRICKMAGE Lvl 6, Tiny — 50 — Fly

Stop Hitting Yourselves! *Reaction, 1/Round. (Reach 4) Swap the position of two creatures.*

Illusory Assault. (Reach 4) Create 3 illusory fey minions (d4) in empty spaces adjacent to a hero. They attack immediately.

Advantage. *If a minion would attack with advantage, increment their die one step instead.*

GREMLIN STATBLOCKS

Come Get Some! *If no heroes are Taunted, a Gremlin may Taunt all heroes for 1 Round.*

GREMLIN Lvl 3, Small — 38

Weeee! 1d6+10. Then, if target is Small size or larger, Ride (escape DC 10).

Remember! *If an attack misses a Gremlin that is Riding a hero, it hits the hero they're Riding instead! Gremlins find this HILARIOUS.*

GREMLIN WRESTLER Lvl 4, Small — 46

Punching Up: *Can Grapple Large creatures.*

I'mma Mess You Up! 2d6+10. On hit: Grappled (escape DC 12). If Grappled, knock Prone as well.

GREMLIN ROASTMASTER Lvl 6, Small — 68

Take a look as this tough guy!*. (Reach 6) Heroes that miss attacks suffer 5 psychic damage.*

Cheap Shot. 1d6+10. If target is Hampered, deal 20 damage instead.

BOGEY Lvl 10, Large — 120

Taste for Violence. *If a Bogey has 2 or more adjacent heroes, it uses a d20 for its attacks.*

Choose Twice:

- **Smash and Grab.** 1d10+5. On Hit: Grappled (escape DC 14).
- **Headbutt.** If Grappling target, 1d10+10 damage and Dazed.

BOGEY

ARTIST: PETR KOSTYUK

FIENDISH HORRORS

Ravenous, chaotic, evil that answers only the call of slaughter and ruin. Dripping with ichor, bristling spines, and claws–they glut themselves on pain.

NALFESHNEE Lvl 19, Large — 290 — 12 Tele

- **Spellthief.** Cast a spell you saw cast this round. OR:
- **Ichorbolt.** (Range 6) d66 to creatures in a 3x3 area.

A grotesque swine-fiend, bloated with dark magic.

Cast copies of weaker spells, stay near melee heroes.

Use your mobility to stay far away from heroes.

GLABREZU Lvl 14, Large — H — 110

Doomclaw (2×). (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 creature Grappled by both claws) 50 unpreventable damage. If the target is at 0 HP: DC 17 STR save or be torn in two, dying instantly.

A mighty fiend with terrible pincers and heavy carapace.

Target two different heroes with Doomclaw.

Target a single weak/slow hero with both Doomclaws.

HEZROU Lvl 13, Large — M — 150 — Jump

Bite (2x). 2d6+6. Highest die is Primary. On Crit:

Consumed. *At the end of each of your turns suffer 2d6+6 damage (ignoring armor) and 1 Wound. Your attacks have advantage and ignore armor (teleport or escape DC 15).*

A nightmarish toad-fiend, large enough to swallow a horse whole.

Move twice instead of one of your attacks. Target high-STR/DEX classes to be consumed.

Target classes that buff their allies (e.g., Commander, Songweaver) to limit their special abilities.

VROCK Lvl 11, Large — 130 — Fly

Horrid Screech. (Reach 6) 20 psychic damage (ignoring armor), enemies are also Dazed on a failed DC 15 STR save. (Reach 18) 10 damage instead and advantage on the save.

A foul, carrion bird, often kept by fiends as a living alarm system.

Keep it near strong melee heroes (Berserker, Commander, Oathsworn) so the save is much easier to overcome.

Keep it in the air out of melee reach, target weaker heroes (Mage, Songweaver, Stormshifter).

INCUBUS/SUCCUBUS Lvl 8 — 90

Infernal Allure. *At the beginning of each round, Allure 1 hero on a failed DC 15 WIL save (you spend one of their actions this round). They gain advantage on the save for each time they fail this encounter.*

Brimstone Whip. (Reach 3) 2d6+6 damage.

Cruel tempters who use their allure to sew chaos and inflict pain.

Target strong-willed heroes (Shepherd & Songweaver)

Target weak-willed heroes (The Cheat & Shadowmancer)

HOOKSPAWN Lvl 6, Large — 68

Rend (2×). 1d6+6. On damage: Lacerated.

Lacerated. *Suffer 1 damage for each space you move (or are moved). Healing or a DC 15 Examination check ends.*

Its enormous scythe-like hooks prevent prey from fleeing.

Target Ranged heroes who have little need to move.

Lacerate as many heroes as possible. Combine with Glabrezu, Hezrou, or Incubus/Succubus to force movement.

SPINY FIEND Lvl 4 — 49

Spines. *Melee attackers take 3 damage.*

Claws (2×). 1d6+6. OR:

Shoot Spine. (Range 12) 1d6+6.

Covered in wickedly sharp spines, both a defence and cruel offense.

IMP Lvl 2, Small — 34 — Fly

Cowardly. *Advantage on attacks when an ally is adjacent, Disadvantage otherwise.*

Sting. 1d6+6.

Cowardly opportunists, they strike whenever attention falters.

STENCHLING Lvl 1/2, Small — 18

Bite. 2d6.

Putrid Cloud. *On Death: 2d6 poison damage to enemies within Reach 2.*

Scavengers whose foul stench make them a menace to all.

ARTIST: VLADIMIR MATYUKHIN

FIENDISH TYRANTS

EXECUTOR Lvl 18, Large — 270

Torment. (Reach 8) Select up to 3 enemies, each must SECRETLY choose:

- **Courage.** Suffer 2d20 damage.
- **Cowardice.** Take no damage; If ALL choose Cowardice, Suffer 2d20 damage and 1 Wound.

Direct envoys to Vorgrath, these towering, supreme judges wield dominion over the minds of those that dare stand against them.

Allow the heroes to creatively coordinate their choices in secret (e.g., telepathy or stealth check).

If the Executor notices coordination, heroes may forfeit their choice and you choose for them this round instead.

OVERLORD Lvl 15, Large — 200

Cruel Dealer. *Whenever an enemy rejects an Offering, they take 10 psychic damage.*

- **Rise, My Minions!** (Reach 8) Summon 3 fiendish minions (size:d8). Then:
- **We Offer You Clarity!** Each fiendish minion Offers to Taunt an enemy.

Eyeless, robed lawmakers that tip the scales ever in their own favor. They enforce deals through maleveolent cunning.

Have all minions Offer to Taunt a single nearby enemy who can easily dispatch them with an AoE.

Have each minion Offer to Taunt a different enemy, continue to target any Hero who rejects. Extra challenging when combined with the Lumbrax, Pactmonger, or Hierarch.

HIERARCH Lvl 13, Large — 170

Tip the Scales. *Enemies roll Disadvantage, with +1 Disadvantage. Allies roll Advantage with +1 Advantage.*

I Offer You ABSOLUTION! (Reach 8) Permit 1 hero to kneel (considered Prone). Otherwise punish them for 2d20+10 damage.

High-Judges of Fiendlaw who tip the scales ever in their own favor.

Act last amongst monsters or Offer Absolution to those not at risk of being attacked.

Act first and Offer Absolution to those at greatest risk of being attacked.

LASHFIEND Lvl 10, Large — 130

I Offer You REVENGE! *When attacked by an Lashfiend, the target may choose to make a DC 15 STR save.*

Punish. (Reach 8) 2d20+10 damage. If the Offer was accepted, roll 1 additional d20. On save, the hero chooses one of the dice rolled for the Lashfiend to suffer, the hero takes the remaining damage.

Vengeful fiends with spiny, whip-like tails who revel in revenge.

Target strong heroes (Berserker, Commander, Oathsworn)

Target weak heroes (Mage, Songeweaver, Stormshifer)

JUSTICIAR Lvl 6, Large — 70

Infernal Edict. *When damaged by the Justicar, enemies MUST accept the next Offer they receive. Enemies suffer 5 damage whenever they act while it is not their turn.*

Cruel Judgment. (Reach 6) 1d20+5.

Large judges of Fiendlaw with enormous, gaping maws. They bellow judgements toward foes, forcing them into terrible deals.

Limit the need to Interpose by spreading damage out and attacking more well-armored heroes.

Focus-fire weak heroes, force their allies to Interpose. Tempt them into making Opportunity Attacks against weak enemies. Use Cruel Judgment to to set up devastating Offerings for the Hierarch, Lashfiend, or Pactmonger.

LUMBRAX Lvl 4, Large — 50

- **I Offer You REPREIVE!** If accepted, summon 3 minions (size:d8). If rejected Brutalize:
- **Brutalize.** 2d20 damage.

Hulking, powerful, but lazy. Prefer to have their underlings do most physical labor for them.

Swarm your minions around Heroes who can easily deal AoE damage. The minions are lazy and attack next round.

Threaten weakened heroes with BIG damage (feel free to let them know you'll be rolling d20s!) so you can summon LOTS of minions (who attack right away). Works great with the Grumbulus.

Pactmonger Lvl 3 — 40

- **I Offer You POWER!** (Reach 8) Offer a hero an additional Action. Then:
- **Reckoning.** (Reach 8) 2d8+4; or twice as much if the target has accepted an Offer this round.

Cruel predators who seek out and feed upon the weak-willed and power-hungry.

Choose strong heroes, ones that can easily be protected, or ones that have already accepted an offer.

Act last amongst monsters. Choose heroes with very low HP, they'll lose the action anyway when they drop to 0!

Grumbulus Lvl 2, Small — 32

Gnash. 2d8+4.

I Offer You SECRETS! *(1 use) When an attacker would kill you: offer control of a random Fiend on their next turn. If accepted, you can't be harmed this round.*

Blackmailing, little secret-hoarders. They leverage this illicit information to hold sway over other fiends.

Make your Offer more often (e.g., when you take damage), or select a powerful Fiend instead of choosing randomly.

Use these with other powerful Fiends to really tempt Heroes into taking the offer–or with ones that summon weak minions like the Lumbrax to increase the chances of the heroes getting a bad deal!

Quasit Lvl 1, Tiny — 20

Mobile. *Move 3 spaces away after attacking.*

Slash. 1d8+4.

I Offer You RICHES! *(1 use) When an attacker would kill you: offer LVL gp. If accepted, you can't be harmed this round.*

Diminutive, horned fellows with exquisitely tailored suits.

When damaged, it can make its Offer, if accepted it can flee combat in a puff of sulfuric smoke.

Tempt multiple heroes with smaller weapons to make Opportunity Attacks by moving past them or moving away after attacking. It can OFFER more riches, but they only carry enough gp to fulfil the offer once–"I'll owe you! hehehehe…"

Running Tyrants

Fiendish Tyrants offer cruel choices to the heroes–sometimes they'll want to take the offer, other times they may be forced to take them, or punished for rejecting it. Tyrants often work alongside other creatures (usually mortals who have entered bargains with them), either as mooks to soak up damage for them or a single champion to protect them.

Fiendishly Crafty. *A crafty fiend reveals only the benefits of the Offer and NOT the drawbacks–though if a hero insists, you may reveal all the terms.*

TPK Alternatives

You are taken hostage by the Fiends, and your essence harvested from your lifeless bodies with the following potential outcomes:

- **Freaky Game Day.** You break free from your infernal shackles and will have to pilot random monsters to find a way back to your bodies.
- **No Body to Go With.** Your now-undead bodies have arisen to save yourselves!

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Fighting Lizardfolk means entering their swampy domain. Depending on how difficult you want the encounter to be, you may engage the heroes on different levels of swampiness and Muck: difficult terrain for non-Lizardfolk.

- **Shallow Swamp.** Up to 25% of the battlefield is covered with wet Muck. Minor effort is needed to avoid it.
- **Deep Swamp.** Up to 50% of the battlefield; movement paths are substantially hindered.
- **Prime Hunting Grounds.** 75% of the battlefield; there are precious few areas to stand and move normally!

TPK ALTERNATIVE

Criminals, exiles, or prisoners are typically thrown into the pit to be fed to the Hydra or tossed into the Raptor pens if a Hydra is not available. If the heroes fight and lose, they are captured, perhaps the lizardfolk make it a ceremony and need to wait for a full moon, or maybe if they survive the night with cleverness, or beat the Hydra, they gain the Lizardfolk respect and are allowed to go free as "chosen of the swamp".

LIZARDFOLK ENCOUNTERS

- **Bogfang Scouting Party.** (VS lvl 2–4 heroes). Composed of Reedstalker, Hunters, and a Raptor or 2, depending. Reedstalkers will keep in cover using their poisoned blowpipes, usually in water, to lure the heroes towards them. Once in the water, Hunters will spring forth to net them while Raptors come from behind. They will focus on anyone wearing cloth, believing them to be magic users.
- **Marshblood Warband.** (VS lvl 4–6 heroes) Same as previous, but now add in Scalebreakers and a Broodguard, which leads the warband. A Broodguard will always go for the toughest-looking hero.
- **Hatchguard Circle.** (VS lvl 6–9 heroes) A mix of low-level lizardfolk led by a shaman, possibly more depending on the size of the threat. There will also be additional Broodguard that won't need to guard the shaman and join in the attack. The Chieftain might join if deemed necessary.
- **Voice of the Mire.** (VS levels 9–12 heroes) The Hydra is brought to bear, as well as the Greatscale and Shaman. Lizardfolk become much more dangerous in the presence of their All Mother, and it's taking her out quickly will be key in breaking their morale. But she will not be easily exposed, and there is still the monstrous Hydra to contend with.

LOOT

Antivenom (Potion, Action: drink to remove and become immune to Poisoned for 1 hr). Jewelry made of gold and colourful stones (valuable, priceless to the right buyer). Feather charm - various coloured feathers tied to a string. Raptor claws (advantage on checks to climb). Bone dagger. Swamp moss poultice (used to cover wounds and stop infection–recover 1 Wound or other condition). Edible mushrooms. Strange powder (sniffing it will induce hallucinations). Crude gold pendant of a snapping turtle's shell.

LIZARDFOLK COMPANIONS

SWAMP RAPTOR LVL 2

28 | 10

Pack Tactics. *Advantage when an ally is adjacent to target.*

Pounce. 1d8+10. On crit: Prone & Restrained (Escape DC 10, or any damage to the Raptor).

Domesticated by the Lizardfolk, Swamp Raptors hunt, guard, and carry messages through the bogs. The fiercest defend hatcheries, attacking any without the tribe's scent. When they die, their hides and bones are repurposed for tools and armor.

Spread the Raptors and allies out, attacking different targets.

Use their speed to attack isolated heros in packs. They'll gain advantage from Pack Tactics, Prone, AND Restrained!

HYDRA LVL 13

160

Uh, guys… *Starts with 2 heads. Gain 1 additional head at 120hp, 90hp, 60hp, and 30hp.*

Bite. (Reach 3) 1d20 per head, you may split the damage dice among any creature in Reach. On damage, poisoned (healing ends).

Young hydras are captured and tamed through ritual using mist, drums, and pheromones. In peace, they are fed offerings–often trespassers. When one grows too large, the Lizardfolk deem it sacred, abandoning their village so the beast may rule the swamp.

Spread the attacks out, or attack a Dying hero with all heads, it only counts as a single attack and is not likely to crit!

Attack a single hero for devastating damage!

LIZARDFOLK ABILITIES

Muck Walkers. *Double movement while in Muck instead of treating it as Difficult Terrain.*

Cold-Blooded. *Lizardfolk despise the cold, and if hit by any Ice-based attack, are Poisoned for 1 round. Saves against Ice spells are made with Disadvantage.*

LIZARDFOLK REEDSTALKER LVL 1 — 26

Sneak. *You are Invisible until you attack.*

Blowpipe. (Range 8) 1d8, On damage: Poisoned for 1 round (healing ends).

Slight and agile, Reedstalkers patrol tribal borders and watch for intruders. They move unseen through trees and muck, striking from afar with blowpipes and poisoned darts.

Attack already Poisoned heroes, act after Scalebreakers

Attacks from Invisible can't be Defended or Interposed!

LIZARDFOLK HUNTER LVL 4 — 34

Gotcha! *(1 use) When an enemy moves adjacent, Restrain them with a net (escape DC 12, or any fire/slashing damage).*

- **Javelin.** (Range 8) 2d8+10 OR:
- **Club.** 2d8

Powerful ranged attackers who carry nets for capturing prey who get too close (and to set up their Scalebreakers underlings).

"Forget" to use your net; attack from up close.

Net is wet/reinforced (unaffected by fire/slashing damage). Use Muck to get at maximum Range before attacking.

LIZARDFOLK SHAMAN LVL 8 — 60

Broodward. *When damaged, choose 1 other Lizardfolk to immediately move and attack.*

Swampsong. Lizardfolk attack with d10s this round.

Mother to us all: *Upon Death, Lizardfolk roll d20s for the rest of the encounter.*

Female Lazir who hold deep spiritual authority as shamans–maternal figures and ancestral conduits. Will sacrifice themselves to goad their allies to fight more fervently.

Warn that the shaman isn't being protected. "It's almost as if she wants to sacrifice herself."

Charge forward, egg the heroes into attacking the shaman.

LIZARDFOLK SCALEBREAKER LVL 3 — 42

Bash. 2d8+2. +10 VS Hampered creatures.

The muscle of a Lizardfolk tribe. They charge forward without hesitation, driven by dedicated fervor for their Greatscale or Shaman.

Act first and target non-Hampered heroes

Act last and prioritize Hampered heroes.

Hampered. *Anything that negatively impacts movement or actions (e.g., standing in Muck, Prone, Restrained, Poisoned, Dazed…).*

LIZARDFOLK BROODGUARD LVL 6 — H — 54

Swift Defense. *(1/round) Can Interpose within Reach 4.*

Shell Bash. 2d8+10. On Crit: Dazed.

Broodguards are massive warriors chosen to protect the brood. They carry heavy snapping-turtle shells to defend their allies.

Interpose against crits or other attacks good VS heavy armor. Hold position near other lizardfolk and forego attacking.

Protect high-damage allies like Hunters. Interpose against attacks that are less effective against Heavy armor.

LIZARDFOLK GREATSCALE LVL 10 — M — 100

Mighty Scales. *Attacks miss them on 1 and 2.*

Tail Swipe. 2d8 to all enemies within Reach 2. On damage, Prone. Then:

Crush. 2d8+10. On crit: Dazed.

A tribe's chieftain–a scarred, veteran Broodguard. Leadership is earned through strength; challengers test him in brutal combat to prove the tribe's might.

Tailswipe a small number of heroes. Crush a non-Prone target.

Act last, combo with Scalebreaker and Raptor for big damage.

MANA CONSTRUCTS

Enchanted with living mana and bound to the will of powerful spellcasters, Mana Constructs are soulless automatons that neither speak nor feel. Often created to guard arcane secrets or deployed to hunt down rogue spellcasters. They move with unfeeling precision, each variant fulfilling a single-minded purpose of the arcane power that created them.

These towering beings are typically summoned by archmages, lich-kings, or forgotten orders to guard sacred relics, forbidden tomes, or the inner sanctums of magical strongholds. Each hulk is forged for a specific function and sealed with a binding sigil that tethers them to a master's will or location of power.

Mana Construct Lore

- **Scourge Hulk.** These constructs act as wardens and pain engines, their flails are etched with runes that echo the shrieks of creatures they've struck. They often guard prison halls or magical containment vaults where threats must remain bound rather than dead.
- **Spire Hulk.** These swift-striking anti-thief constructs guard against stealth and subtlety. Created to root out infiltrators, thieves, and assassins, their gaze can pierce stealthy attempts and basic illusions, while their blades are honed for swift, silent kills.
- **Breaker Hulk.** These super-heavy constructs are less subtle. They act as seige breakers and specialize in taking down heavily fortified enemies. These are designed to hold choke points, or end a seige against a mage's tower. Breakers excel in brief, decisive violence.
- **Arbalest Scion.** Support Construct, Ranged Harrier. Built to snipe intruders with enchanted bolts–these constructs are often stationed atop tower parapets or deep gallery nests with overlapping lines of fire. Their range and reliability make them indispensable sentries.
- **Halberdier Scion.** Common infantry construct. These scions control space with their long polearms, and are deployed in corridors, temple gates, and narrow halls–anywhere they may face groups of enemies.
- **Bladed Scion.** Rabble-clearing infantry. These scions serve as the disciplined front line of any detachment. Swift and reactive, made for sudden bursts of lethal force against groups of tightly packed foes. They enter the battlefield when the Archmage faces overwhelming numbers.

Adventure Seeds:

- **Reliquary Heist.** A wealthy patron hires the heroes to infiltrate a ruined mage's tower and recover a magical artifact, a tome, a person, or even the secret to creating construsts themselves!
- **Bad Side of a Mage's Guild.** The heroes have gotten on the bad side of a Mage's Guild, until the guild is dealt with, they encounter increasingly powerful Mana Constructs hunting them whenever they travel.
- **Protect the Tower!** A Mage's constructs have been sabatoged, the heroes are needed to help defend against a seige until they are brought back online.

Loot:

- **Mana Potion.** Action, recover 2d4+2 mana.
- **Greater Mana Potion.** Action, recover 3d4+3 mana.
- **Supreme Mana Potion.** Action, recover 4d4+4 mana.
- **Executor's Halberd.** 1d10+STR (Reach 2), advantage at Reach 2, disadvantage otherwise.

Mana Charged. *After mana is spent, the closest mana construct MUST attack a target within Range/Reach.*

Scourge Hulk Lvl 8, Large 8 M 75

Punish. (Reach 2) 3d6, the highest die is the primary die. On crit: +20 damage & Prone.

On Death. *An enemy gains 1 action.*

Scourge Titan Lvl 14, Huge 10 M 150

Punish. (Reach 3) 4d6, the highest die is the primary die. On crit: +30 damage & Prone.

On Death. *2 enemies gain 1 action.*

Spire Hulk Lvl 8, Large 8 70

Aegis. *Ignore damage from 1st attack each round.*

Swift Strike. (Reach 2) 1d6+20.
1d20+20 instead vs. Evasive targets (DEX>STR).

On Death. *An enemy can move for free.*

Spire Titan Lvl 14, Huge 10 150

Aegis. *(1/round) Ignore ALL effects of 1 attack.*

Swift Strike. (Reach 3) 1d6+30.
1d20+30 instead vs. Evasive targets (DEX>STR).

On Death. *2 enemies can move for free.*

Arbalest Scion Lvl 3 — 40

- **Shoot.** (Range 8) 1d6+10 damage OR:
- **Finishing Move.** Deal 20 damage to an adjacent Prone enemy.

Halberdier Scion Lvl 3 — 50

Execute. (Reach 2) 1d20, advantage at Reach 2, disadvantage otherwise. On 18+: Prone.

Bladed Scion Lvl 5 — 60

Flurry. 3d6, also damages the next closest target within Reach.

On Death. *1 enemy gains advantage on their next attack.*

Breaker Hulk Lvl 8, Large — H 60

Crush. *Moving through a Prone creature deals 20 damage.*

Armor Breaker. 1d4+20. On Crit: Prone. Advantage 2 vs Tanky targets (STR>DEX).

On Death. *An enemy gains 15 temp HP.*

Breaker Titan Lvl 14, Huge — 8 H 125

Crush. *Moving through a Prone creature deals 30 damage.*

Armor Breaker. (Reach 2) 1d4+30. On Crit: Prone. Advantage 3 vs Tanky targets (STR>DEX).

On Death. *An enemy gains 30 temp HP.*

ORCS

Mighty, battle-born, warriors that train endlessly to resist blades and arrows. Only the greatest Orcs dare use the arcane, and even they do so with reverence and fear.

Orc Encounters & Tactics:

- **Skirmishband.** (VS levels 1–4 heroes) Composed primarily Orcs, Orc Raiders, & Warpigs. They use simple tactics: Orcs and Orc Raiders engage the first avilable targets, Warpigs are trained to use their speed, to engage the back lines with less armor.
- **Warband.** (VS levels 3–10 heroes). With a Battlebard or Warchief (or both) a Skirmishband becomes a true Warband. Add in a few Elites and these become truly terrifying combatants. They use much more intelligent tactics: flanking, ganging up on isolated heroes, targeting heroes with lower armor, and especially targeting any hero using magic.
- **Infernoband.** (VS levels 8–16 heroes). When an orc tribe has been pushed to the edge, their high leader musters and personally leads this ultimate warband. Flamecallers always travel with a retinue of Battlebards, Elites, and Warchiefs–they can quickly flood the battlefield with overwhelming numbers, impeccable positioning, and using Pillar of Flame to Damage as many heroes and Orcs as possible to trigger their Enrage ability.

Orcish Names:

Karthug One-Eye, Brakka the Red, Katerwal the Howler, Skrall, Trugga Wormgut, Makluk Deepscar.

Defeat (TPK Alternatives)

The heroes are taken captive to the Orc's High Flamecaller–He wants them to:

- **Remain an Enemy.** Deliver a message to those who sent them and he will spare their "miserable lives" leaving them with a rad scar (ask the heroes what scar they'd like).
- **Become an Ally.** He wants their aid in defeating a powerful rival. "You fight unlike any we've seen, It took a warband many times your size to subdue you…"

Parley

When clearly losing, orcs may yield to a hero (particularly one who can cast magic) as their new, true High Flamecaller. If spared, they will honoably serve and die for their new Flamecaller–and can provide info they'd have access to, and be sent on minor quests in their region.

> ***Note.*** *They can engage in combat "off-screen," but to avoid overcomplicating play, they will refuse to personally aid their Flamecaller in combat: "A High Flamecaller can handle themselves."*

Orc Loot:

Oversized Cleaver, Slab of Bacon, Giant Horn (blow it and orcs may answer the call), Tattooing Kit (with black ash ink), Bone Totem Necklace, Clan Banner Scrap, Flamecaller's Pungent Incense, Warrior's Diary (retreived from a fallen soldier; bloodstained, full of strategic notes & maps), Black Iron Nails, War Paint Jar (a mix of blood, ash, and herbs; applying it gives a faint burning sensation).

Battlelust. Heroes have disadvantage on Initiative against a band composed mostly of Orcs.

Tough as Nails. *Medium armor, except against magic damage.*
Enrage. *When crit: deal 5 damage to an adjacent enemy.*

Warpig LVL 1/2 — 10 — 18

Gore. 1d10

Orc LVL 1 — 26

- **Battleaxe.** 1d10+4. OR:
- **Javelin.** 1d6+4 (Range 8)

Orc Raider LVL 3 — 34

- **Twin Strike (2x).** 1d10+4. OR:
- **Javelin.** 1d6+4 (Range 8).

Orc Battlebard LVL 4 — 50

Stand Your Ground! *Allied Orcs attacks with advantage so long as you have not moved (or been moved) since your last turn.*

Battle Horn (1/encounter). Trigger every allied Orc's Enrage ability.

Orc Elite LVL 6 — 70

Cleave. 2d10+4, can target a 2nd enemy in Reach. OR:
Heavy Javelin. 2d6+4 (Range 8).

Orc Warchief LVL 8 — 90

Warchief's Axe. 2d10+4, then:

Call the Horde. Summon 1 Orc to the battlefield.

High Orc Flamecaller LVL 10 — 70

Touch Not The Flamecaller! *When damaged, choose 1 Orc to move and trigger their Enrage ability.*

Pillar of Flame. *(AoE, Reach 8)* 1d10+10 to ALL creatures in a 2×2 area. Orcs there trigger their Enrage ability .

ARTIST: ANNA GIOVANNINI

TROGLODYTES

Ruthless, cave-dwelling brutes–you'll smell them before you see them.

Overwhelming Stench. *When rolling initiative VS Troglodytes, make a STR save instead.*

Death Stench. *On death: Poison adjacent enemies for 1 round.*

Troglodyte Lvl 1/3 — 14

Claws. 1d6+3.

Monster's prefered target:

Roll 1d4 or choose one:

1. Whoever is the best smelling.
2. Whoever is wearing the shiniest equipment.
3. Whoever makes light or casts magic.
4. Whoever makes the most noise.

Troglodyte Tunneler Lvl 1 — 14

Burrower. *Unseen until you attack (advantage on attacks when unseen). If not burrowed or grappling, burrow instead of attacking.*

From Below! 1d6+3. On hit: Grappled (escape DC 10).

Troglodyte Muckthrower Lvl 2 — 20

Burrower. *Unseen until you attack (advantage on attacks when unseen). If not burrowed or grappling, burrow instead of attacking.*

From Below! 1d6+3. On hit: Poisoned.

Troglodyte Screecher Lvl 3 — 30

Screech. *(AoE, Reach 2)*1d6+3 and Daze. *(AoEs do not miss or crit, and ignore armor)*

Troglodyte Champion Lvl 4 — M — 40

Spiked Club. 3d6+9.

Troglodyte Stenchmaster Lvl 4 — 40

Pervading Stench. *(AoE, Reach 12)* 1d6+3 to all enemies, they are Dazed and Poisoned for 1 turn. *(AoEs don't miss or crit, and ignore armor)*

Trogeldyte Loot:

Fungus-covered skull, filthy hide cloak (reeks of death), stench gland (a grotesque organ still oozes its vile odor), cave moss poultice (smells awful, tastes worse, might heal), bone charms – (tiny humanoid bones strung together), pouch of shimmering spores, rusty shackles, chipped stone idol (an unknown, many-eyed creature), pouch of teeth, cave fish (still alive! blind, slimy, and disturbingly resilient), scrap of ancient map (torn, water-damaged, partially legible).

Vampires

Vampires are immortal undead that retain the intelligence and memories they had in life, but with their conscience ripped away. Their blood curse banishes them from the daylight, and dooms them to thirst for the blood of living humanoids.

Vampires have diverse and powerful magical abilities including super-human strength and vitality, shapechanging, hypnotism, and flight. Some lurk in the shadows, drawing their prey into the dark to feed. Others use their power and immortality to build comfortable lives as nobility and feast on their subjects at their leisure.

VAMPIRE LORE

- **Vampire Spawn:** Humanoids who began the vampiric transformation but their minds were broken in the process. They mindlessly thirst for blood, lacking any trace of their former humanity.
- **Vampire Thinblood:** The weakest of the vampire kin. Their powers have been diluted by many generations of transmission of the blood curse. They hide amongst humans, beguiling and seducing them in order to feed.
- **Vampire Gorger:** A vampire that imbibes too deeply and for too long, becoming bloated and disfigured from overindulgence. Characterized by swollen, misshappen bodies and mouths that hang permanaently agape
- **Vampire Outlander:** These vampires embrace their rightful place as an apex predator. Nothing is more satisfying to them than the thrill cornering of their terrified prey.
- **Vampire Fullblood:** Fullbloods are powerful vampires afflicted by the most ancient and potent strains of the blood curse. Fullbloods are frequently arrogant and imperious, choosing to assume positions of wealth and power, command leagues of servants and familiars, and maintain an impressive castle or manor home.

VAMPIRE ALLIES

Vampires' magical abilities allow them to bind servants to their will. These creatures are commonly found under the command of Vampires:

- **Minions:** Vampires can control the minds of animals with little effort, preferring Wolves (d10) and Bat (d4, Flying) Minions.
- **Timberwolf:** Timberwolves are a favorite pet of Vampires, giant beasts that are physically imposing but as easy to dominate as any other animal.
- **Gargoyles:** Stone statues of terrifying design, imbued with a mote of a vampire's magical essence. Used by vampires to protect their castle homes, they attack by flying above enemies and crushing them with terrible force.
- **Blood Thralls:** Weak-willed, servile humans who willingly submit as servants in exchange for a vampire's favor. A Thrall lures victims to their master, and performs other errands and tasks beneath their master. The more powerful a vampire, the more thralls it may have at its command.
- **Bloodstain:** Thralls that live out their purpose may be granted a form of immortality, dissolved into puddles of animated blood. They remain telepathically connected to the Vampire that created them and seek to fulfil their master's every desire.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

- **Signed in Blood:** People are going missing off the streets. The trail leads to a quiet bookstore, owned by a Vampire Thinblood, whose Thralls lure unwitting shoppers into the back rooms.
- **The Barony:** When the heroes arrive in a barony, young women are packing their bags to flee the settlement. The immortal baron Lazarescu is only seen once every hundred years, when he descends from his castle home to choose a new bride. The centennial lands at the end of the week.

VAMPIRE LOOT

Centuries-old artifacts, ancient coins from a foreign land, twisted and tarnished holy symbols, finely made clothes (a century out of style, and including a cape), portraits and sculptures of the vampire themself (through the ages), melodramatic poetry, human bones carefully wrapped in a shroud, a worn locket.

RUNNING VAMPIRES

Vampires are deadly hunters, but also possess punishing vulnerabilities. For this reason, Vampires seek to control the circumstances of an encounter, luring their enemies into ambushes where they can feed with minimal risk.

Vampires utilize minions ruthlessly, and in battle will focus a weak target while minions keep stronger fighters busy. Vampires will always use Bloodied, Bloodsoaked, and Dying targets to sate their thirst before attacking stronger foes. When faced with a Shepherd or other source of consistent Radiant damage (their primary weakness), Vampires will keep their distance, utilize minions, and strike aggressively when they sense an opportunity.

Some Legends are True

There are many stories of Vampires' weaknesses. Unfortunately for the heroes, not all these stories are true. You are encouraged to choose 1 or more weaknesses from the list below for vampires in your game. The players must discover which legends are true through play:

1. ***Sunlight.*** *Vampires take 1d20 Radiant damage at the start of their turn if in direct sunlight.*
2. ***Relics.*** *If a hero wields (as an action) a sacred relic near a Vampire, it must make a WIL save at the start of its turn (DC 12). On failure, Frightened until end of turn. The DC decreases by 2 each subsequent turn.*
3. ***Garlic.*** *Vampires have disadvantage on all saves if garlic is nearby.*
4. ***Wooden Stake.*** *A critical hit with a Wooden Stake (a d4 weapon) instantly kills a bloodied Vampire.*
5. ***Fire.*** *A Vampire that takes Fire damage becomes Dazed (1/round).*
6. ***Water.*** *Running water or holy water deals 2d12 damage to a Vampire.*

Vampire Encounters

- **Ambush Predators (Level 5-10):** A Blood Thrall (disguised as a regular citizen) lures the party into an ambush with one or more Vampire Thinbloods. The Thinbloods use Mesmerize to attempt to split the party and feed. To make it more difficult: add a locking door, pit, or other obstacle to split the party more effectively.
- **Hunting Party (Level 10-16):** A Bloodstain appears from nowhere, soaking the party in blood. A Vampire Outlander approaches slowly from the distance, as Timberwolves and Wolf minions swarm the party. Take full advantage of the Bloodsoaked status.
- **The Count's Entourage (Level 14+):** Attacking a fullblooded Vampire in his home should result in a suitably climactic battle. Unleash a Gorger, Gargoyles, and several Spawn to weaken the party. The Vampire arrives to turn the tide when the heroes start to win.

Defeat (TPK Alternatives)

Losing to a Vampire is a potentially campaign-altering event. Your Vampires may:

- **Subjugate:** Bind the heroes to the vampire as thralls. Thralls must obey their master's commands–the heroes will need to find a way to undermine their master or break the magic.
- **Underestimate:** The vampire feeds–or his minions do. The party is discarded at the brink of death, before being found and nursed back to health by a good samaritan.
- **Turn.** Any hero dealt a lethal Wound by a Vampire's bite can fall unconscious and begin to turn into a Vampire. The remaining heroes will need to find a solution or (in time) see their friend become an enemy!

GM's Note: *Tread carefully with turning heroes into vampires–a campaign with a vampire may quickly become a campaign ABOUT vampires. You may decide that they remain unconscious until healed, or they become an NPC, or that they can continue adventuring with their friends, but replace their ancestry ability with appropriate boons and comparable weaknesses (and story snags) as a vampire.*

VAMPIRE STATBLOCKS

Sunscorn. *Radiant deals +10 damage to you. When damaged this way, gain advantage on your next attack.*
Predation: *Advantage VS Bloodied creatures.*

VAMPIRE SPAWN LVL 10 — 118 — 8

- **Rend.** 1d10+20. OR:
- **Feed.** (If you have advantage) 1d20+20 damage.

VAMPIRE THINBLOOD LVL 14 — 170 — 8

Mesmerize. DC 16 WIL Save or spend 1 action moving where the vampire wishes. Then:

- **Rapier (x2).** 1d10+10 OR:
- **Feed.** (If you have advantage) 1d20+30 damage and 1 Wound.

VAMPIRE GORGER LVL 15, LARGE — 230

Bloodgorged: *Vulnerable to Piercing and Slashing damage, when damaged this way adjacent targets become Bloodsoaked: considered Bloodied until they wash.*

- **Thrash.** 2d10+10 to all adjacent targets OR:
- **Devour.** (If you have advantage) 1d20+30 damage and 1 Wound.

VAMPIRE OUTLANDER LVL 17 — 200 — 8

Hunter's Bola: *(1/ Round) When crit, Restrain them (escape DC 18, or 2 actions).*

Call of the Wild. (If you have no minions) Summon 1 Wolf minion/hero (d10, speed 10). Then:

- **Feed.** (if you have advantage) 1d20+30 damage and 1 Wound. OR:
- **Crossbow.** (Range 8) 1d10+20

VAMPIRE (FULLBLOOD) LVL 19 — 230 — 8

Batform: *(1/round) Reaction, temporarily turn into a cloud of bats and teleport 6 spaces (can be used to avoid an attack).*

Enthrall. (Range 12) DC 20 WIL Save or Enthralled, on save 10 Psychic damage. Then:

- **Feed.** (If you have advantage or an Enthralled target) 1d20+40 damage and 1 Wound. OR:
- **Sanguine Strike (2x).** 1d10+20 (Reach 2).

Enthralled. *The Vampire spends one action on each of your turns, and you can't Defend against it, nor allow anyone to Interpose for you against it; damage ends.*

VAMPIRIC SERVANT STATBLOCKS

TIMBERWOLF LVL 3 — 40 — 10

Mangle. 1d4+10. Advantage VS bloodied creatures.

BLOOD THRALL LVL 8 — M — 75

Nothing Without Master! *Unarmored and attack with disadvantage when beyond Reach 6 of a Vampire.*

Cursed Dagger. 1d4. On hit: +25 damage.

GARGOYLE LVL 6 — H — 41 — FLY 6

Crush. 1d4 (with disadvantage). On hit: +30 damage and Prone.

BLOODSTAIN LVL 10 — M — 75

Blood Spatter: *Melee attackers and creatures you hit become Bloodsoaked: considered Bloodied until washed.*

Crimson Lash: 1d4+10 (Reach 2), up to 3 targets.

LEGENDARY MONSTERS

ARTIST: JOSEPH QIU

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

Heroes should *know* when they are fighting a Legendary creature. It 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 and 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 and feel free to nix any rule that your table doesn't like or that doesn't make sense in the world.*

They have interesting mechanics and weaknesses that can be uncovered through research ahead of time or using the Assess action in combat.

Saves. Like heroes, Legendary Monsters have advantaged (+) or disadvantaged (–) saves. For example ***STR++, WIL–*** means that this monster would roll STR saves with advantage 2 (two additional dice), and WIL saves with disadvantage.

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:*
>
> - ***Wind Up/Breathe In.*** *Regain the use of a single use ability.*
> - ***Terrible Roar/Creepy Monologue/Taunt.*** *Creatures (or a creature) who hear this make a WIL save or are Frightened for 1 turn.*
> - ***Toss Around/Telekinetic Shove.*** *STR save or moved, Prone, etc.*
> - ***Size Up/Spot Weakness/Pin Down.*** *DEX save, the next attack you make is with advantage and cannot be Interposed.*

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: 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 (though, as always, feel free to change it up!).

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. Unlike normal encounters, the numbers here are all based off the Party Level, 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. Legendary monsters will typically have at least Medium armor; if unarmored make sure they have some other defensive ability.

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

Examples

For example, see Pudge the Blunderer below. For a level 2 party he'll have 75 HP and Medium Armor. 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. 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–

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

- **Move & Smack.** Move 8, attack for 1d8+2. On damage: Prone.
- **Grab & Throw.** 1d8+2, 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.

BLOODIED: At **37 HP**, Pudge's damage increases to 1d12+2.
LAST STAND: Pudge is dying! **20** more damage and he dies. Until then, Pudge can move 6 spaces, and use Grab & Throw each turn.

Legendary Teams

"Solo" encounters need not be strictly solo! Legendary creatures may have pets, summon minions, or even come in groups. You can have ALL of them attack after each hero, or take turns attacking.

Level 3 Solo Bug Druid & His Stinky Pet

Kelebek & Poppy

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose Kelebek OR Poppy to act.

Kelebek, Entomancer *60 M INT+ WIL+*

Vinelash. Move 6, then 2d6. On damage: move target to an unoccupied space within 10 spaces.

Poppy, Giant Stinkbug *60 H STR+*

Stink Cloud. *When damaged, enemies within 2 spaces make a STR save (DC equal to the higher of 10 or the damage done). On a failure, they must spend their next action vomiting, and they cannot take reactions this round.*

Crushing Mandibles. Move 6. 4d6 damage, up to 2 adjacent creatures.

BLOODIED: When Kelebek is reduced to **30 HP**, Poppy always Interposes for him.
LAST STAND: When Poppy dies, the room is filled with noxious gas: all heroes have a maximum of 2 actions each turn.

Level 2 Solo Angry Bugbear

KROGG, GOBLIN KING

75 *M* *STR+, DEX+*

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

- **Manglemaul.** Move 6. 2d6+3 damage, Grappled (escape DC 10). OR:
- **Crack Skulls.** Move 6. Swing a Grappled creature at another creature. Both take **2d6+3** damage, ending the Grapple.

BLOODIED: At **38 HP**, Krogg's damage increases to **2d8+3.**

LAST STAND: Krogg is dying! If he takes **20** more damage he dies. Until then, he has Heavy armor.

Level 3 Solo Goblin & Large Rat Cavalry

VERMIS & SKITTERSNACK

120 STR+, DEX+

Mangy Rat. *When Skittersnack is struck, summon 1 giant flea (a d4 minion, on hit: 1 damage).*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, alternate using your 2 abilities:

- **Chaaarrge!** Move 10 in a straight line, deal 2d6 damage to all in your path (2 spaces wide).
- **Itchy Fleas.** Move 4. Skittersnack summons 1 giant flea/hero (they act at the end of each round).

BLOODIED: Flea Bitten Varmint! At **60 HP** Skittersnack summons 3 Giant Fleas per hero.

LAST STAND: Fleas, Please! Veris & Skittersnack are dying! **30** more damage and they die. Until then, they perform both actions each turn.

Level 3 Solo Large Owlbear

100 M STR+

Grimbeak, the Unyielding

Brutal. *Treat the highest die rolled as the Primary Die. On crit: knock Prone.*

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

- **Savage Screech.** (1 use) All enemies within reach 12 suffer 2d6 damage (ignoring armor). DC 11 WIL save or become Frightened for 1 round.
- **Rend & Tear.** Attack for 2d6+10 damage.
- **Beak.** Move 8. Attack for 2d6 damage.

BLOODIED: At **50 HP**, Savage Screech recharges.

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

ARTIST: CARLOS EULEFI

Level 4 Solo Human Criminal

Thorn Quickblade

125 M DEX+

Strike Back. *When crit, make a Heart Piercer or Stormquill attack in return.*

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

- **Stormquill (Crossbow).** Move 4, 4d4+10 damage (Range 8).
- **Heart Piercer (Rapier).** Move 8, 2d4+3 damage. On crit: Dazed.

BLOODIED: Smoke Bomb. At **62 HP**, Thorn immediately becomes invisible (until the end of his next turn), then moves 8, ignoring opportunity attacks.

LAST STAND: Mortal Panic! Thorn is dying! **30** more damage and he's dead! Until then he'll Strike Back EVERY time he's hit (1/turn).

ARTIST: EDWARD YORKE

Level 5 Solo Large Manticore

130 M STR+ DEX+

Ravager of the Lowlands

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

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

- **Venomous Stinger.** (1 use) Reach 3, 5d12 damage.
- **Ravage.** Attack for 1d12+20 damage.
- **Move & Claw.** Fly 10, attack for 1d12+6 damage.

BLOODIED: At **65 HP**, his Venomous Stinger recharges.

LAST STAND: The Ravager is dying! **40** more damage and he dies. Until then, the first time each turn he takes damage, he uses Move & Claw.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

Level 6 Solo Large Matriarch of Spiders

160 M ALL+

Queen Aranya, Broodmother

Weave Web. *Creatures she hits are entangled in a sticky web (Dazed).*

Flammable Webs. *Fire critical hits suppress the Broodmother's Weave Web for 1 turn.*

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

- **Impale.** (Reach 2) 2d8+8 damage. Then skitter away up to 8 spaces.
- **Hatch Brood.** Summon spiderling minions (1/hero, size:d8); they act only when commanded.
- **Dinner Time!** Command all of your spiderling minions to move up to 6 spaces and attack once each.

BLOODIED: "Avenge Your Queen, My Brood!" At **80 HP**, summon 3 spiderling minions/hero anywhere within Reach 8.

LAST STAND: Aranya is dying! **40** more damage and she dies. Until then, Hatch Brood after each of her turns.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

Level 6 Solo Large Grey Drake

180 M STR+ DEX+

Nalzar, Apex Predator

Tail Swipe. *When dealt slashing or lightning damage: knock a hero within 3 spaces Prone.*

Torn Wings. *Each slashing crit reduces the Wing Buffet DC by 1.*

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

- **Devour.** (Prone creatures only, Reach 2) 4d12+6.
- **Wing Buffet.** Fly 8, then land. Cone 8: 1d12, then DC 14 STR save or also knocked Prone (advantage if behind cover or another hero).

BLOODIED: At **90 HP**, her Wing Buffet Range and DC increase by 2.

LAST STAND: Nalzar is dying! **60** more damage and she dies. Until then, each turn, she moves 6, then uses Devour (ignoring the Prone requirement).

ARTIST: JOSEPH QIU

Level 7 Solo Large Floral Dragon

200 M ALL+

Florindris, Bane of the Forest

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, choose one:

- **Petal Storm.** (1 use) 3d10+10 damage to all enemies within Reach 8, half on a DC 13 DEX save.
- **Rend.** Fly 10 before or after attacking. (Reach 2) 1d10+10 damage to up to 2 targets within reach. On hit: Gain Thornblight.

  Thornblight: *Suffer 5 damage for each space you are forcibly moved. Magical healing ends this effect.*

- **Gust.** (Reach 8) Move a target 1d10 spaces.

BLOODIED: At **100 HP**, enemies within Reach 12 gain Thornblight, and Petal Storm recharges, .

LAST STAND: Florindris is dying! **70** more damage and she dies. Until then, Aura of Wind and Gust move creatures twice as far.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

Level 8 Solo Huge Flame Titan 175 H STR+ WIL+

General Flameheart

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 8 then strike a 2×2 square area for 2d10+10 fire damage.
- **Molten Fury.** Lob a molten fireball at the furthest hero not already in the flames, igniting a 2×2 square area. Creatures there take 2d10+10 damage; and another 10 damage at the end of each of their turns if they remain in the area.

BLOODIED: 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 3×3 square.

ARTIST: CHEN GUIXIN

Level 9 Solo Luminary of Malice

250 ***INT++ WIL++***

Vael, Undying Necromancer

Protect Master! *Whenever Vael would fail a save or take 20 or more damage, he may sacrifice his Lifebinding Spirit, Bane, instead. He spends his next turn moving up to 6 spaces and summoning Bane.*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, Bane attacks for 1d12+6 then Vael chooses one:

- **DOOM.** (Range 12, undamaged target) DC 14 WIL save or 5d12 damage. Half on save.
- **Veilwalker's Rebuke.** (Range 8) 2d12+6. Double damage against those behind cover. 1/round you may swap places with them.
- **Cruelty's Edge.** 1d4+2. On hit: DC 14 WIL save or Dazed and Frightened. Then move 6.

BLOODIED: 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.

ARTIST: CHEN GUIXIN

240 H STR+++

Level 10 Solo Gargantuan Skeleton

Titan of the Deep Woods

Splintering Legions. *Bludgeoning damage or any crit cause bones to splinter off and animate, forming a d10 minion.*

Brittle Bones. *Resistant to piercing, vulnerable to bludgeoning.*

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

- **Devastating Strike.** (Reach 4) 1d4+30 damage. On hit: Knockback 6.
- **Crushing Stomp.** Move up to 10 spaces. Deal 1d4+20 damage to up to 2 targets along the path. On hit: Prone.
- **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.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

Level 11 Solo Medium Brain-Eating Aberration 300 INT++ WIL++ DEX+

Ul'vek, Psionic Despot

Mind Shield. *Whenever Ul' 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) Choose half of the heroes to suffer 2d12 psychic damage (ignoring armor). DC 15 WIL save or Dominated as well.

  Dominated: *Rolls are made with disadvantage while Dominated. Ul' spend your first action on each of your turns, moving, making a weapon attack, or casting a cantrip. Damage ends.*

- **Consume.** (Dominated creature) Contested DEX or STR check, on success: Grappled and 6d12. Cannot be Defended or Interposed against.
- **Control.** Teleport 8. (Reach 8) DC 15 WIL save, force an enemy to spend one Action to make a weapon attack or cast a cantrip. On save, they attack with disadvantage.

BLOODIED: At **150 HP** gain **Illusory Shift.** Reaction, when attacked (1 use): Swap places with a Dominated creature, making them the new target of the attack.

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

ARTIST: EARL LAN

Level 12 Solo Large Aberration, all TEETH & EYES

325 ***INT ++ WIL++***

Dravok, All-Seeing Tyrant

My plans, flawless! *Dravok makes all saves with +1 Advantage, attacks against him have Disadvantage.*

Weakness: *Taking more than 12 piercing or slashing damage: Dravok's plans are FLAWED! (until the end of the next hero's turn.)*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, Move 6 and then either use **Eye Ray** (Range 10, randomly chosen ray then choose target) OR **Terrible Maw.** (Melee attack. 4d4, EVERY die can crit and is Vicious.)

1. Warping Ray. 3d6. On hit: Dazed, exchange places with target.

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

3. Terror Ray. 5d10 psychic damage & Terrified: *You are Frightened, and your screams give allies within 6 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, 2 actions on save. *(Cannot spend resources, they regain spent 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.

BLOODIED: 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 he dies. Until then, each turn he will move or use Warping Ray and then **Devastation Beam.** 2d12+20 in a 10 space long, 2 space wide line.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

Level 14 Solo Huge Balor Feeling Hot & Spicy

320 H ALL+

Azriel, Lord of Pain & Flame

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:

- **Crackling Whip.** Move 6. (Reach 6) 3d12 damage. On hit: Grappled and pulled adjacent to Azriel (escape DC 17 STR, DEX, or until he uses the whip again).
- **Doom Sword.** 3d12+10 fire damage to all creatures within Reach 2.

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

LAST STAND: YES, MORE PAIN! Azriel is dying! **180** more damage and he dies. Until then, EVERY hit against him is a crit.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

Level 15 Solo Huge Rot Dragon

320 H ALL++

Gloomwing the Cruel

Aura of Rot. *Creatures within 6 spaces take* **5** *necrotic damage at the end 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.** (1 use) Fly 10, then (Cone 8) DC 17 DEX save or 8d10 necrotic, half on save.
- **Bite.** (Reach 2) Move 6, then 3d10. On damage: Cruelty's Gift.

Cruelty's Gift: *Healing is halved and Vulnerable to necrotic damage. Healing ends.*

- **Claws.** (Reach 2) then 3d10 slashing +10 necrotic.
- **Tail.** (Reach 4) 1d10, and knocked back that many spaces.

BLOODIED: 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.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

THE CRIMSON COUNT

Count Alaric is an ancient Vampire of such profound power that nature and reality are warped by his presence. Where he settles, nights grow unnaturally long, as though the sun is afraid to rise. Beasts become rabid and vicious, vermin reproduce until they fill the alleys. Before long, locals become despondent and hopeless as the Vampires he spawns run amok, and spread to nearby settlements. Once a region collapses under his influence, he will search for new hunting grounds.

Alaric is rarely seen outside his estate, preferring his Thralls to bring him entertainment. Although he presents the air of a handsome sophisticate, Alaric is emotional, passionate, and prone to flights of fancy. The subjects of his obsessions are carelessly discarded the moment something else catches his eye. As long as the Count remains alive, everyone in his domain is in peril. If the heroes lack sufficient motivation, a friendly NPC may go missing, last seen at his estate.

Running Alaric

Alaric is a well-balanced foe with strong defensive abilities, steady damage output, and above-average mobility. Radiant damage will give heroes an early advantage, but once Bloodied, he becomes much more difficult to damage. Begin by moving in and striking with Ebonfang then flying away if possible. Any hero with a poor WIL save or anyone bloodied is a great target to Beguile, then Beckon on the next turn. **To increase the difficulty:**

- **Bats:** Alaric is far deadlier with his bat swarms. If they're being shut down, spread them out.
- **Mobility:** Outdistance melee heroes using Ebonfang, targeting the back line with Beguile and Beckon at every opportunity.

To reduce the difficulty:

- **Bats:** They may clump up near hero with high armor, or one with an AoE ability. Or they may move twice and instead of attacking.
- **Beguile:** Target heroes that are not Bloodied or ones with advantage on their WIL saves.
- **Beckon.** Use this less often, use Ebonfang more.
- **Monologue.** Arrogant and perilously self-absorbed, he may underestimate the heroes and spend a turn or two taunting them, telling them of his plans or insulting them for their impudence. "You'd make lovely thralls…"

Level 16 Solo Vampire Lord

Alaric Draegoth, the Crimson Count

320 ALL++

Sanguine Cloak. *(1/turn) Deal 1d10 necrotic damage whenever you are hit, the 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, summon 1 blood bat minion (d10) within 8 spaces, then choose 1:

- **Ebonfang.** 1d10+15 damage, your target is considered Bloodied for 1 round. Fly 8 before or afterward.
- **Beguile.** (If no one is Beguiled) Beguile a target on a failed DC 18 WIL save (w/ disadvantage if Bloodied).

Beguiled. *Dazed. Cannot Defend or allow anyone to Interpose for you. Damage ends.*

- **Beckon.** Move a Beguiled creature adjacent to you and bite them: 2d10+30 damage and 1 Wound.

BLOODIED: At **160 HP**, gain **Mistform.** No longer vulnerable to radiant. **Bat Decoy.** (1/round) Whenever Alaric would take damage, instead first swap places with a bat minion.

LAST STAND: Alaric is dying! **160** more damage and he dies. Until then, his Sanguine Cloak, attacks, and bats roll d20s instead of d10s.

620 H ALL+++

Level 20 Solo World-Ending Cataclysm

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 12. 3d20 to a creature adjacent to where you began or ended.
- **Immensity.** (Reach 12) DC 20 STR save (disadvantage if within Reach 4) or suffer 3d20 damage and Prone. Half on save.
- **Glimpse Your End.** DC 20 WIL save or DOOMED: Concentration ends, the next damage roll against you is maximized.
- **Plasma Storm.** Reach 6, DC 20 DEX save or 2d20 lightning and 2d20 fire damage. Half on save.
- **Singularity.** Reach 2, 5d20 bludgeoning damage.
- **Almighty Push & Pull.** (Range 12) DC 20 STR save or be launched 20 ft. into the air, repeat until the target saves. Fall damage for this attack is 1d20 for every 10 ft. fallen.

BLOODIED: At **310 HP**, **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 the mark drops 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

Death Knight Regent Lvl 20, Large

H 160

Merciless Aura. *Enemies within Reach 4 cannot regain HP, when healed they instead suffer 4d10 damage.*

- **Doomblade.** 1d10+40 (Req: DC 20 WIL save to Interpose). Then:
- **Call Servant.** Summon 2 Grave Crows and 2 Grave Squires within Reach 12.

Reaction *(2 uses)* **Gravewalk.** Instantly descend into the earth and errupt from the ground up to 12 spaces away. Creatures within Reach 4 are knocked Prone on a failed DC 20 DEX save.

Level 10 Solo Large Fallen Knight

CAELIAS, BARON OF ASH

200 H STR+, WIL+

Mounted Combatant. *Heroes have disadvantage on Initiative. While mounted, Caelias does not trigger Opportunity Attacks and can move through smaller creatures as if they were not there.*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, Move 6 then choose one:

- **Doom Charge.** Charge forward up to 10 spaces in a straight line. Each creature you pass through takes 20 damage – DEX save. They are knocked Prone if they take 10 or more damage this way.
- **Doomblade.** 1d10+20, on crit: 1 Wound (Req: DC 16 WIL save to Interpose).

BLOODIED: When Caelias is reduced to 100 HP, he dismounts and summons his Doomsteed (100 HP Large, unarmored creature, it can Interpose 1/round from up to 10 spaces away). He uses Doomblade AND the Doomsteed can Doom Charge each turn.

LAST STAND: Caelias is dying! **100** more damage and he dies. Summon 2 Gravecrows within Reach 10 at the end of each of your turns (they act at the end of each round). Gain advantage on Doomblade attacks.

Level 14 Solo Large Death Commander

TYR, LORD OF LEGIONS

360 M STR+, WIL+

Commander of Dark Devotion. *Tyr's Squires can attack for 1d10 damage.*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn choose one:

- **Squires, Attend Me.** Summon 1 Grave Squire adjacent to you and each hero.
- **Strike!** Each Grave Squire can move 6 and attack (Req: DC 16 WIL save to Interpose).

BLOODIED: "Squires, hold fast!" When Tyr is reduced to 180 HP, he summons 1 Grave Squire per hero. Grave Squires now die only when they suffer 10 or more damage at a time.

LAST STAND: Tyr is dying! **140** more damage and he dies. He summons 2 Grave Squires adjacent to himself and each hero, they act immediately.

ARTIST: KEREM BEYIT

ARTIST: ANNIE STEGG GERARD

MAV, THE WINTER QUEEN

A formidable fey monarch that rules over a wintry domain. She is the equal and opposite ruler to Titania, the good-natured May Queen. Mav aspires to bring about a winter that never ends to the mortal realm.

Level 10 Solo Avatar of Seasons

Mav, The Winter Queen

M ***280*** ***ALL+***

Wind Ward. *Attacks from Range 6 or beyond have disadvantage against Mav.*

Ice Avatar. Resistant to Ice, vulnerable to Fire: when dealt Fire damage, her next attack is made with advantage.

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn choose 1:

- **Winter's Wrath.** (1 use, Reach 8) Create a 6x6 area of wintry storm. Enemies in the area take 10 damage, they take 10 more whenever they enter the area or if there at the end of each of their turns.
- **Wolf-Spirit's Bite.** Move 10. 1d10+8. On hit: drag the target 2 spaces in any direction.
- **Stormlord's Gust.** (Reach 8) All heroes make a DC 15 STR Save. Move all heroes that fail up to 4 spaces in the same direction; on success, half as far.

BLOODIED: At **140 HP**, Mav's Wintry Storm increases to 8x8. Mav is no longer vulnerable to Fire damage. Your forced movement moves twice as far.

LAST STAND: Mav is thawing out! **100** more damage and she's banished to the Wildscapes. Her Wintry Storm is ended, Mav summons icy shards that cover the ground within Reach 12. Enemies suffer 3 damage for each space they move in the area.

RAZZLE, GREMLIN ICONOCLAST

Razzle is an unspeakably awful little creature–this makes him quite popular amongst Gremlins.

Level 7 Small, Insufferable Rascal

Razzle, Gremlin Iconoclast

M ***200*** ***STR+, WIL+***

"The Boys." *" When combat begins, 2 Gremlin minions/hero arrive as well.*

Endless Stream of Vile Insults. *All heroes are permanently Taunted by Razzle.*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn choose 1:

- **Poke Eyes, Pull Hair.** (If a minion died last turn) Teleport to an enemy, gain Riding and attack for 1d6+6. On hit: Blinded 1 round. Then (if the heroes outnumber the gremlins) summon 1 minion/hero.
- **Get 'em Boys!** (If no minions died last turn) All minions move then attack (1d6 each, 1d8 instead VS a Blinded or Ridden hero).

BLOODIED: "Razzle Dazzle!" At **100 HP** A flash of glitter Blinds all heroes for 1 round. Razzle may teleport 8 and summon 1 minion/hero.

LAST STAND: Razzle is losing his cool! **70** more damage and he's banished to the Wildscapes. 3 Gremlin Minions/hero arrive to protect him. Razzle turns invisible until the end of the next Hero's turn.

ARTIST: VLADIMIR MATYUKHIN

VORGRATH, THE INSATIABLE

Lore & tactics, coming soon!

Level 14 Solo Progenitor of Fiends

Vorgrath, the Insatiable

M ***375*** ***ALL+***

After each hero's turn perform 1 action (recommended: in order).

- **Bow Before Me!** Each hero rolls 3d20. Allow each to bow (become Prone) or take that much damage.
- **Serve Me!** (Prone target) Spend 3 actions for them (they regain any spent actions).
- **Suffer!** Fly 8 then Ichorbolt. (Range 8) d66 damage to creatures in a 3x3 area.

BLOODIED: BLEED WITH ME! At **187 HP**, Vorgrath inflicts Lacerated on all heroes.

Lacerated. *Suffer 1 damage for each space you move (or are moved). Healing or a DC 15 Examination check ends.*

LAST STAND: Your Pain Will Be Unending! Vorgrath is dying! **140** more damage and more damage and he dies! Until then he can force a hero within Reach 8 to Interpose for him (1 time use).

Level 10 Solo Orc Lord

HORDECALLER KEREM

250 M STR+, WIL+

Hordecaller. *When initiative is rolled and when crit, summon 1 Flamebound Ancestor per hero (place them within Reach 6).* ***Flamebound Ancestor:*** *d10 minion. On death: 5 damage to 1 adjacent enemy.*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, Move 6 then choose one:

- **Ancestors of Flame.** If there are more heroes than Orcs: Use your Hordecaller ability.
- **Command the Horde:** (1/round) Command your horde to move then attack.
- **Flameslash.** (Reach 6) 2d10+4 damage.

BLOODIED: "Ancestors, I call upon thee!" Trigger your Hordecaller ability.

LAST STAND: Kerem is dying! **100** more damage and he dies. Hordecall at the end of each turn.

ARTIST: KEREM BEYIT

THE TARRASQUE

An earth Titan of horrific power and primordial origin–The Tarrasque is a cataclysmic force whose footsteps reshape continents. It cannot be defeated, only sent back into depths to slumber for a time before it inevitably reemerges to bring devastation to the world.

Running The Tarrasque

It opens combat by using its Cataclysm ability, and follows that up with Consuming anyone it can. The Tarrasque has no need to move in combat as its Reflective Carapace (combined with its heavy armor and Indomitable ability) can take out many ranged foes by itself–but when combined with its Worldheart Beam, there is nowhere to hide.

The number of Wounds the Tarrasque can apply means that this battle will come to an end quickly if the heroes are not fully prepared and use teamwork and smart tactics.

To increase the difficulty:

- The Tarrasque may vomit up any consumed heroes dealing too much damage from the inside then Crush them.
- Heroes staying close enough to each other to Interpose can be taken out with a Worldheart Beam.

To reduce the difficulty:

- "Waste" a Worldheart Beam on a single annoying hero.
- Spend a turn letting loose a Terrifying Roar that can Daze or Frighten heroes who fail a DC 20 STR or WIL save.

Titans. *These fights are possible to win, but are not easy or even fair. Heroes must come prepared to die. GMs must come prepared to oblige.*

Level 20 Solo Gargantuan Worldbreaker

Tarrasque, Cataclysmic Titan

H ***400*** ***ALL+++***

Indomitable. *Immune to all conditions that would Hamper. Can take no more than 25 damage/turn.*
Reflective Carapace. *Ranged attackers suffer half as much damage they deal.*

Opening Move: Cataclysm. Reach 12. All structures in the area are destroyed. DC 20 DEX save, 50 damage minus the save result. On failure, Restrained underneath rubble (escape DC 20).

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

- **Consume.** Reach 6 (VS a Hampered target). 1d20+20 damage and Consumed.

Consumed. *At the end of each of your turns suffer 1d20+20 damage (ignoring armor) and 1 Wound. Your attacks have advantage and ignore armor (teleport or DC 20 STR save to escape).*

- **Crush.** Reach 6. 1d20+20 and Prone, advantage vs smaller targets. On damage: deal 1 Wound.
- **Charge.** (If no target is within Reach 6) next turn use **Worldheart Beam.** Line 40 (3 spaces wide), 2d100 damage. Flying targets fall, landing Prone.

BLOODIED: Rage of the Earthsplitter. (Reach 24) At **200 HP** enemies suffer 2d20 psychic damage. Then make a DC 20 WIL save. On a 20+ they suffer their choice of the following conditions during their next turn: Dazed, Frightened, or Dying (lose all of your HP). **10-19:** they must choose 2. **<10:** Suffer all 3.

LAST STAND: Throes of the Worldbreaker. At 0 HP the Tarrasque is weakening, **200** more damage and it is banished back into the heart of the earth! Until then, at the beginning of each of its turns it deals 1d20 damage to all enemies within Reach 12.

ARTIST: VLADIMIR MATYUKHIN

THE GARDEN OF DEATH

A THORNY STARTER ADVENTURE FOR 2+ HEROES

ARTIST: EARL LAN

LET'S PLAY!

The following adventures will guide your players from level 1 beginners to seasoned level 3 heroes while helping you grow from a new GM to someone confident enough to run a sandbox-style campaign. By the end of this journey, your players will have plenty of choices about what to do next, and you'll have the tools to create new adventures that can keep the story going indefinitely.

If you're new to GMing, expect the first session to be a (fun) learning experience for everyone. You and your players will get used to the rhythm of the rules and the flow of a TTRPG. By the second session, you'll all feel more at ease, and by the third, running the game will become second nature. For more seasoned GMs, consider using the Advanced GM Tools in this book to add complexity or customize challenges to suit your group.

A good rule of thumb: your players will remember their own choices far more than the story you've planned. Wherever possible, leave room for their creativity and ideas to shape the narrative. The adventures included here are designed to fit into a standard 2–4 hour session, but they're flexible enough to be extended, condensed, or otherwise adjusted to fit your group's needs.

Feel free to adjust the adventures to suit your group's preferences!

- Don't like spiders? Swap them out for another type of monster.
- Prefer a treasure hunt over a rescue mission? Maybe the goblins stole a precious item instead of kidnapping Moonblossom.
- Do your players thrive on combat or roleplaying? Add more opportunities for their favorite parts of the game.

These adventures are designed to inspire, not constrain. Follow the fun, and trust your instincts to adapt as the story unfolds. Make them your own!

A Tiny Rescue

The Garden of Death, Chapter 1: *A introductory adventure for* ***LEVEL 1*** *heroes (and GMs) to learn the ropes!*

Jump Right In! *Long narrations can lose attention, so this adventure starts right in the middle of the action. Whenever possible, jump right into the fun parts rather than a slow build-up of excitement! Get the heroes involved, asking questions and rolling dice right away.*

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" on pg. 79). 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 starting information is intentionally minimal to get your heroes involved and asking questions as quickly as possible! "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 outside in the dark, accompanied by orders being whisper-shouted.
- **Be A Hero!** Some players are naturally hesitant to face danger, 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 with a fork, shuffles 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 (Perception: it's Moonblossom!), as he yells "get'em boys!" He, and a few others take off into the night.*

- The remaining goblins (**2 goblin minions/hero**) face you down, filthy, crooked daggers drawn, and 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.

Minions. *Any damage kills a minion, they all move at the same time, they 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 (a 1 misses, the max roll crits)! 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 (1d6).*

The Quest

After the goblins are dispatched, encourage the heroes to loot them as villagers pour out into the town 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 (steamed potatoes) and promised 20 gp each upon her safe return.

Additional Info

- **The Fairy Tree.** A large golden oak stands proudly in the town square, a symbol of hope and good luck. It feels warm and comforting to the touch, giving

goosebumps. (Arcana or Lore Check: fairies are often kept for the blessings they bestow, but more sinister forces use them as *ingredients.*)

- **The Goblins.** People are shocked goblins would come so far from **The Elderwild** into the valley.

Traveling Encounters

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

> ***Skill Checks.*** *Let 1 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

Two 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, flora practically hums with magical energy.)

- **Distant Laughing.** Loud, boisterous laughs echo 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.

> ***Planning!*** *Allow the party time to observe, ask questions, and plan how to deal with the situation. This can be some of the most fun your heroes will have! If the party takes too long, the rat sniffs the air and growls suspiciously.*

- **Roll Initiative!** This encounter kicks off when the party jumps into action; if they're taking too long, the giant rat begins sniffing the air suspiciously in their direction and growling. 1 Goblin Flunkie/hero and 1 Goblin Ratrider (Ratrider is at half HP if there are 3 or fewer heroes).

> ***Defend & Interpose.*** *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).*

Aftermath/Loot

A curious map. Found on a goblin, odd symbols (will need to ask about it in town). On the back, a note:

> *"Tell Pinky he better not come back without my ingredients! WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT, KROGG!" –Greenthumb.*

Moonblossom.

> **Muffled* "Pardon me? A little help would be lovely…"*

A tiny fairy with a minuscule voice, locked in a crude cage. She's eager to return home and promises them a gift as thank you when they get there. She'll offer a healing kiss on the forehead of the most injured hero, restoring all HP and removing all Wounds.

What She Knows. The goblins were hired by someone bad. It sounded like they were arguing about which boss to deliver her to. Apparently, there are two bosses.

Back in Merivale. Moonblossom gifts the party a golden acorn from the Fairy Tree as a 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. 19 of the *Core Rules* book.

Goblins

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

Goblin Minion

Stab. 1d6 (follows minion rules).

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

The Garden of Death, Chapter 2: *A **LEVEL 2** adventure for 2–8+ heroes.*

What's Going On?

The froglin wizard **Greenthumb**, in his hubris, has planted a Deathbriar seed—a sentient plant whose spores can animate the dead—believing he could tame it for study. His experiments have gone horribly wrong, and now the **Deathbriar** has grown out of control. In desperation, Greenthumb seeks to perform a 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. However, the goblins are demanding triple payment and refusing to turn over the goods. Furious, Greenthumb has sent Rootbreakers—animated plant creatures—to the goblin's lair in an abandoned mine to take the items by force. The adventurers are drawn into this volatile situation, with danger on all sides.

Back in Town

The villagers of Merivale are overjoyed at Moonblossom's safe return and eagerly share what they know:

- **The Goblins.** They returned while the party was away; some food and a **golden locket** were taken. Villiagers are unsure of what else was stolen. The Goblins are up to something and getting more aggressive. They must be stopped!
- **The map.** Leads to a well-known **abandoned mine** deeper into the Elderwild. The villagers are happy to provide directions.
- **Unnatural Growth.** Plants around town are "acting up," thorns and briars are growing at a rapid pace.
- **Krogg.** Nobody knows who **Krogg** is, but it sounds like a goblin name. **Pinky** is likewise unknown.
- **Greenthumb.** The froglin wizard stayed upstairs at the Valley's Rest for a few days (grumpy, kept to himself). Left a few weeks ago (travelers are always coming through Merivale on their way to Farhope).

Who's Talking? *Your players may be perfectly happy talking to anyone in general and not asking 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, see "Merivale" on pg. 79 for more information.*

Travel Encounters

The trek through the Elderwild takes 2–3 days. Possible encounters include:

- **Distant Landmarks.** A particularly clear day, you see far to the NW the peaks of the **Iceforge Mountains**. 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.
- **Flying Predator.** A BIG monster carrying something in its claws. (DC 10 Perception: it's a manticore, carrying a cow!).

Adventure Locations

Goblin Cave Entrance. *Deep in the woods, a large hole in the side of a rock face.*

- A goblin, 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).
- If startled, on his turn in combat, he will run inside and try to alert his buds, but will get pulled down into the pit by the trapped Rootbreakers.

Rootbreaker Pit. *Just inside, the cave lies a DEEP pit obstructing further progress.*

- Freshly dug & DEEP. Too dark to see the bottom (Goblins have dug the pit to stop the attacking Rootbreakers, two of which are stuck inside).
- Narrow, rickety scaffolding zigzags to the other side. (Perception check, DC 10: Vines reach up from the pit, will entangle the first one to cross if not spotted first).
- Upon crossing (or if they investigate further before attempting to cross), DEEP rumbling voices are heard: Rootbreakers (wrapped in black thorny vines, with dull red eyes) are trapped at the bottom.
- (Rootbreaker voice: as deep and slowly as you can!) "HEELLLP USS, WEE ARE TRAAPPED." and "WEE WILL AAIIID YOU AGAINST OUR COMMON FOOEEE…"

Do the Voice! *You don't need 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.*

If the heroes 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.*

- 1 Goblin/hero mills about in this room. Examining the floor (it is covered in cracks, they seem to be growing) scratching their heads deep in thought.
- 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's 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, covered in spider webs (to the Spider Chamber).

Collapsed Tunnel. *A passageway blocked by rubble.*

- Another Rootbreaker (motionless, but alive) is visible under the collapsed rubble along with a shiny object (1d4 amber crystals, 5gp each). Will take 30 min to get to the loot.
- The Rootbreaker attacks the closest creature if the rubble is cleared, then dies (1d12 damage).

Spider Chamber. *Passageway obstructed by dense layer of webs.*

- Giant Spiders (1/hero) hide amidst the webs and will attack if the webs are disturbed.

Giant Spider LVL 2 — M — 27

- **Shoot Web.** (Range 6) 1d8+2. On hit: Restrained (escape DC 12, or any slashing/fire damage). OR:
- **Bite.** (Hampered target) 2d8+4, Poisoned (magical healing ends).

Drill Room. *A dozen holes drilled into the walls.*

- A large mechanical drill (broken) is lodged in the wall.
- (Examination: DC 10, with a diamond-tipped drill bit 25gp). Moving the drill (DC 16 Might) 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 Giant Spider (it attacks first).
  - **6–10:** Bones wrapped in spider webs.
  - **11:** A small treasure.
  - **12:** A 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.*

- **Goblins** are here (2/hero), 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.

Slop Hall. *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 step-ladder stirring it lazily. Grumpily mumbling:
- "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:

- He 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 Wind-form). He wants to convince Sprig to join him in service to Greenthumb.
- Pinky claims there is an dreadful force that will soon terrorize the region (unsure what that means).
- 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, but quickly drops it if heroes seem unwilling. "It'll probably be fine…"

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.*

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, growls without looking up:
- "IT'S ABOUT TIME, I'M STARVING. GO TAKE THIS LETTER TO YOU BROTHER, THE BETRAYER–"
- Krogg is happy to reveal any information he knows about "GREETOM" before attacking.

Treasure

70 M STR+, DEX+

Level 2 Solo Angry Bugbear

Krogg, Goblin King

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn:

- **Manglemaul.** Move 6. 1d6+3 damage, Grappled (escape DC 10).
- **Crack Skulls.** Move 6. Swing a Grappled creature at another creature. Both take **1d6+3** damage, ending the Grapple.

BLOODIED: 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, he has Heavy armor.

- **Scrawled Letter.** Sloppy handwriting outlines a deal with "GREEETOM" 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.
- **Manglemaul. (Rare, 2-handed Maul).** 1d6+STR bludgeoning damage. On hit: you may Grapple a creature smaller than you (escape DC 10). Action: You may swing a creature Grappled this way at another creature within Reach, damaging both of them and ending the Grapple.
- **Abacus** with beads made of bone, silver and gold (30 gp). Used by Krogg to keep track of his ledgers.
- **Golden Heart Locket.** Opens to reveal small (not very good) paintings of Marla Homebrew's children. She'll definitely want this back!

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 be ready to start the next adventure!

ARTIST: KYLE COX

Greenthumb's Base

The Garden of Death, Chapter 3: *a **LEVEL 3** adventure for 2–8+ heroes.*

What's Going On?

"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 Merivale: it has once again been attacked and rasacked. Not by goblins, this time; 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 stack 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.

What 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 peasants can do." Most of the plants 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.*** *It began as a benign magical flower cultivated by ancient druids who sought to harness its rapidly spreading roots to enrich blighted soils. But some soil will not so easily be cleansed of its corruption. It became twisted, gaining sentience and cultivating a hunger for power. It was thought to be wiped out—at terrible cost to the druids.*

- 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 and 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 meeting with Mayor Tills, "There's not nothing he don't know about plants."

To Greenthumb's Base

- The numerous, plodding tracks the Rootbreakers left make it easy to navigate to the ruins where Greenthumb has been holed up.
- A half day's journey from the Goblin's former base, you find **Rootbreakers** (1/2 heroes) standing watch outside the entrance of an ancient tomb—eyes closed, absorbing the warm sun.
- Trivial to sneak past. Give surprise if combat is started.

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 as if by a massive blade every 5 ft.
- Swinging blades from the ceiling activate if pressure plates are pressed (1d8 damage). Traversing the hall unscathed requires two DC 12 DEX saves to avoid the blades (advantage if the blades were noticed first).

> ***Encourage Creativity.*** *Heroes can use a special ability they have as well. If the idea is good enough, let them roll with advantage 1 or 2, or you can even allow them to succeed automatically.*

Mural Chamber. *Water trickles in from open ceiling and cracks in the walls. Dappled sunlight shines through.*

- **1 Tangler** and **X Seedlings** (1/hero) gathering under a beam of sunlight.
- Murals cover the walls and floor (partly obscured by creeping vines and overgrown moss). If heroes look more closely, under the foliage:
  - Panel 1: An engraved series of murals depicts a band of dwarven soldiers lead by a human king.
  - Panel 2: Depicts them in a losing battle against terrible odds, four of the dwarves are slain.
  - Panel 3: Partially destroyed by the ravages of time—the human king offers something, and they all are taken away to safety by a flock of griffons.

Hall of Tombs. *CRACKED walls. 4 stone tombs, 1 is empty.*

- 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.
- Skeleton holds a silver sword (20gp). DC 12 Examination or Lore check: this is a Dwarf, 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:

1. **Empty Tomb:** Vines seem to have pushed its large stone lid to the side.
2. **Overgrown Tomb:** wrapped in RED VINES. DC 14 Might check to remove the vines (advantage if a slashing weapon is used) to open the coffin. Inside: A small silver dwarven charm (10 gp).
3. **Scratching Tomb:** Image of a warrior carved on the stone lid. DC 12 Perception check to hear SCRATCHING sounds from within. Inside: A hostile skeleton (use Ghoul statblock, it has 10 HP/hero) covered in RED VINES, gold belt buckle (20 gp).
4. **Undisturbed Tomb:** Decorated in a Griffon 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. Leads to Acid Flooded Room.

> ***On Puzzles.*** *The above is only one possible solution to the puzzle. If the players are taking the world seriously, coming up with ideas that make sense, LET THEIR IDEAS WORK! Reward 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.*

- Giant Venus Flytrap in the center of the room. When heroes enter it begins swaying its head and leaves, blindly looking for prey. Stuck in its teeth: An iron key hanging from a chain (unlocks door to Storage Room).
- About a dozen smaller plants 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 (Healing Potion).
- Players can willingly enter combat for the treasures, or

attempt to sneak past. If any hero fails a DC 10 Stealth check, they are noticed and combat begins!

- 1 Giant Venus Flytrap and 1 Seedling/hero.

Giant Venus Flytrap HUGE 20/HERO

Blind. *Always attacks with disadvantage.*

Choose 1:

- **Tangle (2×).** (Reach 12) 1d6+2, Grappled (escape DC 12, or any fire or slashing damage).
- **Reel In.** If any creature is Grappled, pull them adjacent, then Bite.
- **Bite.** (Reach 3) 1d6+15 damage.

Seedling LVL 1/2, SMALL H* 8

Peeling Bark. *Damage degrades Armor 1 step: H » M» None.*

Thorn Seed. (Range 6) 2d6+2

Acid-Flooded Room. *Circular Room. A large statue on an ornate, 20 ft.-tall pedestal.*

- Lore check (made w/ advantage for any Dwarf, or anyone who saw the murals): Statue is of Roderic Stoutheart, first human king of the dwarves. Great Great grandfather of the current Queen.
- 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/Insight 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 spaced around the perimeter of the room have faces of unknown DWARVES carved into them.

Ceremony Room. *Ceremonial weapons and shields hang 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 (Ruby).
- She runs to the tallest hero, hiding behind them, and sticks her tongue out at Pinky, who stops in his tracks.

Parley With Pinky. *A pink goblin, frail and overwhelmingly anxious (literally vibrating).*

Pinky is Greenthumb's assistant. *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.

- Pinky 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 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.

Fight or Parley? *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).*

Rootbreaker LVL 5, LARGE H* 50

Peeling Bark. *Damage degrades Armor 1 step: H » M» None.*

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

Pinky LVL 2, SMALL 18

Panic. *Attacks are made against Pinky with disadvantage.*

Protect Me! Command a Rootbreaker to attack.

Escape. *(Reaction: when Bloodied) Use Cloak of Lesser Windform to turn Invisible and run away.*

Locked Iron Door to Storage Room. (Key can be found in the jaws of the giant venus flytrap, on Pinky, or DC 16 Finesse check with a lock pick–failing it means the pick breaks).

Storage Room. *Cold, damp cave. Stalactites dripping water from ceiling.*

- Vases and clay jars on shelves.
- Greenthumb's incompetent goblin assistant Pinky makes frequent trips 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) DEX save to avoid.

Greenthumb'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 parchments.
- Notebook lies on top of the mess open to a page detailing the care of a "Deathbriar" plant.
- Journal entry catalogs 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 Cave. *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 Pinky). Will attack at the slightest provocation.
- Greenthumb will fight to the death. When he dies, the Deathbriar's red vines will take his body and absorb him, gaining strength. This causes the walls to begin cracking even further, the entire place is about to collapse—with the heroes in it if they're not fast!

100 ***INT+ WIL+***

Level 3 Solo Botanical Wizard

Greenthumb, Lichling

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

- **Summon Briarbanes.** Summon 1 minion/hero (size: 1d4).
- **Root.** Choose 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) 5d4+5.

BLOODIED: At **50 HP**, Greenthumb gains magical bark, giving himself Heavy Armor.
LAST STAND: Greenthumb is dying! **30** more damage and he dies. Until then, he chooses twice each turn.

Skill Challenge: Escape!

The heroes will now need to escape quickly, below are a series of dangers 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 begin 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).

- **The Ceremony Room.** If the children haven't been rescued yet, you'll need to save them! If you left Pinky 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. Pinky is fumbling with his keys and she snatches them from him and unlocks the door for her sister Pearl: "Took

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

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 a 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 make 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 passageway, 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?
- **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?
- **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!

> *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 Pinky) 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.

Aftermath

Does the Deathbriar reanimate Greenthumb and use him as its puppet? Are one of the factions in Farhope 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 a 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, complex, overarching plot–your players won't actually remember that too much. What they'll remember is all the silly things *they* do, and the trouble they get themselves into and out of.

What's Next?

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!*

As for adventures, what interests you and your players? The rest of this book describes the local region, and a number of different quests the heroes can go on while providing enough content to take them all the way up through level 6. After which, the setting opens up to be more of a sandbox. You can use it as a whole or strip it for parts–taking bits you like, changing names and details however you like.

There are also plenty of adventure hooks and tools contained here for enough content to play much, much longer if desired. The rest of the journey is up to you!

Leveling Up

After one more good-sized quest, they can level up to 4. Heading to Farhope may be a good idea to learn about the factions and their various quests. The quest "Vermin's Vengeance" on pg. 84 is a great one to take your players from level 3 to 4.

For, levels 4-5 you might level up after 2–3 sessions (weeks of in-game time). For levels 6-12, level up after roughly every 2–4 sessions (months/years of in-game time). Beyond that… you reach the rarefied heights of truly epic heroes; leveling up perhaps only every 3–5+ sessions (years/decades of in-game time). This, of course, is more of a "rule-of-thumb" than a hard rule. Go at whatever pace is comfortable for you and your players.

Leveling up too frequently might not give your players enough time to learn their new character abilities and can end up feeling rushed, too slowly and your players may get bored.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

FROSTFORGE
MOUNTAINS
WITHERING DUNES
W
MERIVALE
SHADOW BLIGHT

ARTISTS: KYLE COX, SAGA MACKENZIE, EVAN DIAZ

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 for 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 and then abruptly ends. 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 provides 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.

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 or lamb) and Marla's famous Spiced Apple Cider, a comforting cure for weary bones. Adorned with local crafts, it's a hub for travelers and townsfolk alike, sharing stories and songs are often 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 and 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 Bazaar of Whispers. A sprawling marketplace where merchants sell rare goods and peculiar trinkets often acquired through questionable means. Anything can be bought or sold here–if you know who to ask.

The Dawn Spire. A towering lighthouse at the edge of the docks, its magical beacon helps guide ships safely to harbor through treacherous waters. Operated by an enigmatic figure known only as "The Keeper."

The Black Reef Cemetery. A windswept graveyard near the outskirts of the city, where sailors and explorers lost to the sea are laid to rest. Locals say it's unwise to linger here after dark, but it's also a favorite haunt for necromancers and those looking to make pacts with the spirits of the deep.

The Factions. Countless factions vie constantly for control over the city, but only 3 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. The Golden Company's presence is felt in every corner of Farhope, securing order and stability through sheer force of will. Though their intentions are seen as being above reproach, their methods can sometimes be heavy handed. **Key NPCs:**

Marcius Thel. Grand Commander of the Golden Company. A seasoned paladin with a scarred face, Marcius 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. Marcius 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 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.

The Tower

A powerful order of mages and spellcasters, **The Tower** is devoted to unraveling the secrets of the arcane and expanding the boundaries of magical knowledge. Their headquarters serves as both a haven for scholarly pursuits and a hub of innovation. They seek true understanding of the arcane and mysteries of the world, but their hunger for knowledge can sometimes lead to dangerous experiments or the temptation toward fel bargains. Those deemed worthy of their trust are often hired to capture magical creatures in the Growling Marshes, recover lost spells in the Withering Sands, or seek out arcane artifacts in 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. Specializes 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.

ARTIST: EARL LAN

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.

Quest Hooks

- **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 rib cage and bites the hero (1 damage, DC 10 STR save or poisoned 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 DC 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 you descend, you 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 (Stealth check to avoid making sound–with disadvantage since the room aplifies all sound), the rat swarms all attack at the same time; otherwise, they 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.

Smuggler's 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, strange 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 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*** (the guild's Aerolith Crystal shipment–to the right buyer, it's worth *thousands*).
- 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, pulsing energy. Fetid Stench DC: 16.*

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

Loot

- **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.
- **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 in filth for 1 week.

Rat Prince LVL 1 — 20

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

Ignacius 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.** Offering a large sum to anyone who brings in a living fairy.
- **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 is known to speak crypticly.
- **Liriel Greenwhisper.** An herbalist who brews potions if you bring her the right ingredients.
- **Elderwild'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 out-

post was attacked by Elderwild denizens, the survivors 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 is 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 fairie'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 outfitted on scarecrows with your likeness.
- **Tithebriar.** A wall of sharp brambles blocks your path (Naturecraft: Called 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.

The Hidden Honey Cavern

*A sticky quest for **LEVEL 3** heroes.*

What's Going On?

The insect-obsessed druid Kelebek is creating priceless magical honey in the Elderwild. The only problem, Kelebek's cave is defended by *creepy giant insects.*

Quest Hooks

- **Finley Thistlepot.** An eager young member of the Explorer's Guild. Has returned from a herb-gathering expedition with the location of a hidden cave. He's planning to explore it further but needs backup in case it's dangerous.
- **Odelis.** An enterprising member of The Tower. Searching for a supply of magical honey. He's offering an outrageous sum of gold in exchange for a single jar.
- **Tugrul.** A druid of the Elderwild, wants to know how Kelebek creates his signature honey. She offers a pouch of restorative seeds that can fully heal one's Wounds in exchange for the recipe.

Rumors

- Kelebek's secret base is hidden behind a waterfall.
- An ancient dragon lives near the waterfalls, guarding an invisible treasure hoard (knowledge).
- PJ and Jorgun, of the Explorer's guild, were smuggling Red Sap and ducked into the cave to hide out but got separated and are now trapped inside.
- Kelebek himself is a giant sentient insect! Don't get too close to his pet stinkbug.

> ***Optional!*** *If your table is okay with a more gruesome story, or just want a clear "bad guy", Kelebek may lure travelers to his cave and use the bodies of those his insects capture as compost in his glade! Any NPC you deem appropriate may offer this information to your heroes.*

Travel Encounters

- **Treant Sentinels.** A group of Treant Saplings surround the heroes (minions, 3/hero, d6 die size), mistaking them for sap harvesters. "Interlopers! The trees bleed—admit it, you carry their lifeblood!" Easy to trick or convince otherwise, but anyone with an axe or fire is mistrusted.
- **Redcap Mushrooms.** DC 10 Naturecraft: These are Bloodshrooms: they act as healing potions, 1d4+1 are ready to be harvested. DC 18 Naturecraft: Adventurer's Bane: look almost identical to Bloodshrooms. Do *not* heal. Instead has a hallucinogenic effect: sees allies as enemies for 1 round upon eating.
- **The Verdant Sage.** A blind, elderly green dragon. Exceptionally well camouflaged (DC 22 Perception to spot). An OLD booming voice in Draconic: "Do you come seeking my unseen treasure? Come now, share of your treasure and I will respond in kind."
    - He will offer some of his invisible treasure hoard (knowledge; answering questions and sharing any adventure rumors or info on the Elderwild) if the heroes describe anything about how the Elderwild looks: "Tell me of how the Elderwild blooms, for age has blinded my eyes to its beauty."
    - Speaks Common reluctantly (the "Profane Tongue") if none speak Draconic, but may offer less information.

Adventure Locations

Cavern Entrance. *A small lake and rushing waterfall (blocks the entrance to a hidden cave).*

- If you weren't specifically told where it was, you'd have never guessed!
- A giant insect in the water spots the heroes and begins swimming toward them.
- (Naturecraft or Insight). A harmless herbivore species of insect. Appears friendly, swims to the shiniest hero.
- If spoken to: Name is Xid. Will offer a ride through the waterfall in exchange for something shiny. Warns that no one he's taken into the cave ever comes back out. Knows of Kelebek, PJ, Jorgun, and others (not by name of course, all of you look the same).

Tunnel. *Long damp tunnel, ends in a dry chamber covered in dead leaves, twigs, and acorns.*

- (Insight or Naturecraft) Purposefully, carefully, kept dry and brought here and spread across entire floor.
- (Perception) Pill bugs the size of an adult leg silently crawl on ceiling and munch on the moss-covered walls.
- Stepping on the litter on the floor or speaking above a whisper causes pill bugs to drop from the ceiling onto their heads and try and suffocate them. DC 12 DEX save or Grappled, Blinded, and suffocating: Take 1 Wound /round until you escape. Fire, bright lights, or dealing 10 or more damage in a single turn could also cause a bug to flee.

> ***Escaping a Grapple.*** *Action: make a STR or DEX save to escape. Remember allies can help as well!*

Spider Lair. *A dusty, WEB-filled cavern.*

- Giant Spiders (1/hero, names: Booger, Fuzz, Trots) are wrapping up a squirming person in a web cocoon.
- The spiders enthusiastically greet anyone entering their lair, "AnOtHeR meaL sSo sOOn? LOOk bOOgEr, it'sSs oUr luCkY dAAy!"
- PJ, a goblin from the Explorer's Guild, is wrapped in the cocoon. If not freed soon, the spiders will eat him. He issues muffled pleas for help and offers extravagant

promises: "Treasure! Fame! Your wildest dreams!" (he has none to offer–but does know the entire layout of this cave system).

- If saved, PJ offers to draw a map of the cave in the dirt and info on the wax maze (granting advantage on 1 roll), and then makes for the cave exit: "SEE YA!"

Wax-Chamber Maze. *Walls of thick wax form a confusing maze-like chamber.*

- Skill challenge: Heroes must succeed on 3 different skill checks before 3 failures (DC: 10, 13, 16). A great idea can gain advantage or succeed automatically.
- Success leads to Larva Nursery, failure, the Storeroom.
- Wax walls can be easily melted or otherwise destroyed to find either exit automatically but Wax Golems rise to defend the area (1/hero).

Wax Golem Lvl 1 28

Sticky. *Grapples target on hit. Can Grapple any number of creatures. When crit: release 1 creature (attacker's choice).*

- **Wax Grip.** 1d4 (escape DC 10). OR
- **Crush.** (a Grappled creature) 1d12 damage.

Larva Nursery. *Lined with soft glowing honeycomb.*

- Buzzing with young larvae. Curious but harmless, mimicking the heroes' movements.
- If harmed, they let out a shrill squeal alerting the drones in the Bee Hive who attack ferociously.

Central Hive. *Cacophonous thrumming.*

- An ever-buzzing line of Giant Bee Drones (3/hero, use Stirge statblock) transports nectar from the Glade into the Hive. Glass jars are filled with mature honey and drones carry them into the Storeroom for safekeeping.
- Interfere with production and the bees will attack.

Storeroom. *A small dark cave, foul smelling.*

- Filled with dried flowers, steaming heaps of compost (source of the awful smell–optional:humanoid bones and scraps of adventuring gear), and jars of honey.
- Giant Slugs slide over every surface, emanating a discordant tune. An orc (Jorgun, from the Explorer's Guild), is slumped over a crate, snoring loudly.
- Spending time here will cause heroes to slowly begin to suffer the sleepy effects of the slugs' song. Giant Slugs (4/hero) attack if harmed or honey is taken.

Giant Slug Minion Attack: 1d4.

Discordant Song. *Enemies who can hear gain a cumulative +1 Dazed at the beginning of each round.*

- If awakened, Jorgun (drowsy and confused, has forgotten where the crate came from–stolen goods) will leave it as thanks and offer information about Kelebek ("left me there to feed the slugs") before hastily heading for the exit.

Glade. *Lush cave, FILLED with a variety of huge flowers.*

- An insect-like druid (Kelebek, antennae, six arms, and carapace-like skin) tends to the flowers carefully. He is accompanied by a Giant Stinkbug (Poppy).

Combat or Peaceful Negotiation? *Not every adventure needs to end with combat with a bad guy! Sometimes a successful negotiation can be more rewarding. Think about what would be more fun, give your players options and feel free to go in any direction that makes sense.*

- **What Kelebek Wants:** Recognition and to protect his honey. Kelebek views the magical honey as his life's work, he's fiercely protective of it and the bees that produce it. He sees himself as a misunderstood genius and craves acknowledgment of his mastery.
- **Peaceful Negotiation.** Flattering his genius, offering a trade (a rare flower, a magical item related to nature, etc.), offering to rid the Elderwild of a mutual threat, or something similar could sway Kelebek into letting go of a single jar of honey.
- **Fight!** Heroes may want to attack Kelebek after learning of his treatment toward those who stumble into his cave, or simply if they don't like bugs! Alternatively, Kelebek may attack first if the heroes have taken anything or harmed his insects, up to you! (See "Kelebek & Poppy" on pg. 45)

THE WITHERING DUNES

Scorching desert sands and acidic winds corrode all organic matter here. 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**, people who have been held there 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 riverbank 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 the Badlands, 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 mega-dungeon 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 Common ("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.

Snakemen. Feral humanoids with scaly skin and yellow eyes. Crafty, ruthless.

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

- **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 conjures 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.
- **Scarab Mask.** A ceremonial mask of blackened gold, adorned with glowing runes that protects the wearer from poison.
- **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 underground temple and a god turned prisoner await **LEVEL 5** heroes in this arid expedition.*

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…

Quest Hooks

- **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…

Secrets & Rumors

- Heytet-Seqat, the Scorpion Queen, is immortal. Each time she is defeated she returns to life, more powerful.
- The Tower seeks an ancient magical lamp created by a powerful desert mage.
- They do not know that the lamp is what binds Heytet-Seqat to this tomb; removing it will free her.
- Snakemen do their best to trap outsiders in the tomb in hopes that one will free her, or failing that–feed her.

Traveling Encounters

- **Sandstorm.** Winds begin to whip caustic sand into the air, a sandstorm is coming! Players can shelter in place (taking 2d6 acid damage on a failed STR save), or shelter in a cave that has an eerie sound (cave is safe–winds are causing the caves to echo & moan).
- **Golden Pyramid.** This massive structure hauntingly shines in the distance. Heroes must make a WIL 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 3 hours (until the end of the next encounter).
- **Ruined Caravan.** It sits in a heap of broken axles amidst the sand dunes, merchant bodies lie scattered motionless. 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 Snakemen strike (3/hero).
- **Sleepy Oasis.** Beautiful palm trees frame a small pristine lake. Slumbering jackals surround the water's edge. Drinking the water heals HP, but causes drowsiness (1 HP/gulp; more than 4 gulps: fall asleep for an hour afterward, suffering 1 Wound for sleeping in the heat).

Adventure Locations

Mages' Camp. *Ransacked. Torn cloth and broken poles.*

- A massive pitfall trap has been triggered. Snakemen scales and a khopesh (sickle) lie amidst the rubble.
- A severed rope dangles into the pit which descends 50 ft. to 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. To the right, echoing metallic slicing sound.
- 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/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 take 1d10 damage. 5-6: No cave in!

Trapped Gallery (Right Corridor). *Sloped floor covered in thin layer of sand. Sound echoes from below.*

- Begin sliding down upon stepping on it. Looks nearly impossible to climb back up.
- A mural carved into the stone of a giant scorpion with ancient inscription (Lore: "THE FURY OF HEYTET- SEQAT" the name of the scorpion held here).
- Leads to a corridor guarded by a series of 3 bladed pendulums, perpetually swinging.
- DC 10 DEX save to slip past one. Suffer 1d8 damage for each failure (Examination/Insight: they follow a predict-

able pattern, gain advantage on save).

- 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 (robes singed), writes frantically in the corner, recording all he can with an obsessive fervor. Any questions are answered with "Ask the first gods. They know all."
- Examination: The sculpture features multiple snakemen fighting a giant scorpion. One lies down, stabbing a spear at its exposed, vulnerable underside.
- Insight: Heroes on one of the sculptures points to an gilded scroll shelved high on a wall: 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 trapped here by some magical artifact.
- 5 starving survivors, all whisper-quarreling. They say:
  - *SHH!* GRATEFUL to see you. Do you have any food?
  - The mages won't even tell us what treasure they're LOOKING for! It's not the ruby, don't even LOOK at it.
  - Only way out is past HER (Scorpion Queen).

False Treasure Chamber. *A stone chamber lined with sarcophagi. MASSIVE ruby lies on a pedestal.*

- The ruby casts the room in red light. All creatures who do not avert their gaze before entering the room must succeed on a DC 14 WIL save or they are compelled to rush forward and grab it.
- Upon touching the ruby, the floor gives way and they fall through to the Scorpion Shrine below (onto soft sands).
- Sarcophagi have a 1 in 4 chance of containing treasure, otherwise each is filled with Scarab Swarms (5 minions/hero. Size:d4).

Scorpion Shrine. *Bones line the path to the altar of the great Scorpion Queen, Heytet-Seqat.*

- She slumbers, blocking the narrow staircase out, tail coiled around a clutch of Scorpion Eggs.
- Once defeated, her wounds begin to heal and she will begin to reanimate over the course of the next day.

True Treasure Chamber. *Simple room, halfway up the stairs.*

- An oil lamp made of brass sits on a wooden altar (if the party has the mage's runestone, it glows brightly).
- Murals on the walls show the lamp being given to the Scorpion Queen by a powerful desert mage as an offering to placate her wrath. In truth, it is what binds her to this place.

Aftermath

- If the lamp is removed, she will be free to once again roam the dunes and lead the Snakemen in causing havoc in the region.
- If obtained, The Tower intends to use the lamp's power to consolidate control over the region.

115 ***H*** ***STR++***

SCORPION QUEEN LVL 5 SOLO, LARGE SCORPION

Trampling Movement. *She can move through the space of any creature smaller than her, knocking them Prone.*

Vulnerable Underbelly. *Hits from Prone melee attackers auto crit on her.*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, move 6 then choose 1:

- **Claw.** 3d6. On damage: Grappled (escape DC 12).
- **Venom Stinger.** (Reach 3, a creature she has advantage against) 1d6+20.

Bloodied: At **58 HP**, she drips acid blood, dealing 1d6 damage to any creature she walks over.

ICEFORGE MOUNTAINS

ARTIST: NOAH BRADLEY

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 lie 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 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 Dwarfs 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 Dwarfs; will ram others, knocking them down the mountain.
- **Rain of Spears.** Cave starts shaking, causing wickedly sharp stalactites to 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

- **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.
- **Endless Cask.** A dwarven cask made of enchanted oak. Refills itself with potent brews that heal wounds and bolster courage.
- **Forgefather's Crown.** A rune-etched crown of black iron, grants wearer command over fire and metal.
- **Frostwarden's Shield.** A large, ice blue shield that glows faintly in the dark. Radiates a cold aura, freezing enemies who strike it.
- **Grimbeard's Warhammer.** A mighty hammer with a head of adamantine and a handle wrapped in dragonhide.
- **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.

Quest Hooks

- **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 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. *3 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:** "Did 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 pay grade, 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 Assassin LVL 2 ♥ 24

Sneak. *You are invisible until you attack.*

Poison Blade (2×). 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 find 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 into the open sky below.
- **Eyrab.** A one-legged fisherman with a deep hatred for 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

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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 cloud banks. 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 Snakemen.

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. Explodes into a shower of lightning on death.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Heart of the Sky.** A large gem that glows with yellow light. Holds the soul of the Wind Sovereign, greatly empowers lightning spells.
- **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.
- **Stormcaller.** A polished orb filled with swirling storm clouds. Activating it summons a thunderstorm for a short period.
- **Windforged Mail.** A piece of light armor crafted with rare Skyreach minerals. Greatly reduces damage from lightning.
- **Windcloak.** A colorful cape woven from enchanted feathers. Grants the wearer limited flight and the ability to glide between islands.
- **Zephyr Boots.** Boots made from the hide of a storm drake, enchanted with the power to walk on air for short distances.

Raid on the Royal Nest

*A sacred prophecy is realized and a hatchery comes under siege in this **LEVEL 4** adventure.*

What's Going On?

- A Birdfolk prophecy tells of a magical golden egg laid in the Royal Griffon Nests every century. The Snakemen believe eating it grants demigodhood.
- The egg has just been laid, and the hatchery is under siege by Snakemen wielding instruments called Frightsticks. The unnerving sound they produce when shaken sends the Griffons into a state of irrational terror, leaving the nest vulnerable and defenseless.
- Charleton, the noble griffon lord, and his entourage have been sent by the Birdfolk guards to bring heroes capable of lending aid in protecting the nest.

Quest Hooks

- **The Golden Company.** Defacto security force in the valley, are asked by the Birdfolk to provide assistance in defending their hatchery. Rendezvous with a griffon pack at the landing zone to organize the defense.
- **The Explorer's Guild.** Waylay the heroes chosen by the Golden Company and arrange for you to be at the pickup spot to represent the Guild instead.
- **The Tower.** Heard of the magical properties of the egg, bribed the Golden Company and the Guild to allow their own representatives to aid the Birdfolk instead (and secretly bring back info on the egg to them).

Beginning the Quest

- **Charleton's Arrival.** The sound of powerful wing-beats fills the air. Charleton, noble griffon lord, lands with his entourage. "Heroes of the realm, we are in dire need! Vile Snakemen are upon us! We must fly swiftly–there is no time to delay!"
- **Mounting the Griffons & Flying.** DC 13 skill check to successfully mount the griffons. On a failure, describe a minor complication (bitten for 1d6 damage, or take off prematurely and dragged into the air with their foot stuck in the stirrups). Heroes with scales roll with disadvantage. Whoever rides on Charleton gets advantage.

> ***The Story Must Continue!*** *The point of this is not to see IF they can fly to the adventure location–they do. The point is a for a fun narrative encounter. Let them describe how they handle any complications.*

- **In Need of Aid.** Charleton explains what's going on as they fly to the Royal Hatchery and can answer most questions the heroes have.
- **Windstorm.** A turbulent storm, each player must describe what they do to pilot successfully and roll a save or skill check to remain mounted or begin falling.

> ***What Do You Do?*** *If someone falls, don't worry about giving specific options, simply ask what they do. If it sounds reasonable, it works! If it sounds like a longshot, make them roll for it. The goal of this encounter is to encourage creativity, not to kill the heroes–though that could be a real risk if they don't take the situation seriously.*

- **Distressed Airship.** A caravel with merchant's flags is flying erratically (they may be in need of aid, or it might be a trap–pirates with false flags). **Stopping to help:** Steering wheel is jammed! They need a very strong or mechanically inclined person to fix it or they will crash (DC 18 Might or Finesse). Reward: 1,000 gp. This takes time however, so the Birdfolk guards in the Mess Hall are already dead before the party arrives.
- **Storm Drake Surprise.** Charleton says the quickest way to the Royal Hatchery is through the Tempest Reef, but they risk flying into storm drake territory. Going around is safer but will take longer. **Shortcut.** Blue Drakes (1/hero) attack. Reward: heroes Gain +10 Initiative for Landing Zone. **Go around.** A safer path, the Cobra Captain and his minions are already part of the Snakemen attack squad during the Landing Zone.

Adventure Locations

Landing Zone. *Snakemen are assaulting the hatchery, Birdfolk guards are defending, clearly losing.*

- No amount of cajoling can convince the griffons to get too close or fight. Heroes can fight at range, mounted on a griffon, or leap safely to the ground to engage.
- Snakemen minions 3/hero.
- Once defeated, griffons will drop off any remaining mounted heroes and quickly flee at the sound of a terrible hiss coming from the Foyer. A Cobra Captain joins the fight with more minions (2/hero).

Hatchery Foyer. *A royal Birdfolk statue with a spear of lightning. Corridors leading left or right.*

- Awful screech and clang of metal to the left–a Griffon trapped in the Royal Stables is struck dead. To the right, Birdfolk in the Mess Hall yell "Protect the Armory at all costs!" Time is of the essence, which way?
- Touching the spear grants the Charged condition, and +1d6 lightning damage on attacks for 1 minute. 1/day.

Mess Hall. *Overturned tables and chairs. Rations and silverware all strewn about.*

> ***Stables First?*** *If heroes go to the Royal Stables first, Birdfolk guards are dead by the time they arrive, and the Snakemen can be found in the Armory, better equipped. With Medium Armor and attack for 1d6+10 damage instead.*

- Snakemen (2/hero) attacking 4 Birdfolk guards. If rescued, the guards (who are losing) will tell the party about the hidden ornate box in the Armory.

Dormitory. *A spacious room, dozens of bunks and footlockers for the attendants and guards.*
- A gravely injured Birdfolk guard lies here gasping for breath. If healed, he is convinced the party is the heroes of the ground foretold in the prophecy, and will give them the Silver Tapestry after defeating the Lindworm.

Royal Stables. *Numerous griffons trapped in pens, under attack by Snakemen (3/hero) and panicking.*

> ***Mess Hall First?*** *If the heroes go to the Mess Hall first, only 3 griffons remain. Otherwise 6 griffons remain.*

- A lever on the near wall. Action: open all of the griffon pens, freeing them. In their panicking state, they may trample you if released.
- If released: Roll 1d6 for each griffon, on a 1 they knock a random hero Prone before fleeing, otherwise they trample a Snakeman (killing it).

Training Yard. *Expansive, open air training ground.*
- 2 towers on both sides of the yard. Numerous training rings float mid-air.
- Each tower has saddles, bags of feed, and a weapon rack with spears, slings, and wooden bucklers on it.
- A Birdfolk Knight is guarding a door (to the Armory) from a Giant Cobra (it has 20 HP/hero remaining). She is visibly losing the fight; if saved, she will reward the heroes with a Trainer's Whistle after defeating the Lindworm.

Armory. *Well-stocked.*
- Nearly any mundane adventuring equipment and weapons are stocked here.
- DC 16 Examination check, or if informed of it by one of the Birdfolk, reveals a small ornate box with no visible means of opening it. Will open if the word "ascend" is whispered while held. Contains a Wand of Fly.

Vertical Hallway. *Cylindrical "hallway" in the floor. Completely open to the ground, miles below.*
- Faint sounds of fighting coming from behind Golden doors 60 ft. below (leads to Golden Sun Hatchery).
- Those without flight or some way to safely descend will fall to their death.

Golden Sun Hatchery. *Well-appointed, royal nesting grounds. LARGE hole in wall.*
- 5 Birdfolk guards and 2 griffons lie dead.
- Heroes arrive just in time to witness an enormous Lindworm swallowing the golden egg, whole.
- The hero with the highest INT knows that the gold shell prevents it from being digesting for a short while.

> ***Golden Egg.*** *Whichever creature holds the egg makes all of their attacks and saves with advantage! Picking up an unheld item is a free action on your turn.*

75 ***M*** ***STR/DEX+***

Lindworm Lvl 4 Solo, Huge Serpent

Fiercely Jealous. *Attacks those nearest the Golden Egg.*

Desperate Purge. *When crit, Grappled, or Bloodied: regurgitates its most recent meal.*

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, choose 1:
- **Constrict.** Move up to 8, attack for 1d6+10, target is Grappled (escape DC 10).
- **Squeeze & Spit Acid.** Squeeze a Grappled creature for 1d6+10 damage. Move up to 4, attack for 1d6+10 (range 8). On crit: Poisoned until healed.

After defeating the Lindworm, any surviving Snakemen retreat, and the faction that hired the heroes gains favor with the Birdfolk. Loot:
- A Lore check or an NPC can reveal that consuming Lindworm meat gives mortals magic powers (choose or roll any minor Boon, lasts for 1 day). 2d6 portions.
- **Optional Rewards.** Trainer's Whistle: Blow and a cohort of Griffon Cavalry will come to your aid. Once. Silver Tapestry: 100 year old tapestry sewn with silver thread. Bears the uncanny likeness of the party, rescuing the golden egg. Worth 3,000 gp.

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 is thick 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

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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 ritual effects are enhanced in this place.
- **Veil of Mists.** Lair of the Mist Wyrm, source of the mist that flows through 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.** 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.** 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. Your body is surrounded by vines; roll to avoid being captured and brought 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.
- **Bog Witch's Familiar.** A giant, semi-intelligent leech with faint glowing markings blocks your path. It's a familiar of the Blackwater Hags and carries messages between them. If captured or befriended, it can reveal secrets about the hags and marsh.

Treasures

- **Crablord's Crown.** A helmet made from the shell of a colossal crab, adorned with barnacles and seaweed. The wearer can command lesser Crabmen.
- **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.
- **Reed Flute.** A musical instrument carved from a rare swamp wood. Calls forth harmless swamp creatures to serve as guides.
- **Venomfang Dagger.** Carved from the fang of a Mist Drake, this small blade is permanently coated with a deadly poison.
- **Witch's Eye.** A shriveled eye encased in amber. Allows the bearer to see through illusions.

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.
- **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.
- **Lientern.** Lantern fueled by lies. Frowns when lit.

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. Any who enter the ruins, have 50% chance of leeches; minor damage until noticed).

Adventure Locations

Vampire Brambles. *Thicket 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 and 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):*

1. **Clumsy you!** Roll again twice.
2. **Fetid Gas.** STR save or Poisoned for 2 encounters.
3. **More Stirges.** 3 Freshly-hatched (hungry) Stirges.
4. **Monster Grease.** Covered in grease (flames or sparks nearby ignite. 2 × LVL damage, ending this).
5. **Stirges.** 2 Freshly-hatched (hungry) Stirges.
6. **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, 2/hero).
- 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 of Spiderhollow: the Flooded Cesspool (he escaped during the fight between the Hag and Troll and is 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 of 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. Ladder 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 (DC 10 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, a mysterious amulet (helps with one of the hero's problems).
- After the fight, echoing cackles surround the den. Jona 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 **68**

Spit Curse. *When crit: DC 12 INT save, or 1 Wound.*

- **Bug Swarm.** Summon 1 minion/hero (d4), then:
- **Claw (2×).** 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! Squirrrrrm like a maggot!
- **Gaining the Upper Hand:** Sing, little toads, siiiing!
- **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.

SHADOWBLIGHT

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 a 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 Marcius Thel 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.** Extra-dimensional 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 fiends; few clerics ever return.
- **Erebus Vaults.** Poisonous caves filled with all sorts of valuable jewels. Touching its treasures always triggers either an encounter or a curse.

ARTIST: NOAH BRADLEY

- **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 extra damage from the heat.
- **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 Valley of Hope.
- **Undying Pyre.** 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.** Extra-dimensional fissures that must be closed.

Adventure Hooks

- **Bladehall.** Sending reinforcements to the Shadowblight 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.** Concerned that the tower in the Highway of Flame closest to the Shadowblight continues to be snuffed out, even after being relit.
- **Missing Warriors.** 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 morning star, 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 tricked, 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 fiend with diamond scales, burning eyes, and a thundering voice. Surrounded by a cluster of fiends; each fiend killed makes him stronger. He wants to escape to the surface and expand his domain.

Treasures

- **Ashen Harp.** A delicate instrument made of burned bones and tendons. Its melody puts fiends under the control of its musician.
- **Doomcaller's Horn.** A twisted horn that, when blown, summons a storm of ash and fire. Summons fiends if used under a blood moon.
- **Grimskull Helm.** Crafted from the skull of a fiend lord. Wearing it grants resistance to fire and necrotic, but may cause insanity.
- **Fiendish Runeblade.** A carved obsidian sword wreathed in ghostly flames. Hungers for fiendish blood and grows stronger with each fiend it slays.
- **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.
- **Soulshard Amulet.** An ominous black gem. Empowers Necrotic spells but corrupts the wearer.
- **Trueflame.** Fire that burns with bright pure white light. It dissipates fogs and illusions, but fiends tend to harbor extra animosity toward flame bearers.
- **Vortex Sigil.** A pulsing medallion that absorbs light. Creates portals to the shadow realm, which can be used as dangerous shortcuts.

Beyond the Crimson Veil

*A fiendish adventure for **LEVEL 14** 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.

Quest Hooks

- **The Golden Company.** Paladins seek heroes willing to risk death *(or worse)* by venturing into the Crimson Veil and putting a stop to its spread before it consumes neighboring regions.
- **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 quest giver 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: total of LVL damage for each 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 taskmasters (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 (2×). 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 taskmasters 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!"
- Cultists (2/hero), Fanatics (1/hero), and Doomsayers (1/hero) stir and mix the vats with enormous onyx ladles. 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 or 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 grumbles 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…"

5e CONVERSION

Adventures

You can run any 5e compatible adventure right out of the book with no additional prep and minimal changes. For the skills, saves, and conditions that were combined or changed, just use the updated name.

Saving Throws

CON save → STR save

WIS/CHA save → WIL save

Skill Checks

Animal Handling/Nature/Survival → Naturecraft

Athletics → Might

Deception/Persuasion/Performance → Influence

History/Religion → Lore

Investigation/Medicine → Examination

Sleight of Hand/Acrobatics → Finesse

Conditions

Paralyzed, Stunned, Unconscious → Incapacitated

Monsters

You can likewise 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; simply change their AC to armor and roll their damage dice for attacks.

- **Monster Attacks.** They miss, hit, and crit just like heroes.
- **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%).*

5e Legendary Monsters

Nimble Legendary monsters will be much easier to run and provide a more dynamic experience, but you can run 5e legendary monsters as written just like other monsters! Change their AC to armor and simply roll their damage dice for attacks. They act 1/round (using their Lair/Legendary Actions as normal in 5e).

Optional Tweaks

- **Monster Saves.** To simplify play, roll a d20 for saves without bonuses. If a monster is notably Strong/Frail, Fast/Slow, or Smart/Dumb, give them advantage or disadvantage on their STR, DEX, or WIL/INT saves. Legendary monsters may have advantage on multiple 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 condition instead (–1 action for 1 round).

5e Spells

Most 5e spells should be easy enough to use with Nimble without any change. Though it's not recommended to use 5e combat-related spells, 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 that can be cast from a distance cost **3 Actions**. Examples:

Magic Missile *Tier 1, 2 Actions*
Range: 12. **Damage:** 1d4+1 (3×). Can target a different creature with each die. Does not miss. **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

For items that change stats, simply use the ability score modifier.

Belt of Hill Giant Strength
While worn, your STR score is 21.

→

Belt of Hill Giant Strength
While worn, your STR is 5.

5e Races & Classes

- **Race & Background:** Pick a Nimble ancestry and 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 and match 5e and Nimble spells, feats, or other options; stick with one or the other. See the *Nimble 5e* booklet for more.

Monster Skill Checks

If a contested skill check is ever desired or necessary, since Nimble monsters don't have skills or stats, you can roll an additional die based on the creature's capabilities and add it to the skill check instead:

- **No bonus or +1d4.** This monster is untrained or average at this skill.
- **+1d6–1d10.** This monster is trained or very good in the skill.
- **+1d12–1d20.** This monster is world class or has legendary capability with this skill.

Appendix of Inspiration

***Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master* by Michael Shea.** Step-by-step guide on how to prep and run a TTRPG (without it taking all day). Buy 2 copies, one for you and one for the friend you want to become a GM.

***Mastering Dungeons*.** TTRPG Podcast where co-hosts Teos Abadía and Shawn Merwin talk about RPG news, design deepdives, interviews, and listener Q&A.

***Knave 2* by Ben Milton.** Lots of great tables for getting the creative juices flowing.

***Forge of Foes* by Teos Abadia, Scott Fitzgerald Gray, and Michael E. Shea.** Even more ideas on how to create flavorful (and balanced) monsters quickly and easily.

***The Monsters Know What They're Doing* by Keith Ammann.** Monsters are much more than their statblocks, this teaches how to bring more life to your combat encounters by treating the monsters more 3-dimensionally.

***Flee, Mortals!* by MCDM.** Super crunchy, exceptionally well-balanced monsters. Some of the best monsters around (but be prepared to study them ahead of time).

***Mausritter* by Isaac Williams**–A lightweight, charming TTRPG that has deeply inspired my own design. I love everything about it.

***Oz* and *Neverland* by Andrew Kolb.** 5e-compatible settings. Absolute masterpieces of layout, design, and creativity.

***Mothership: Warden's Operation Manual* by Tuesday Knight Games.** Some of the best GM advice around. From prepping a session and structuring a campaign, to player agency and thinking through consequences. Even if you never intend to run the system, buy this book.

***Dragon Town and the Darkness Below* by JP Coovert.** JP's writing and art style have long been an influence for me, as has his clean and lightweight adventure writing. You can be guaranteed most anything he produces is gold.

***Tome of Adventure Design* by Matt Finch.** A TOME indeed. Random tables for nearly everything you'd ever need when making TTRPG content.

***To Be Or Not to Be a Villain* by James Introcaso and Rudy Basso.** An absolute masterclass of thoughtful adventure design and what TTRPGs can be. Compatible with 5e and Zwiehander.

***Conan the Cimmerian Barbarian by Finn J. D. John and Robert E. Howard*.** Classic pulp fantasy. Great adventure inspiration.

***Running the Game*.** Youtube series by Matt Colville. Excellent series of videos designed to teach how to be a GM and get people excited about it. 11/10.

***The Alexandrian*.** A blog by Justin Alexander. Prolific writer, excellent mind for TTRPGs, what makes them work. See his blog at thealexandrian.net and his book, *So You Want to be a Game Master*.

***Alphastream*.** Game design blog of Teos Abadía. Fantastic resource for game designers.

For Creators

Want to make your own content for Nimble? Great! Go to nimbleRPG.com/creators for more information and resources on homebrewing and publishing Nimble-compatible content.

CHAOS

CHAOS TABLE

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 or take INT d10 fire damage on a failure, half on save. You fail the save.

2 **Backfire.** Suffer 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 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! (GM's 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 can see.

13 **Mindfire.** The dumbest enemy 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 (ignoring your natural max).

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).

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