Nimble

A fast, tactical TTRPG

GM Guide BETA v 1.7

Beta Disclaimer!

This is an *unfinished BETA document*. More content is still in design.

Note, many of the legendary monsters in particular are not yet balanced (though the legendary monster builder is ready to test), monsters are not finished, nor is the adventure & locations.

I am NOT currently looking for:

- **Typo reports.** Yes, there will be typos, they will be fixed before final release, no need to report them at this point.

I AM currently looking for feedback on:

- **Anything confusing for a first time GM?**
- **Feedback on the adventure (note, it is a still a rough draft, expect some plot holes, rough corners, etc.)**
- **Feedback on BOONS. They, too, are incomplete and unbalanced.**

Questions or Feedback?

The best place to join in the beta testing is on **the Nimble Discord server.** Some (myself included) will be doing live playtests, submitting battle reports, and brainstorming changes.

– Evan @ Nimble Co.

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 though your first sessions with baby steps and by the end you'll be at the helm of your own open sandbox adventure that follows your heroes wherever they want to go!

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

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

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

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

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

The No. 1 Rule

WHEN IN DOUBT RULE IN FAVOR OF THE HEROES.

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 30 ft. and jump down, landing on top of the bad guy and attack him!"*

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

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

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

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

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

The No. 2 Rule:

LET PLAYERS DO COOL THINGS!

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

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

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

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

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

When information Is necessary: Rather than just telling the heores a bunch of lore or backstory information (you risk them tuning out), instead have everyone roll a skill check and reward the hero with the highest roll with the information. *They* are the ones who knew it!

The No. 3 Rule:

BE HONEST & TRUSTWORTHY

Roll in the open. Even if you're NOT cheating (perhaps especially so) make sure play also feels to your party that everything is on the up in up. What happens is what was supposed to happen. If they missed killing the bad guy by a single Hit Point, you are welcome to show your players the stat block and say "oo, sorry, ALMOST got him…" Or if they suddenly kill a bad guy that was proving to be exceptionally difficult, with exact damage, again, show the stat block and congratulate them for their great luck! Cheers will be had all around the table. Players love to know that they won fairly.

Be Aggressive! 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. Leave it to the players to figure out how to save themselves. Interpose, Retreat, or something else...

ADVANCED GM TOOLS

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

What You DON'T See Is...

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

Cutscenes

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

Imminent Danger

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

Secret Allies

While exploring a dungeon, the heroes narrowly avoid a hidden trap. Narrate how a secretive ally (a sympathetic goblin), disarmed it just in time, without the heroes ever knowing. They heroes may jsut be more open to chatting when they meet their little secret friend rather than coming to blows.

Undetected Traitors

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

Foreshadowing

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

Monster Secrets

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

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

Character Vignettes

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

These are brief (no more than 5 minutes) one on one stories between the GM and one of the heroes. Before you begin a campaign, chat with your player about their character–they may have lots of ideas and a full backstory or they might only have "I'm a dragon dude and I want to hit things with a big axe." Either is perfectly fine. You can work with them on a vignette if they have a very clear idea of their hero, or surprise them with one if they don't too much care what their story is.

Example 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Example 2

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

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

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

Perfect. from the hallway you can hear your mother clearly enough but you struggle to hear the other side of the conversation.

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

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

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

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

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

indistinct response from the mirror

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

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

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

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

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

Example 3

Vignettes can also be a great way to give the players information that their heroes wouldn't have access to. Brandon wants to play an ooze spy character, he doesn't really care what the other details are. We work together to come up with a cool secret passphrase and response and he gets to show off his sweet spy skills in front of the rest of the players. As well as secret lore the party shouldn't have yet:

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

Brandon: *"Open the door, cautiously."*

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

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

Brandon: *"Dead. As always."*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Running Skill Challenges!

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

- When a dungoen they heroes are in is collapsing
- During an urban chase scene
- Sailing through a dangerous storm
- Negotiating a peace treaty,
- Playing a team competition (e.g., a fantasy sport or baking competition).

You will present a series of situations and the Heroes will need to use their skills and other abilities to solve the problems. Failing a check may impose some consequences (HP loss, Wound, Condition, loss of an item, a cool scar, or other narrative situation), failing too many times can result more severe consequence, failing an entire quest, or even death.

Generally, if some resource is spent (a limited use item, piece of specialized equipment, mana, discipline points, fury dice, etc., or if an idea is particularly creative) give advantage on the skill check, allow the Hero to use a skill that wouldn't normally apply, or even grant them an automatic success.

For a good example of a what skill challenge might look like, see "Skill Challenge: Escape the Ruins!" on page 68.

Making Your Own Adventures

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

Problems to Solve (Not Solutions)

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

Something to Fight

2-5 "fair" combat encounters per session is typical). Having some well-balanced fights are appreciated so the heroes can do their cool things. Though some sessions may not have any combat, if your players are having fun, that's okay too!

Something Big to Run From

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

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

Places to Explore

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

Others to Influence

Fun NPCs to role-play with. A dumb bad guys to bamboozle, a quirky granny to charm, cuddly animals to befriend, jerks to offend, troops or citizens to rally, people to make into their enemies or allies, merchants to trade and bargain with.

Traps

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

Treasure

Yes, a great adventure has treasure. But not

just gold, weapons, and armor, lots of things can make great treasure! Single use items like health potions or spell scrolls. Expended items like powerful wands. Mysterious objects that can kick off new quests. Cursed items, blessed items, stolen items (that the rightful owner badly wants back), sentient objects that can lead (or mislead) the heroes. Or even an entire castle that they can use as their home base!

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

Lore & Secrets

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

Dilemmas

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

Follow the Fun

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

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

Gating Information

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

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

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

What to Avoid

"Oh, it doesn't matter."

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

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

Don't punish curiosity, bravery, or creativity!

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

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

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

Don't let them behind the screen.

Don't show your prep notes, don't let them know after a session "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 wnat 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.

Ruling too Rigidly

Players may want to use their "combat only" abilities outside of combat, if the situation calls for it and it soudns 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 advanatage on the skill check.

Running Monsters

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

Monster Armor

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

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

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

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

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

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

Default Monster Stats

Unless otherwise noted, assume that monsters are unarmored, have a speed of 30 ft. (can replace one of their attacks to move again, or replace either one of those to make a save), attacks have 5 ft. reach, and roll saves with an unmodified d20 roll, (though some monsters may have Advantaged/Disadvantaged saves when appropriate).

Reading a Stat Block

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. On the goblin's turn, the GM could move him up to 30 ft. and then stab (or shoot) in either order. Whenever an attack misses him, him special ability triggers.

Goblin ♥ *15*

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

Stab. 1d6+2 (or Shoot 60 ft. range).

Tuning Encounter Difficulty

Not every encounter needs to be "level appropriate," some can be easy, others can be way too hard! Easy encounters are important as they provide the context with which players can gauge their progress. Go ahead and make your players feel strong every once in a while (especially right after they level up)! Even an easy encounter can whittle down their resources. Encounters that are too hard can really make them band together and think creatively about how to get out of it alive. That said, sometimes you'll want to shoot for a particular challenge for an encounter. It's very easy to tune an encounter to exactly the difficulty you want, either beforehand or on the fly with these tips:

Low Level Balancing

For an easier game at lower levels, use **Flunkies**: they're the same as a regular monster, but they **can't crit**. When players are new, and while HP & Armor are low, it can feel really bad to lose all of your HP from one unlucky crit. After levels 1–2 this is not an issue and you shouldn't need to use Flunkies.

Balancing with Minions

Minions can be used to easily to fill the battlefield and give it more fluidity without slowing down combat to a crawl. They are easy to kill and defend against, but can cause big trouble for the heroes if ignored.

Do not track a minion's HP. Any time a minion takes damage, they die. At the your discretion extra damage can overflow to other minions within range (a 20 damage crossbow attack could take out up to FIVE d4 minions or TWO d10 minions standing in a line!).

All minions move at the same time, and each one uses a single damage die for its attack (1d4 for weak minions, up to 1d20 for a very strong minion). All minions attacking a hero roll at the same time, do not add anything to their roll, can not crit, and miss on a 1. Heroes can Defend or Interpose against multiple minion attacks as if they were a single attack.

USE MINIONS! *They are super easy to run for the GM and importantly, they give heroes the chance to use some of their coolest abilities. Heroes with a lot of armor feel cool by blocking 5 attacks at once, spellcasters and berserkers can blast or cut down huge numbers of enemies in one go!*

Minion Size/Party Level

As you begin designing combat encounters, lean toward making encounters that are a bit too easy to start, and add minions over the course of the first round or two of combat (or use some of the other tactics below) to dial in the difficulty. Using only 1 minion per hero will add no noticeable added difficulty, but will increase the tactical options and battle interest. 2-3 minions per hero will be noticeably more difficult, and 4 minions per hero will be quite a bit more challenging.

Party Level	Appropriate Minion Size
1-2	d4 sized minions
2-5	d6 sized minions
5-10	d8 sized minions
10-13	d10 sized minions
14-17	d12 sized minions
18-20	d20 sized minions

Be Fair & Believable. *Make sure anything you do in combat FIRST makes sense in world. Some extra minions hiding in the bushes that only leap out once a leader calls for them? Sure, that totally makes sense! Monsters continuously coming out of a summoning portal until the portal is closed? Better get that thing stopped ASAP!*

Minions coming out of thin air just because the fight is easier than you thought? Or if combat is too hard, the portal suddenly… turns itself off? Or if you roll in secret and the monsters suddenly start missing more often than normal? Don't do that. You'll lose your player's trust. If they feel like you're cheating (bending the rules to make it easier OR harder) they may feel robbed because the world doesn't work as they expect it to. The immersion– and their trust–will be broken and it may be hard to win back.

Balancing With Tactics

Focus Fire. The more the monsters focus their attacks on one or two heroes the more difficult the encounter will be. Conversely, the more monsters spread their damage out the easier it will feel.

Give a Reason. *If you're going to be pulling punches in the middle of an encounter. If you want to attack the hunter who hasn't taken any damage yet and ease up on the Commander who's looking rough. Ask out loud, "Who dealt the most damage last round? Who attacked this one most recently? Oh, the hunter? Ok he's coming after you now!" Give the party a reason for obviously sub optimal play by the monsters.*

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

Go for squishy characters. Make them use their Actions to Defend or run away and hide behind their stronger friends! Let the tanks feel good about Defending and Interposing.

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

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

Creating Combat Encounters

The included adventure has all the encounters you'll need to start with. You can also use the "Tuning Encounter Difficulty" guidelines on the previous page to tweak the challenge to your desired level.

If you are making your own encounters, the sample encounters in the bestiary are on a per hero basis so they can be easily made to suit your party size. For an easier encounter you can use the stats 1 or 2 levels lower, more challenging, 1 or 2 levels higher. Alternatively, for completely custom encounters, add up the total levels of the heroes. If the total monster levels equal that, then it should be a challenging but fair fight.

Example: *A hill giant is a level 12 monster. So a pair of hill giants (24 monster levels total) would be a level appropriate encounter for: 6 level 4 heroes, 4 level 6 heroes or 3 level 8 heroes.*

For normal encounters, there should typically be at least 2 monsters (if you want an epic fight against a single monster, use a legendary monster instead); and use at most 3–4 monsters/hero (excluding minions). If you want hordes of monsters, use minions.

Important Note! *If the heroes or monsters greatly outnumber one another the encounter may be more trivial or challenging than anticipated.*

Monster Builder

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

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

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.

Shifty: Can move after being attacked.
Aggressive: Faster if moving toward enemies.
Sturdy/Undying: The first time the monster would die, they have 1 HP instead.
Parry/FAST: Reaction: 1/round. Force a reroll with disadvantage on an attack. Or, attack against them miss on a 1 and 2.
"Invulnerable": Immune to damage until crit.
Desintegrating Armor. Start with Heavy Armor, on crit degrades to Medium, then to none.
Flying: Flying speed and immune to Opportunity Attacks. May FALL when crit (1d6 damage/10 ft. fallen, and land Prone).
Pack Tactics: Advantage on attacks when an ally is adjacent to the target.
Retaliate: Attacks the first creature who attacks them in melee each round.
Vicious: Crits are vicious.
Climbing: Can traverse walls or ceilings normally.
Controlling: Creates/immune to difficult terrain.
Ranged: Extra damage, can *only* attack at range.
Brawler: Extra damage, can *only* attack in melee.
Formation: Armor increases 1 step for each adjacent ally (None, Med, Heavy).
Disgusting/Venomous/Heavy Blows: Attacks also dazes the target.
Doom: Attacks also Wound the target.
Brute: Attacks also knockback a number of 5 ft. spaces equal to the primary die rolled.

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

Armor Allotment

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

BESTIARY

Kobolds

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

Nooooo! *When an ally within 10 ft. dies, attack once for free.*

Kobold Minion Lvl 1/5

Stab. 1d4 (follows minion rules).

Kobold Lvl 1/3 ♥ 12

Stab. 1d4+2 (or Sling 60 ft. range).

Kobold Sneak Lvl 1/2 ♥ 24

Revenge! *If an ally dies, first move up to 30 ft.*

Stab. 1d4+2 (or Sling 60 ft. range).

Kobold Clanger Lvl 1 ♥ 24 H

CLANG! *Allies who hear your clanging roll 1 additional die whenever they attack.*

Kobold Trapper Lvl 1 ♥ 24

Throw Scorpion (2x). **1d4+2** (60 ft. range)

Trap! *When an enemy moves adjacent to you or an ally, they trigger your trap! 1/ encounter each.*

- **BEEES!** Deal them 5d4 damage (doesn't miss). Half as much to ALL adjacent creatures.
- **GOTCHA!** They are Restrained until they can escape (Action: DC 10 STR or DEX).

Kobold Denwarden Lvl 1 ♥ 24 M

Hold! *Adjacent allies gain Medium Armor.*

Stab (2x). 1d4+2 (or Sling 60 ft. range).

Sample Kobold Encounters *(per hero)*

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

Level 1: 3 Kobold Flunkies/5 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/12 Kobolds*

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

Kobold Loot

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

Goblins

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

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

Goblin Minion LVL 1/4
Stab. 1d6 (follows minion rules).

Goblin Lvl 1/3 15
Stab. 1d6+2 (or Shoot 60 ft. range).

Bugbear CR 1 M 30
- **Cleave.** 2d6+4. OR:
- **Javelin.** 1d6+2 (60 ft. range)

Goblin Taskmaster LVL 2 M 30
Meat Shield. *Can force other goblins to Interpose for him.*
- **Stab.** 1d6+2 (or Shoot 60 ft. range). Then:
- **Get in here!** Call a goblin minion to the fight.

Goblin Ratrider LVL 2 30 50 FT.
CHAAARGE! *If you move at least 20 ft. attack with advantage once.*

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

Sample Goblin Encounters *(per hero)*

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

Level 1: 1 Flunky or 2 Minions

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

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

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

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

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

Goblin Loot

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

Bandits

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

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

Bandit Minion
Stab. 1d8 *(follows minion rules).*

CR 1/8
Bandit HP 12
Stab. 1d8+1 (or Shoot 60 ft. range).

CR 1
Bandit Bruiser (M) HP 40
Bash (2x). 2d8+1 damage

CR 2
Bandit Captain (M) HP 70
Slice (3x). 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 60 ft.)

CR 1/2
Bandit Hunter HP 24
Longbow. 2d8+2 damage 90 ft. range.

CR 1
Bandit Assasin HP 24
Sneak. *You are invisible until you attack.*

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

CR 2
Bandit Mage HP 40
Spark Step. *When damaged, teleport up to 20 ft.*

Arc Lightning. 3d8 damage (120 ft. range). Also strikes the next closest creature. On miss:

Sample Encounters

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

Level 1: 1.5 Flunkies or 2 Minions

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

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

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

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

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

Bandit Loot

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

Dungeon Denizens

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

Stirges

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

Stirge 10 **Latch On.** 1d4+2 damage and Latched On. CR 1/4

Greater Stirge 60 **Latch On.** 1d12+10 and Latched On. CR 3

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 28 *(Cup, Shoe, Apple, Candlestick, Potion, Pebble)* CR 1/2
Pseudopod. 1d4 (escape DC 9) or **Bite.** (a grappled creature) 1d12 damage.

Small Mimic 41 *(Backpack, Shield/Weapon, Chair, Crate, Tree Stump)* CR 1
Pseudopod. 1d6 (escape DC 11) or **Bite.** (a grappled creature) 1d20 damage.

Medium Mimic 79 *(Table, Treasure Chest, Barrell, Bookshelf, Door, Bed)* CR 3
Pseudopod. 1d8 (escape DC 13) or **Bite.** (a grappled creature) 2d20 damage.

Sticky. *Mimic hits also Grapple and can Grapple any number of creatures. When crit: release 1 creature (attacker's choice).*

Oozes

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

Grey Ooze 28 **Acidic Touch (2x).** 1d6+**2** damage. CR 1/2

Ochre Jelly 52 **Acidic Touch (2x).** 1d6+**3** damage. CR 2

Black Pudding 90 **Acidic Touch (2x).** (Reach 10 ft.) 1d6+**5** damage. CR 4

Elder Ooze 150 **Acidic Touch (3x).** (Reach 15 ft.) 1d6+**6** damage. CR 7

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

Dungeon Denizen Loot

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

Hills & Fields

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

Gnolls

Frenzy: *Advantage against bloodied creatures.*

Gnoll CR 1/2 28
- **Ravage (2x).** Deal 1d10 damage. OR:
- **Shoot.** (Range 60 ft.) 1d10 damage.

Gnoll Packleader CR 2 M 28
- **Bark Orders.** 2 allies can move. Then:
- **Ravage (3x).** Deal 1d10 damage.

Griffon CR 2 50
- **Talons.** Fly 60 ft. then deal 2d6+10 damage On hit: Grappled. OR:
- **Fly & Drop.** If Grappling: Fly 60 ft. upward and release (fall damage is 1d6 per 10 ft.).

Hill Giant LVL 12 130 40 ft.

Brute. *On hit: Knockback 5 ft. x Primary Die.*
- **Tree Club (2x).** 1d6+15. OR:
- **Boulder!** 1d6+20 (Range 60 ft.)

Worg CR 1/2 28 50 ft.

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

Rip Apart (x2). 1d6+2. On damage: Grappled (escape DC 10).

Troll CR 5 M 120 40 ft.

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

Choose twice:
- **Claws.** (reach 10 ft.) 2d10 +5 On crit: knock Prone.
- **Bite.** (a prone creature) 4d10+10.

Bulette CR 5 H 74 30 ft. (Burrow)

Burst Forth! *Combat with a Bulette starts with the largest character making a DC 14 DEX save or they take 1d12+20 damage and are Grappled (escape DC 14, half on save).*
- **Drag Below.** If a creature is grappled, deal 2d12 damage and drag them below and burrow away. OR:
- **Leap & Bite.** If no creature is grappled, leap up to 30 ft. and attack for 1d12+20 damage. On damage: Grappled.

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

Roc CR 11 M 195 120 ft.

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

Crush & Drop. Fly upward 120 ft., deal 20 damage to Grappled creatures, then drop them.

Undead

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

UNDEAD ABILITY:

Unliving, Undying. Half damage from Necrotic and Piercing, double from Radiant. The first time this dies, reset to 1 HP instead (excluding minions).

Skeleton LVL 1/3 ♥ 10
Grave Arrow. 1d4+4 (60 ft. range)

Ghoul LVL 1 ♥ 30
Sickening Claw (2x). 1d4+6, on crit: Dazed.

Ogre Zombie Lvl 5 ♥ 80
Greatclub (x2). 1d4+10, on crit: knock Prone.

Giant Zombie Lvl 8 ♥ 100
Decaying Swipe (x2). 1d4+14, on hit: knockback 5 ft. x Primary Die.

Zombie Lvl 1/2 ♥ 10
Crunch. 1d4+4, on damage: grappled.

Specter LVL 3 ♥ 30
Deathly Touch. 1d4, on damage: set HP to 0.

Mummy Lvl 6 ♥ 70
Slam (2x). 1d4+8. On damage: Dazed.

Wraith Lvl 10 ♥ 110
Soul Rend (2x). 1d4+10 (60 ft. range), on damage: deal 1 Wound.

Mummy Lord Lvl 21 ♥ 313
Cursed Gaze. When Crit: *DC 20 WILL save, or suffer 1 Wound.*

- **Scarab Swarm.** Summon 10 scarab minions (d6) within 60 ft. Then:
- **Slam (2x).** 1d4+20, on damage: Dazed.

Undead Loot

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

Forest Denizens

Briarbanes. *Soulless, thorny plant beings fertilized by blood.*

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

Seedling Lvl 1/2 H* ♥ 8
Thorn Seed. 2d6+2 (30 ft. range)

Tangler Lvl 2 H* ♥ 20
Tangle (2x). Deal 2d6 damage (range 30 ft). On a failed DC 12 DEX save they are also Grappled (escape DC 12, or any amount of fire or slashing damage).

Treant Lvl 14 H* ♥ 200
Enrage. *When Armor is reduced to none: attack with advantage.*

Choose Twice:

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

Acidpod Lvl 1 H* ♥ 8
On Death: Caustic Eruption. deal 4d6 acid damage to all adjacent creatures.

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

Rootbreaker Lvl 5 H* ♥ 50
Slam. 3d6+6, on crit: knockback 10 ft.

Briarbane Loot

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

Cultists/Horrors

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

Cultists

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

Cultist LVL 1 — 28

- **Oblation of Blood!** If undamaged, attack self for 2 damage. Adjacent enemies are inflicted with Despair. OR:
- **Dreadful Blade.** 1d6+6 damage. OR:
- **Blood Boil.** (Range 60 ft. Bloodied creature) 3d6+6 damage.

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 save or Grappled (reroll to escape, or any radiant damage), if susuccessful, attack for 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.** Deal 2d6 psychic damage to all enemies who can hear you.

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

Stench Fiend LVL 1/2 — 18

Bite. 2d6 damage.

On Death: Putrid Cloud. *Creatures within 10 ft. take 2d6 poison damage.*

Spiny Fiend LVL 4 — 49

Spines. Melee attackers take 3 damage.

- **Claws (2x).** 1d6+6 damage OR:
- **Shoot Spine.** (Range 60 ft.) 1d6+6.

Glabrezu LVL 14 — H — 110

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

Horrible Loot

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

Underground

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

Giant Spider LVL 2 — M — 27

- **Shoot Web.** (Range 30 ft.) 1d8+2 On Hit: Restrained (Escape DC 12, or slashing/fire damage). OR:
- **Bite.** (slowed targets only) 2d8+4 damage and Poisoned (magical healing ends).

Ettercap LVL 4 — 49

Web Garrote. 1d8+2 damage, Grappled, and Silenced. This attack deals an additional 1d8+2 damage for each round a target is Grappled this way.

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

Nestweaver LVL 6 — M — 54

Summon 2 spider minions (d8). Then choose 1:

- **Shoot Web.** (Range 30 ft.) 1d8+2 On Hit: Restrained (Escape DC 12, or any slashing/fire damage). OR:
- **Bite.** (slowed targets only) 3d8+6 damage and Poisoned (magical healing ends).

Great Tunnel Worm LVL 16 — H — 140

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

- **Crush.** Creatures in a 10ft.×30ft. 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 — 110 — 50 FT. (FLY)

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

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

- **Wrap.** 2d10+20 damage and Grappled (escape DC 16). OR:
- **Horrifying Wail.** DC 16 WILL save, or creatures within 30 ft. are Frightened and must spend 1 Action moving as far away as possible.

Umber Hulk LVL 10 — H — 70

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

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

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

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.

LEGENDARY MONSTERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Legendary Monster Builder

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

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

Legendary Monster Stats by Level

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

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

Offense

Small Attack. 10+PL. **Big Attack:** 2x Small Attack
Bloodied: Do something to shift the tide of battle
Last Stand HP: 10xPL Gain a terrifying ability!

Defense

MED Armor. HP: (25 x PL) + 50
Heavy Armor. HP (20 x PL) +50
Saves: 1 or more Advantaged saves.

Example

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

Level 2 Solo Dumb Ogre

Pudge the Blunderer

HP: 75
Armor: M
Saves: STR+, WILL–

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

- **Move & Smack.** Move up to 40 ft. Attack for **1d8+2** damage. On damage: Prone.
- **Grab & Throw. 1d8+2** damage. On damage: they are thrown at another hero within 30 ft. 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, if he takes 20 more damage he dies. Until then, Pudge can move 30 ft., and use Grab & Throw each turn.

Using 5e Legendary Monsters

You can run 5e legendary monsters as written just like other monsters! Acting once per round, and simply rolling their damage dice to see if they hit or crit. However, you can easily adapt them to act after each player's turn like Nimble legendary monsters if you prefer.

For instance the 5e **Adult Black Dragon**, turn its Acid Breath into a single use ability that recharges when it is Bloodied. Instead of its Multiattack, after each hero's turn choose one: Fly up to 80 ft. and make a Bite; OR Make a Claw attack and a Tail/Wing attack. For it's Last Stand ability, it can choose twice each turn. Very scary!

Level 3 Solo Owlbear

Grimbeak, the Unyielding

100 M STR+

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

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

- **Savage Screech (1 time use).** Creatures within 90 ft. take **2d6** psychic damage and are Frightened 1 round on a failed **DC 11 WILL** save.
- **Rend & Tear (2x).** Attack for **2d6+3** damage.
- **Beak.** Move up to 40 ft. Attack for **2d6+3** damage.

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

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

Level 4 Solo Human Criminal

Thorn Quickblade

125 M DEX+

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

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

- **Heart Piercer (Rapier).** Move up to 40 ft., **2d4+3** damage. On crit: Dazed.
- **Stormquill (Crossbow) (2x).** Move up to 20 ft., **4d4+3** damage (Range 60 ft).

BLOODIED: Smoke Bomb. At 62 HP, as a reaction I become invisible until the end of my next turn, then I move up to 40 ft. (without provoking opportunity attacks).

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

Level 5 Solo Manticore

150 M STR+, DEX+

Ravager of the Lowlands

Feral Instinct. *Whenever Ravager is crit, he can fly up to 50 ft.*

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

- **Venomous Stinger.** (1 time use) Reach:15 ft. **5d12** damage.
- **Move & Claw.** The Ravager can fly 50 ft. then attack for **1d12+6** damage**.**
- **Ravage.** Attack for **1d12+6** damage twice.

BLOODIED: At 75 HP, his Venonous Stinger recharges.

LAST STAND: The Ravager is dying! 50 more damage and he dies. Until then, whenever he takes damage and he can fly up to 50 ft. and make a single Claw attack after he lands.

Level 6 Solo Large Matriarch of Spiders

175 M ALL+

Queen Aranya, Broodmother

Weave Web. *The ground within 30 ft. of Queen Aranya is difficult terrain for non-spiders.*

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

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

- **Move.** up to 40 ft. across floors, walls, or ceilings, ignoring difficult terrain.
- **Shoot Web.** (60 ft. range) **1d8+6** damage. On hit: target is entangled in sticky web and Dazed. On crit: Dazed again.
- **Impale.** (10 ft. reach) **2d8+6** piercing damage.

BLOODIED: "Avenge Your Queen, My Brood!" At 60 HP, summon 4 spiderlings (1d6 sized minions) per hero anywhere within 60 ft., they act next and can Interpose for her.

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

Level 6 Solo Large Grey Drake

170 M STR+, DEX+

Nalzar, Apex Predator

Tail Swipe: When dealt slashing or lightning damage she may knock a hero within 15 ft. prone.

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

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

- **Move.** Nalzar can fly up to **60 ft.**
- **Wing Buffet.** Creatures in a **40 ft.** cone take **1d12+6** damage. They are also knocked prone on a failed **DC 14 STR**. Standing behind cover or another hero grants advantage on the save.
- **Devour.** (Prone creatures only, Reach 10 ft.) deal **4d12+6** damage.

BLOODIED: At **85 HP**, her Wing Buffet DC increases by +2 and the range to 60 ft.

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

Level 7 Solo Floral Dragon

200 M ALL+

Florindris, Bane of the Forest

Aura of Wind: *Ranged attacks against you have disadvantage. End of turn: push adjacent creatures 10 ft. away.*

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

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

- **Petal Storm:** (1 use) Creatures within 30 ft. take **4d10+4** damage. Half on a **DC 13 DEX** save.
- **Rend:** Fly up to 60 ft. then attack for **2d10+4** damage. On damage: target gains Pollenblight: (Forced movement also knocks you prone. Magical healing ends this effect.)
- **Gust:** (20 ft. reach) **1d10+4** damage, and moved that many 5 ft. spaces.

BLOODIED: At 100 HP, Florindris' Petal Storm recharges, enemies within 60 ft. gain Pollenblight.

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

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

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.** Flameheart can move up to 50 ft. then strike a 10 ft. square area for **2d10+10** fire damage.
- **Molten Fury.** Lob a molten fireball, igniting a 10 ft. square area. Creatures there take **2d10+10** damage (target the furthest hero not already in the flames). Creatures in this area suffer **10** fire damage at the end of each of their turns.

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 15 ft. square.

Level 9 Solo Shepherd of Death 250 WILL++

Vael, Undying

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

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

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

- **DOOM.** (Range 120 ft., undamaged target) **DC 14 DEX** save or **5d12** damage, half on save.
- **Veilwalker's Rebuke.** Deal **2d12+6** damage to a target within 60 ft. Deals double damage against those behind cover. 1/round you may swap places with them.
- **Cruelty's Edge.** Deal **1d4+2** damage. On hit: target is Dazed. Move up to 30 ft.

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 15 ft. at the end of each of his turns.

Level 10 Solo Huge Ice Dragon 220 M ALL+

Frostfang, the Walking Blizzard

Blizzard Aura: *Applies Frostbite somehow.*

Icy Veins: *Fire or Bludgeoning crits are Vicious agsint you, when this happens adjacent creatures gain Frostbite.*

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

- **Call Avalanche (1 time use):** (50 ft. cone) 4d10 cold damage. Restrained on a failed DC 15 STR save, Failing by 5 or more inflicted with Frostbite (escape the restraint by taking any fire damage).
- **Move & Claw.** Frostfang can fly up to 60 ft. then (10 ft. reach) deal 1d10 slashing +10 cold damage.
- **Bite.** (15 ft. reach) 2d10 piercing+20 cold damage and inflicted with Frostbite.

Frostbite: *-1 Action per stack. Ends upon taking fire damage or moving at least 30 ft. in 1 turn.*

- **Brilliant Reflection.** Deals double Damage to a Frostbitten character? Snowblind.
- Heavy armor that can be shattered?
- stacks of frostbite? advantage against slowed creatures?

BLOODIED: Blizzard Aura His armor resets back to Heavy. His breath weapon and Icy Armor recharge.
LAST STAND: Frostfang is dying! **100** more damage and she dies. Until then,

Level 10 Solo Gargantuan Skeleton 240 H STR+++ WILL+

Titan of the Deep Woods

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

Brittle Bones. Resistant to Piercing, vulnerable to Bludgeoning.

Monsters

Frostfang, the walking blizzard

Level X solo huge ice dragon, X HP, Heavy Armor, Saves ALL+

Abilities:

Blizzard Aura: creatures without cold resistance or immunity withi
movement halved.

Legendary Resistances: 3. On use, the dragon cannot fly for 1 ro

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

Move: the dragon flies up to 10 spaces or walks up to 5 spaces.

Level 11 Solo Medium brain-eating Aberration 300 WILL++

Rth'mxr-zk, Psionic Despot

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

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

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

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

- **Consume.** Grapple an adjacent dominated creature (contested STR or DEX save) creature, on success: Deal **6d12** damage. cannot be Defended or Interposed against.
- **Control.** Teleport up to 40 ft. then spend one Action of a creature to make a weapon attack or cast a cantrip on a failed **DC 15 WILL** save. On save, they attack with disadvantage.

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

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

Level 12 Solo Large Aberration, all TEETH & EYES 325 WILL++

Dravok, All-Seeing Tyrant

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

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

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, Move up to 30 ft. and then use **Terrible Maw.** Melee attack. 4d4 damage. EVERY die can crit and is vicious. OR **Eye Ray.** (90 ft. range, randomly chosen ray then choose target)

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

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

3. Terror Ray. 5d10 psychic damage & Terrified: *Your screams give allies within 30 ft. disadvantage on rolls. Ends when Dravok's plans are flawed.*

4. Gravitation Ray. 2d6 damage, pushed that many 5 ft. spaces. Knocked prone on 7+.

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

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

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 it dies. Until then, each turn it will move or use Warping Ray and then **Devastation Beam.** Deal **6d12** force damage in a 90 ft. long 10 ft. wide beam.

Level 13 Solo Huge Construct

Ancient Golem, Unit N1M8L3

Arcane Pylons: *Four arcane pylons are built within the golem's lair. While the golem is within 5 spaces of one, attacks against the golem have disadvantage. The pylons have X hit points and heavy armor.*

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

- **Charge.** The golem moves up to 5 squares. Each creature on its path takes XdX bludgeoning damage and is pushed to the side.
- **Zap.** Deals XdX lightning damage against one creature within 5 spaces of a pylon. On crit, the creature is Dazed until the end of its next turn.

Bloodied: when reduced to [half] hit points for the first time, each remaining pylon zaps the golem. It regains hit points instead of taking damage.

LAST STAND: when reduced to 0 HP, the golem initiates a self-destruct sequence! In 1 round, it explodes, dealing XdX damage to all creatures within 15 spaces, and half as much to creatures within 30 spaces.

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:

- **Move.** Azriel can fly up to 50 ft.
- **Crackling Whip.** (Reach 20-60 ft.) 3d12 damage. On hit, the target is Grappled and pulled adjacent to Azriel (escape DC 17 STR, DEX, or until he uses the whip again).
- **Doom Sword.** (Reach 10 ft.) 3d12+10 fire damage to all creatures within reach.

BLOODIED: At 160 HP, Azriel can use Crackling Whip twice each turn.
LAST STAND: YES, MORE PAIN! Azriel is dying! **200** more damage and he dies. Until then, EVERY hit against him is a critical hit.

Level 15 Solo Huge Rot Dragon

320 H ALL++

Gloomwing the Cruel

Aura of Rot: *Creatures within 30 ft. take* **5** *necrotic damage at the start of their turns.*

When Gloomwing *:*** *Aura of Rot is suppressed until the end of the next hero's turn.*

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

- **Rot Breath (One time use):** Gloomwing flies up to 50 ft. then deals **8d10** necrotic damage to creatures in a 40 ft. cone, or half on a **DC 17 DEX** save.
- **Bite:** (reach 15 ft.) Move up to 30 ft. then deal **3d10** damage. On damage: target gains:

Cruelty's Gift. *Vulnerable to necrotic damage until they receive any amount of healing.*

- **Claws:** (reach 10 ft.) then **3d10** slashing +**10** necrotic damage.
- **Tail:** (reach 20 ft.) **1d10** damage, and knockback that many 5 ft. 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.

Level 16 Solo Vampire Lord

320 ALL++

Alaric Draegoth, the Crimson Count

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

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

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

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

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

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

Creating Interesting Rewards

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

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

"Release Valve" Items

A total party kill (TPK) is sometimes the right outcome. The heroes are playing fast and lose, the GM has telegraphed danger and yet they forge ahead, heedless. It's important that a player's choices have realistic consequences–the heroes all die.

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

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

Gem of Escape

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

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

Glacier in a Bottle

When poured out (1 Action), the Glacier in a Bottle creates a solid form of ice, filling any number of unoccupied consecutive 5 ft. squares up to 30 ft away from you and up to 10 ft high. The ice lasts for 1 hour before melting. Extreme heat or damage may cause it to fail prematurely. 1/per Long Rest.

Fiery Phoenix

You are reborn as a golden fiery phoenix. Enemies within 30 ft. must make a **DC 10+KEY DEX** save, or take **LVL d10** fire damage (half on save). After 10 minutes this form ends, the helm and your body are no more. Until then gain the following stats and abilities:

- You gain a fly speed of 80 ft., have 12 Armor, and 10 x Level HP.
- Any creature that touches you takes Level fire damage.
- **Fiery Talons (1 Action).** 1d12+Level fire damage.

Story Items

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

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

Hearring

A simple piece of jelwelry 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

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

The Grimoire of Truths

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

> *"Ah, another mortal thirsting for knowledge. Think you can handle the truths I hold?"*
>
> *"The Battle of Evermore... such a delightful mess. Would you like to know how it* ***truly*** *ended, or are you content with the fairy tale everyone believes?"*
>
> *"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."*
>
> *"Ah, a little risk to get the blood pumping. What's life without a bit of* ***danger****?"*

Combat Items

Create combat related items with a drawback so there is a choice to be made (see the Weapon of Animosity, Weapon of Slaying, Item of Ill Omen). It can be a 1 time use item, something that damages the hero, or somethign that needs to be recharged to be used again. Alternatively, you can have it become a friend with the party like Lumina!

Lumina, Living Sunbeam

A small, radiant orb of light, about the size of an apple, with a gentle, warm glow that pulses with life and a perpetual, cheerful expression. She is a one-time use item that, when activated as an action, will deal **Level d6** radiant damage to all enemies within 30 ft. 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*

Secret Spells

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lesser Windform. (wind cantrip, concentration up to 10 minutes) You are invisibile and blinded for the duration of the spell.

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

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

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

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

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 special tonic that gives Epic Speed for 1 hour), or you can allow players to take a minor boon instead of a secondary stat increase, ora major boon instead of a key attribute inscrease.

Minor Boons

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

Major Boons

- **Unflinching.** Your focus is unbroken even in the face of danger. Advantage on Concentration checks.
- **Honorable Protector.** Gain temp HP equal to your level whenever you Interpose. Take psychic damage equal to your level whenever an ally within 10 ft. is attacked and you don't interpose.
- **Natural Talent.** Learn 1 Cantrip in a school you do not know.
- **Unnatural Talent.** Learn any 1 Utility Spell.
- **Tough.** Whenever you gain temp HP, gain 5 more.
- **Hardy.** Whenever you would roll your hit dice to increase your maximum HP, roll with an additional stack of advantage.
- **Brave.** Gain +2 to damage while you have the most enemies adjacent to you.
- **Lionhearted.** +2 Armor while you have the most enemies adjacent to you.
- **Expansive Mind.** +KEY Max Mana. (excl. Shadowmancers)
- **Tenacious.** Gain +2 maximum Hit Dice.
- **Stalwart.** Gain +1 maximum Hit Die, +2 on Might checks.
- **Smart, not book smart.** –KEY Max Mana + Mana recovery. Gain 1d4 mana whenever you roll Initiative, this expires if unused at the end of combat.
- **Veteran.** +10 HP.
- **Good Patient.** Whenever you would receive magical healing you heal additional HP equal to your KEY.
- **Sniper.** Gain +2 damage when no enemy is adjacent to you, –2 damage otherwise.
- **Aggressive.** On your first round of combat you can spend 1 Action from your next turn.
- **Resolute.** When pushed, you are pushed 5 ft. less. Whenever you would be knocked prone, you can instead be moved back 5 ft.
- **Resilient.** If you would take any levels of Wounds, you may become immune to them this turn instead. 1/ Long Rest.
- **Battle Hardened.** +1 Armor.

EPIC Boons

- **Epic Stamina.** Rolling 4 or higher on a Hit Die heals 1 Wound.
- **Epic Resistance.** 1/ Encounter. Whenever you would suffer damage or fail a save you can choose not to instead.
- **Epic Speed.** +20 ft. Speed, +4 Initiative.
- **Epic Criticals.** Whenever you would roll for critical hit damage, you may replace one die with a d20.
- **Epic Mind.** +6 Mana
- **Epic Mana.** Whenever you would be healed, you may instead recover 1 Mana for every 5 HP you would have been healed
- **Epic Stats.** Increase 3 different stats by 1.
- **Epic Defense.** Your shields gain +3 Armor.

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

ARTIST: JUSTIN GERARD

A Tiny Rescue

(Level 1 adventure for 2-8+ heroes)

A tiny scream pierces the silence of the night–but is quickly muffled. *What do you do?*

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

Info they may want:

- **Where are we?** The Valley's Rest, a cozy inn located in the humble town of Merivale.
- **What do we see?** Patrons (mostly farmers and commoners) look at the door where the noise came from, then look to you–the only ones who seem capable of dealing with anything scarier than a stray sheep.
- **Did we hear anything else?** DC 10 Perception check: the sound of a dozen of so small feet shuffling around outside in the dark, orders being whisper-shouted.

> ***Egg them on!*** *If they're hesitant, the innkeeper can offer "Free dinner to whoever deals with that…" and a very elderly old man begins to slowly stand up arms himself with his fork, and heading towards the door.*

When the heroes go to investigate:

- Opening the door, you are facing down a pack of X goblins (2 goblin minions per hero), who clearly look like they've been caught red-handed.
- A goblin in the back yells "Get 'em boys!" before *woosh* disappearing right before your eyes. The remaining goblins face you down, filthy, crooked daggers drawn look ready to leap at you and attack. What do you do?

> ***Let them do it.*** *Before combat, a player may want to try something else: To see if they notice anything about the hooded figure (DC 10 Perception: had a pinkish hue. He was carrying something glowing.) What happened to the hooded figure (DC 10 Arcana: he turned invisible)? To try and talk with the goblins before fighting (they'll talk just long enough to get close enough to stab them "sure we'll talk…*STAB*").*

Once they're done questioning or if nothing happens, it's time to ***"ROLL INITIATIVE!"***

> ***Initiative.*** *To do this, each hero rolls 1d20 and adds their Initiative bonus from their character sheet. If they have a total in the single digits, 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.*

Whichever player looks the most ready can go first, and then play will go around the table clockwise.

Moving and attacking. Heroes can spend 1 Action to move up to their speed (typically 30 ft.), or 1 Action to attack. Roll the dice listed on your weapon or ability and you'll deal that much damage! After all the players have gone, any goblins still standing will take their turn. The goblin minions can move up to 30 ft. on their turn and make a single attack.

> **Minions.** *Any damage kills a minion, they all move at the same and their attacks can be blocked as if it were a single attack.*

Aftermath

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

Goblin Loot: A dirty note ("GET A FAIRY AND REMEMBER THE–" *note torn, the rest missing*, chipped/rusty daggers, rope, pocket full of teeth,

nicely shaped rocks. Here is some of what they see and information they can collect by talking to the townsfolk:

- A large golden elm tree proudly stands (***the Faerie Tree***, a symbowl of hope and good luck to the townsfolk). Feels warm and comforting to the touch, gives goosebumps.
- ***Moonblossom***, the fairy who lives in the tree is missing! She never leaves the tree at night time. She must have been ***kidnapped!***
- People are shocked that goblins would wander so far away from ***the Elderwild*** and into the valley.
- The party is asked to hunt down the rest of the goblins and ***rescue Moonblossom***. They are well-provisioned before leaving and promised 20 gp each upon her safe return.

Journey to the Elderwild

An ancient forest 2 days journey north of Merivale (DC 12 Lore: Grown from the corpse of a titan, trees impossibly large.) Encounters along the way:

Old Caravan. An abandoned and ransacked supply wagon. DC 10 Examination check: a fight took place here recently. Blood and goblin tracks all around (12+ find 1d10 gp).

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

Navigating. With the landscape's hills and ridges, the route isn't an obvious one. DC 10 Naturecraft check, let's see if you get lost:

- **Success:** you're able to successfully navigate to the Elderwild woods without getting lost.
- **Failure:** Does the sun set in the east, or west? I'm pretty sure we've walked this way before… You get lost, whoever is navigating takes **1d4** psychic damage from embarrassment. But eventually you arrive.

The Elderwild

Massive, unnaturally large trees. Misty canopy, dense undergrowth. Teeming with life, rabbits, squirrels, dragonflies, etc. Immediately spot a crude, broken trap (Set by goblins?).

A couple hours into the woods, you hear a pack of goblins **(1 Goblin Flunkie/hero)** laughing and throwing rocks at another goblin on the back of a giant rat **(1 Goblin Ratrider)**.

Goblins

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

Goblin Flunkie ♥ *15*

Stab. 1d6+2 (or Shoot 60 ft. range) can't crit.

Goblin Ratrider ♥ *30* ▶ *50 ft.*

CHAAARGE! *If you move at least 20 ft. attack with advantage once.*

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

> ***"I make friends with the goblins!"*** *It's true that not all goblins are evil. THESE goblins, however, are super evil. Yes, they will make a deal with your party; and yes, they will backstab you at their earliest opportunity. For now, we want new players to feel like unmitigated heroes who are doing good. The moral quandaries can come later!*

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

Loot. A note: "Tell Pinky he better not come back without my ingredients! WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT, KROGG!" – Greenthumb. On the back side of the note is a **map** with odd symbols, (will need to ask someone in town about it). *muffled* "Pardon me? A little help would be lovely…"

It's Moonblossom! She is a tiny fairy with a miniscule voice. Badly wants to go back home. She offers to heal 1 person's HP or Wounds with a little kiss on the cheek or a high-five, your choice. The party is likely relatively low on resources, they can spend their hit die to short rest and recoup some HP.

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

What Moonblossom knows:

- Faeries are magical beings, often kidnapped and used for their magical properties.
- The Goblins were hired by someone *really bad*. But it sounded like they were arguing which guy to bring me to. Apparently there are two bosses?

You can throw in another combat encounter on the way back to town if you think they'd enjoy that: "hey give that back, we stole her fair and square!" or quickly narrate their uneventful travel back to town where they are hailed as heroes and graciously rewarded for their bravery. They will level up the next time they Long Rest in town. Congrats on reaching level 2! See "Leveling Up" on pg 36 of the Core Rules book.

Goblins of the Crystal Crag

(Level 2 Adventure for 2–8+ heroes)

What's Going On?

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

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

Back in Town

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

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

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

Travel to the Goblin Cave

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

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

Goblin Cave Entrance

- Deep in the woods, a large hole in the side of a rock face.
- 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).

Rootbreaker Pit

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

Do the Voice! *You don't have to be good at it, the worse you are at it the more fun it can be! Your players will be more likely to loosen up and play along the more they see you getting into it. Okay you don't HAVE to, but it can be fun, try it out.*

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

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

What the Rootbreakers know:

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

Atrium

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

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

Collapsed Tunnel

A passageway blocked by rubble.

- Another Rootbreaker (not moving but alive) is visible under the collapsed rubble along with a shiny object (d4 amber crystals (5gp each). Will take 30 min to clear rubble.
- The Rootbreaker attacks the closest creature if the rubble is cleared (treat it as a d12 minion).

Spider Hallway

Passageway obstructed by dense layer of webs.

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

Giant Spider LVL 2 *M* *27*

- **Shoot Web.** (Range 30 ft.) 1d8+2 On Hit: Restrained (Escape DC 12, or slashing/fire damage). OR:
- **Bite.** (slowed targets only) 2d8+4 damage and Poisoned (magical healing ends).

Drill Room

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

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

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

Goblin's Den

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

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

Kitchen

Large cauldron full of slop bubbles over a fire.

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

What Sprig knows:

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

Krogg's Quarters

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

- "IT'S ABOUT TIME, I'M STARVING. GO TAKE THIS LETTER TO YOU BROTHER THE BETRAYER–"
- Krogg is happy to reveal any information he knows about "GREETOM" before attacking.
- Wooden desk. Notes in sloppy handwriting outline a deal with "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.

70 *M* *STR+, DEX+*

Level 2 Solo Angry Bugbear

Krogg, Goblin King

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, move up to 30 ft. then choose one:

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

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, his armor increases to HEAVY.

- **Krogg, Goblin King**. Bugbear, strong, crafty (smarter than average goblins). Wears a crown of metal scraps. Wields a Manglemaul, a warhammer with a bear trap on the end.

Treasure:

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

Manglemaul

(Rare, Requires Attunement)

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

What's Next?

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

The Garden of Death

(Level 3 adventure for 2—8+ heroes)

"Rest well, friends. I'm afraid we'll need to lean on you once again for aid."

A terrible scene, awaits your tired eyes as you arrive back at Merrivale. It has once again been attacked and ransacked, not by goblins this time, but nature itself seems to have risen up and taken a swipe at the village. A dead Rootbreaker and half a dozen other smaller plant creatures lie heaped in a pile in the town square. Farmers and peasants stacking the wooden and viny corpses to be burned.

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

What the Villiagers Know:

They were attacked last night at dusk, fighting went on for hours, we fought bravely, there's only so much farmers and merchants can do. Most of them left willingly after picking up and taking anything that wasn't nailed down. Barrels, tables, a door, livestock, you name it.

"Master Needs Beloved Things" They all kept mindlessly bellowing. Withiout seeming to know what they were saying.

Ruby and Pearl were taken—well Ruby was at least, Pearl went chasing after her sister and those monsters. So she got herself taken too.

The only book in town that speaks of the Deathbriar is an old dusty tome in Mayor Till's personal library:

The Deathbriar began as a benign magical flower cultivated by ancient druids who sought to harness its rapidly spreading its roots to enrich blighted soils. But some soil will not so easily be cleansed of its blight. It was corrupted and began to cultivate a hunger for power. Nobody but the most prideful and hubristic botanical wizards would even think to plant a Deathbriar seed.

Marla Homebrew is grateful to have her locket back. Though she isn't too worried about her children, "Foolish as they are they can look after themselves." But these incustions and attacks against the town must be stopped.

offer suggestions to go meet with Mayor Tills, "There's not nothing he doesn't know about plants."

Travel to Greenthumb's Base

The numerous, plodding tracks the Rootbreakers left make navigating to the ruins where Greenthumb has been holed up quite easy. A half day's journey form the Goblin's former base, you find

(1 per 2 heroes) **Rootbreakers** standing watch outside the entrance to what looks like an ancient tomb.

Mural Chamber

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

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

Blade Trap Hall

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

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

Hall of Tombs

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

- DC 12 Examination or Lore check, this is a dwarf Skeleton. 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 imporant to foreshadow the connection between the vines and the cracked walls, this will become important later when the place begins to fall apart!*

Four stone coffins rest in alcoves along the walls of the room:

- **Empty Tomb:** Large stone coffin lid pushed to the side.
- **Overgrown Tomb:** wrapped in vines. DC 14 Might check (advantage if a slashing weapon is used) to remove the vines to open the coffin. Inside: A small treasure.
- **Stone Carved Tomb:** Image of a warrior carved on the stone lid. DC 12 Perception check to hear SCRATCHING sounds from within a coffin. Inside: A hostile skeleton (use the **Ghoul** statblock) covered in RED VINES, 20 gp.
- **Undisturbed Tomb:** Decorated in a Unicorn crest. Carved stone hands hold an empty bowl on the immovable lid. Secret: filling the bowl with anything valuable causes the lid to open, revealing

secret stairs to Leads to a secret areas/shortcut.

On Puzzles. *The above solution is only one possible answer to the puzzle. If the players are taking the world seriously or coming up with ideas that make sense or, LET THEIR IDEAS WORK! Reward their creativity, even if it isn't exactly the right answer.*

Venus Fly Trap Room

Large dome shaped chamber. Dozens of tombstones jut out from the dense foliage on the floor.

- Massive venus flytrap in the center of the room. When players enter the room it begins swaying its head and leaves around blindly looking for potential prey.
- Stuck in its teeth: An **iron key** hanging from a chain (unlocks door to Storeroom).
- About 1 dozen smaller venus flytraps grow throughout the room. A few are closed around what you can assume to be unlucky (or foolish) goblins. One is closed around a **treasure**.

Acid Flooded Statue Room

Circular Room. A large statue on an ornate 20 ft. tall pedastal of a long-dead human king at the center.

- Enormous pitcher plants grow from vines that wrap around the statue. Acid trickles from their mouths flooding the room (2 ft. deep). Touching the acid does 1d4 damage/round.
- Naturecraft check: Plant matter floats freely on the surface and is unaffected by the acid.
- Crown on the statue is made of GOLD and can be removed (Priceless. Looks important). Climbing the statue is possible, but dangerous. Your choice of reasonable skill checks and consequences!
- 8 Pillars evenly spaced around the perimeter of the room have faces of unknown DWARVES carved into them.
- Attempting to traverse the acid awakens **X Briarbane Seedlings** (1/hero) who shoot coconut sized seeds at the heroes. Attempting to knock them into the acid pool. 1d4 acid damage/round.

Ceremony Room

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

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

Parley With Pinkie:

- Pinky is Greenthumb's assistant. A pink goblin, frail and overwhelmingly anxious (literally *vibrating*).
- He left his goblin den to learn magic from Greenthumb, but is now afraid Greenthumb will use him as a sacrifice to become a lich.
- Pinkie wants Greenthumb's praise and approval (which he will never get), to become a real wizard, and information about his brother Sprig.
- Knows enough botanical magic to control the monsters with him in the room and he will defend himself if attacked, but doesn't particularly want to come to blows.
- He has a Cloak of Lesser Windform. He will use it to flee combat if things get too scary, or will offer it to them in exchange for his own life or information about his brother.

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

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

Storeroom

Cold damp cave. Stalactites dripping water from ceiling.

Vases and clay jars on shelves.

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

Wizard's Quarters

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

- Disheveled desk. Covered in ink stains and crumpled up parchment.
- Notebook lies on top of the mess open to a page detailing the care of a "Deathbriar" plant.
- Journal entry catalogues Greenthumb's attempts to halt its rapid, uncontrollable growth. And his fears/thnking on becoming a lich.

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

Deathbriar Room

Large cave. Sunlight streams through cracks in the ceiling.

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

Aftermath

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

Skill Challenge: Escape the Ruins!

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

- **The Deathbriar Room.** Debris and giant rocks begins falling from the crumbling ceiling. Everyone will need to tell you what they're doing to avoid rocks (e.g., Finesse check, Holding a shield over their head, using an ability to run extra fast, etc.).
- **The Ceremony Room.** If they both haven't been rescued yet you'll need to save them! If you left Pinkie in the Ceremony Room, Ruby has made friends with the Rootbreakers, and is sitting on one of their shoulders. A gaping crack has opened up in the floor and the Rootbreaker gently tosses her across as she squeals in delight. Landing safely on the other side. Pinkie is fumbling with his keys and she snatches them from him and unlocks the door for her sister Pearl: "took you long enough!" And they scamper off to safety together "Come on guys!" The party will need to figure out how to get across.

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

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

- **Acid Flooded Statue Room.** Cracks begin appearing in the floor, draining most of the acid. (If the Heroes have already dealt with the Briarbane seedlings they all gain advantage on their checks in this room. If not, they are pelting the heroes with seeds, making navigating this room more challenging.) Dust and debris makes seeing in this room very difficult, what do you do to navigate?
- **Venus Fly Trap Room.** With all of the shaking in the ruins, it is easy to get disoriented and lost in this large room, what do you do to ensure you don't get turned around? (If the heroes discovered the secret passage way, they can use that and skip this room entirely).
- **Hall of Tombs.** The collapse of these ruins seems to be accelerating, it is going to come down on your heads any moment, the exit is nearly within sight. But rubble blocks the door out of this room! what do you do?
- **Blade Trap Hall.** The blades are swinging wildly, to and fro. How do you get past without being sliced to ribbons? YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!
- **The Mural Chamber.** You can see the sunlight! Not too far now! Everyone make a DEX save. Whoever gets the lowest trips and falls just as a huge piece of rubble breaks free from the ceiling directly overhead. They are going to take 1d4 Wounds from this, unless the rest of you help. What do you do?

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

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

What's Next?

From here you and your heroes should have a good feel for how to play, so the adventure opens up to be more of a sandbox. After one more good sized quest they can level up to 4. And from there gaining a level every 2-3 sessions.

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

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

- **Balance roleplaying, combat, and exploration:** Keep things varied. Some players will get listless if there is too much yapping and not enough smacking! Even in combat-heavy sessions, let

players use their social or exploration skills. Others really like using their creativity to overcome exploration challenges. Some of the most fun sessions are when little to no combat happens!

- **Team dynamics & collaboration.** Nimble classes play the best when working together, set up situations where players need to cooperate and use their unique abilities together.
- **Think about the heroes.** Do they have any personal quests? Backstory questions they want resolved? Favorite NPCs? Make sure you keep that in mind as you prep, so you can include moments for those elements.

Leveling up advice

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

Level 3 Solo Botanical Wizard

Greenthumb, Lichling

HP: 100
Armor: None
Saves: WILL+

ACTIONS: After each hero's turn, move up to 30 ft. and then choose one:

- **Summon Briarbane Minion.** Summon a **1d4** minion/hero anywhere in the room.
- **Root.** Force half of the heroes to make a DC 11 DEX save or take **2d4** piercing damage and be Restrained by thorny vines (escape: DC 11 STR or DEX save, or any slashing or fire damage).
- **Thorn Shot.** (Range 60 ft.) Blast a volley of thorns for **5d4+5** piercing damage.

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

MERIVALE

A humble town nestled in a peaceful valley, where rolling hills and fertile fields stretch as far as the eye can see. The town thrives on simple, agrarian life, with quaint cottages and a gentle river winds through the heart of Merivale. Despite its modest size, the town is known for its strong sense of community and the warmth of its inhabitants, who welcome travelers with open arms. For most, Merivale serves as a temporary resting spot before their ultimate destination of Farhope.

Points of Interest

- Third Outpost - A small camp created to house hunters and herb collectors.
- Fairy Groves - Small ponds where animals gather for fresh water and fruits.

Shifters Den - Lair of shapeshifters and their beast companions.

Hidden Cairn - Marking convergence points where magical energies flows.

Burial Mounds - Resting place of ancient heroes and legends.

Skull Mound - Lair of the Forest Guardian.

Legendary Monsters of the Elderwild

Florindris

Optional NPCs

Your players may be perfectly happy talking to anyone in general and not ask for names or details, that's fine! But if they ask for more information about who they're speaking to, or who might be the best person to speak to about something here are a few options:

"Mayor" Tills. Not really an official mayor, but the people still call him that. He is the oldest and most well-liked farmer in town. Whenever a question about things that have happened in the past arises, Mayor Tills is the fellow to ask.

Captain Shortbow. Captain of the town watch. Definitely NOT scared of goblins. Nope, not at all. Will hold down the fort while the party goes adventuring and keep an eye out for them. Knows everyone in town.

Marla Homebrew. Innkeeper at the Valley's Rest. Will happily allow the party to rest at her comfortable inn in exchange for their aid. Know all about rumors and what kind of people are coming and going.

Deep ~~within the heart~~ of the Elderwild lies a sacred grove, home to the hidden tomb of an Elven prince. Forcenturies, this resting place has piqued the interest of historians and treasure hunters. Its location remained a closely guarded secret - until now. The ancient illusions that once concealed it have begun to mysteriously fade.

Adventure

A wizard is hiring explorers to seek out a dusty tome he claims was stolen from his library.

This tome is rumored to be buried with the prince, its pages grant extraordinary power to whoever reads it.

Rival bands of shady merchants, bandits and hunters are also looking to claim whatever prize awaits them in the trees.

The Sacred grove

Rays of sunlight filter through the dense canopy, providing beams of dappled light on the forest floor. The grove has been shrouded in unnatural fog for years. The druidic circles warding the nearby trees have dissipated.

1.An encampment lies in ruin - torn tents, overturned crates and bodies scattered across the ground. The air is thick with the scent of rot. Whoever or whatever did this is still out there.

2.Upon setting foot on sacred ground, a whirlwind of leaves envelops you. A disembodied voice echoes through the trees like a whisper "Turn back". Not heeding this warning provokes a Druid sentry to appear and summon 2d6 undying servants

3.A small pond with a short waterfall cascades down a moss-covered hill

4.Cluster of purple berry bushes grow near the entrance. A few of them is enough to keep a belly full for a day

5.At the center of a large clearing, sits a massive tree unlike any other. The tree has been carved and hollowed out to form the final resting place of a prince whose name has been lost to time.

Deep within the Elderwild lies an Elven tomb, hidden for centuires by illusory magic– that has begun to fade.

Adventure

A wizard want to hire you to seek out an artifact buiried there for him.

Word has gotten out that the tomb has been located. Bandits and mercenaries are looking to claim it first.

The Sacred grove

Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of the grove.

1. Encampment. An nearby encampment lies in disarray. Tents shredded, crates smashed, bodies scattered. (Percetion check smells of rot)

2. Sacred Grove. A whirlwind of leaves envelops you. "Turn back!" (Insight check: bit of info about the voice).

If they ignore: a Druid sentry to appear and summon 2d6 undying servants.

3. Waterfall. A small waterfall cascades down a moss-covered hill into a pond. ???

4. Berry Loot. Cluster of purple berry bushes grow near the entrance. A few of them is enough to keep a belly full for a day

5. At the center of a large clearing, sits a massive tree. The tree has been carved and hollowed out to form the final resting place of a prince whose name has been lost to time.

INCOMPLETE

VALLEY OF HOPE

A frozen kingdom where the air is crisp and the snow perpetually blankets the landscape. The surface is inhabited by hulking trolls, but the true rulers lies in ancient fortresses carved into the mountain's depths. Ever the masters of metal and stone, the Dwarves, and their human queen, offer valuable goods for trading partners and invaluable services for loyal friends.. Points of Interest:

Points of Interest

- Dwarven Hold - Great bastion of the last tribe of dwarves in the region.
- Troll Caves - Hidden by the never ending blizzard, full of animal corpses.
- Fallen Fortress - An ancient dwarven stronghold taken by goblins and orcs.
- Sealed Mines - The gold veins are still plenty, but now belong to a dragon.
- Lost Forge - The secret recipe to create magical weapons lies here somewhere.
- The Abyss - Entrance to the mythical underworld of primordial flames.

Legendary Monsters of the Elderwild

Florindris

Optional NPCs

Your players may be perfectly happy talking to anyone in general and not ask for names or details, that's fine! But if they ask for more information about who they're speaking to, or who might be the best person to speak to about something here are a few options:

"Mayor" Tills. Not really an official mayor, but the people still call him that. He is the oldest and most well-liked farmer in town. Whenever a question about things that have happened in the past arises, Mayor Tills is the fellow to ask.

Captain Shortbow. Captain of the town watch. Definitely NOT scared of goblins. Nope, not at all. Will hold down the fort while the party goes adventuring and keep an eye out for them. Knows everyone in town.

Marla Homebrew. Innkeeper at the Valley's Rest. Will happily allow the party to rest at her comfortable inn in exchange for their aid. Know all about rumors and what kind of people are coming and going.

FARHOPE

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, Merivale thrives as a beacon of opportunity for merchants, scholars and adventurers from all corners of the world, filling the docks with all sorts of exotic goods and brave explorers ready for perilous expeditions into the vast unknown.
Countless factions fight constantly for control over the city's resources, but only three hold real power:

Perhaps a Flag or Heraldry for each of the 3 factions:

1. The Golden Company. A military group that controls much of the city's commerce and has significant influence over its governance. A symbol of power and strength, their grand citadel Bladehall stands at the heart of the city, where they offer protection and lucrative trade deals.

2. The Explorer's Guild. The beating heart of Merivale's adventuring spirit, driving expeditions into the wilderness in search of ancient ruins, lost civilizations, and untold riches. The guildhall is a place where adventurers of all stripes gather to share tales of their exploits, seek traveling companions and acquire contracts that promise both danger and riches.

3. The Tower. A doorless and windowless ivory edifice perched atop a cliff overlooking the city, the Tower is both a place of magical learning and a bastion of innovation. Dedicated to the study of mysterious forces, the Mages here are obsessed with taming the unknown and finding new applications for their magic.

THE WITHERING DUNES

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

Points of Interest

- Mage's Camp - Gathering point of hired escorts for scholars.
- Buried Ruins - A ancient city complex full of secrets and deadly traps.
- Lost Library - A stronghold of knowledge protected by unliving guardians.
- Glowing Lake - An underground oasis of refreshing water, mostly safe.
- Scorpion Cave - Where the scorpion queen resides and births her subjects.
- Golden Pyramid - Always over the horizon, never within reach.

Legendary Monsters of the Withering Dunes

Nalzar, Apex Predator

Optional NPCs

Your players may be perfectly happy talking to anyone in general and not ask for names or details, that's fine! But if they ask for more information about who they're speaking to, or who might be the best person to speak to about something here are a few options:

"Mayor" Tills. Not really an official mayor, but the people still call him that. He is the oldest and most well-liked farmer in town. Whenever a question about things that have happened in the past arises, Mayor Tills is the fellow to ask.

Captain Shortbow. Captain of the town watch. Definitely NOT scared of goblins. Nope, not at all. Will hold down the fort while the party goes adventuring and keep an eye out for them. Knows everyone in town.

Marla Homebrew. Innkeeper at the Valley's Rest. Will happily allow the party to rest at her comfortable inn in exchange for their aid. Know all about rumors and what kind of people are coming and going.

THE ELDERWILD

Grown from the corpse of an ancient titan, where towering trees and exotic flora grow with a magical vitality. Inhabited by primordial creatures and protected by a secretive order of druids, the Weald is considered a sacred domain and those who enter must do so with reverence. Visitors can hunt small animals and gather medicinal herbs, but cutting down trees or disturbing the ancient burial mounds will unleash the raging justice of its inhabitants. Ambitious entrepreneurs have tried to conquer the region for decades without success, as the strength of its wardens never dwindles. Despite the dangers lurking behind the trees, this place is mostly safe for novice explorers as long as they behave according to its rules: never wound the sacred trees and never disturb the eternal rest of the dead.

Points of Interest

- **Third Outpost.** A small camp created to house hunters and herb collectors.
- **Fairy Groves.** Small ponds where animals gather for fresh water and fruits.
- **Shifters Den.** Lair of shapeshifters and their beast companions.
- **Hidden Cairn.** Marking convergence points where magical energies flows.
- **Burial Mounds.** Resting place of ancient heroes and legends.
- **Skull Mound.** Lair of the Forest Guardian.

Legendary Monsters of the Elderwild

Florindris, Titan of the Deep Woods, Home of the elven kingdom, faries, & golins.

Adventure Hooks

- The explorer's guild is sending novice members to gather some magic medicinal herbs near the third outpost.
- A veteran explorer and its group of novices disappeared without trace, those who locate them will be rewarded accordingly.
- The golden company is hiring emissaries to discuss a profitable arrangement with the savages who live in the Weald.
- The Tower is paying a high amount of gold for a bottle of living fairies.
- A mysterious wizard is hiring explorers for a forbidden task: disturbing the burial mound of a nameless prince.
- According to legends, the weapon that killed the weald titan is still stuck in its heart, but was never located.

What's Happening / Secret Plots

Ignacius Kain, a high-ranking member of the golden company, has a hidden camp of red sap extraction in partnership with Jurtan, a thelemite sage who occulted the place with a powerful magic spell. The Wolfman feels the cry of the forest, but they don't know where the scar is. Jurtan also is planning to imprison the guardian of the Weald, so Merivale will be free to explore the riches of the forest without restrictions.

Elderwild Treasures

Glowing Grass. A magic-infused plant who grows in mysterious spots, used by alchemists to produce healing potions.

Red Sap. Crystalized fluids of the wealds trees. Consuming the sap makes one stronger and sharper, but also addicted.

Yellow Mushroom. A powerful hallucinogen that facilitates spellcasting and dreamwalking.

Fairy Pod. The empty shell of a fairy, containing a small fraction of its magic before changing skin. Easier to find than a living fairy.

Rainbow Frog. A rare colorful frog that produces a deadly toxin. Highly valuable to collectors of exotic animals.

Purple Berries. simillar to blueberries, but sweeter. A few of them is enough to keep a belly full for an day.

Mound Treasures

Barrow Blade. Sword of ancient warriors infused with an eternal blessing. Rusty and dull, this blade cuts nothing but souls now.

Green Helm. An angry visage covered in leafs, this helm protects against illusions and mind-controlling spells.

Brass Shield. A light shield engraved with a coiling snake surrounded by runes. This shield repels magic missiles.

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

Golden Urn. An ornate urn containing the ashes of an ancient warrior. Can be used to summon their souls to battle.

Eldritch Idol. A wooden visage of an outerworld creature. May be used to attune and communicate with old gods long forgotten.

ENCOUNTERS

Wild Boar. Often alone, sometimes in packs, this ferocious creature has enough meat to sustain a small group for a day.

Black Deer. Sharp and always alert, this gracious animal will run as soon as they hear any strange sound in the woods.

Windhopper Small winged rabbits, fast and delicious. Difficult to capture, their flavourful meat is highly prized in Merivale.

Savages (Weald Folk). Primeval humans wearing blood marks and animal skins. The weald folk are not hostile unless they witness transgressions against their sacred land.

Wolfman. The feral form of the weald folk. The wolf is always ready to strike at any sign of hostility and will fight to the death.

Druid. Spiritual leaders of the weald folk, the druids can turn themselves into any animal they need to protect their tribes. They also have healing powers and cast illusory spells.

Guild's Party. A group of adventurer's taking a small rest. Make a reaction roll to see if they are friendly or suspicious.

Barrow Wardens. A group of armed skeletons patrolling nearby their barrows. They are either looking for intruders or a barrow thief.

Lone Fairy. Singing a drowsy lullaby that induces any listener into deep slumber. The fairy is changing skin, the only moment they are vulnerable to be captured.

Weald's Guardian. A large winged elk with a bearded human face and a snake tail. The guardian protects the Weald and is the main source of power for the magic of the druids. The guardian speaks with the voice of both a young woman and an old man, in an arcane tongue only known to druids and ancient scholars. They have control over the elements of the weather and their blood has regenerative properties.

LOCATIONS

First Outpost. Located at the Titan's Head, the entrance to the weald. Has everything needed to supply expeditions of a few small groups.

Ancient Cairns. Scattered through the titan's body, marking the invisible trails where the magic flows. Can be used to restore mana and refill magic items.

Burial Mounds. The eternal resting place of the first man. The entrance is filled with pit traps, and the treasure room is guarded by 2D6 undying servants.

Second Outpost. Currently destroyed and housing a few workers, who keep getting attacked by the forest wardens.

Wolfman Village. Home of the forest wardens. A group of explorers is currently held prisoner for trying to extract red sap from the trees.

Fairy Groves. Small ponds where animals gather for fresh water and food. 2/6 chance of a druid is found here alone praying to the old gods.

Third Outpost. A small camp installed within the ruins of an ancient castle, with plenty of space to accommodate many expedition groups.

Glowing Gardens. natural farms of magic grass with healing properties, which only grows in specific spots. Each garden takes a full month to regrow after being fully harvested.

Weeping Cave. Hidden throne of the fairy queen, forever in slumber. The queen births a new faerie every day, and then goes back to sleep.

Core Cairn. A sacred site where the druids gather to perform ancient rituals and share knowledge.

Lumber Camp. A secret place created to harvest red sap. This place is concealed by powerful magic, and anyone who finds it will get in trouble with the golden company.

Broken Heart. A deep tunnel leading to the heart of the Weald, where the Godslayer Spear is stuck. Lair of the Weald's Guardian.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Proin ullamcorper, diam id rutrum varius, velit odio dapibus sem, quis vulputate nunc sapien pretium augue. Aenean imperdiet, neque a pulvinar consectetur, purus purus pharetra nisl, molestie ultricies eros ex ut sapien. Morbi at consequat mi, quis imperdiet orci. Vestibulum ultrices lorem nec nibh consequat, vitae pellentesque lectus placerat. Etiam fringilla eros non eros luctus, quis accumsan risus pulvinar. Sed dignissim vel magna luctus venenatis. Vestibulum feugiat at turpis eu placerat. Integer augue felis, semper quis consequat sit amet, lacinia in enim. Pellentesque id libero tortor. Ut eu tellus mi. Integer magna nibh, consectetur ac magna in, luctus vehicula sem.

Curabitur et vulputate dolor. Suspendisse cursus, enim eget tristique tempus, arcu risus commodo nulla, vitae pretium ex nisl ut turpis. In non risus laoreet, dignissim ligula id, sollicitudin felis. In in orci sit amet elit consectetur pulvinar. In in malesuada nibh. Nullam rutrum, arcu sit amet pretium sodales, odio nisi sodales purus, vitae tristique nulla ligula sed nisi. Donec vel consectetur ligula, non scelerisque dolor. Nam sed mattis turpis. Duis lectus orci, consectetur id odio eget, congue imperdiet purus. Aliquam ac sollicitudin quam. In luctus suscipit nunc euismod lacinia.

Aenean vel fringilla neque. Nullam feugiat ultrices nibh, eget tempor dui suscipit ac. Proin lobortis ultricies tellus, at consectetur augue sagittis vel. Pellentesque suscipit vel magna sed vehicula. Suspendisse tempor, elit ac convallis sagittis, elit elit hendrerit lectus, ut finibus turpis arcu sed arcu. Aliquam et finibus risus. Aliquam vel massa at ante viverra venenatis. Maecenas ultrices magna eu felis mollis suscipit. Quisque non blandit orci. Nunc iaculis nunc eu euismod gravida. Quisque eget dictum justo. Nulla quam lacus, volutpat a odio et, fermentum eleifend risus. Nullam eu massa placerat, auctor eros eu, tincidunt velit.

Phasellus interdum arcu quis tortor lobortis, id semper lorem pretium. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aenean viverra urna eu urna placerat, et aliquam ipsum egestas. In maximus massa viverra nulla imperdiet posuere. Proin condimentum leo ac diam congue, ac cursus mauris commodo. Proin volutpat magna dignissim, dapibus quam nec, pretium lectus. Sed congue, lectus quis dictum blandit, dolor ipsum tempus turpis, sed sollicitudin velit justo in lorem. Pellentesque quis dui est. Pellentesque et consequat justo. Cras a velit eget nibh mattis efficitur eu non lacus. Praesent at augue luctus, luctus orci non, tempus mauris. Donec condimentum nulla eget dapibus accumsan. Duis rutrum lobortis erat, non tincidunt magna porta vel. Maecenas imperdiet quam leo, in accumsan elit pharetra et.

Aliquam aliquet dapibus volutpat. Nullam blandit erat massa, vitae cursus lorem consectetur lobortis. Nunc malesuada dolor id suscipit porta. Nulla malesuada ultrices est vitae posuere. Pellentesque id leo vel mauris aliquam efficitur vel et lacus. Ut eget venenatis orci. Maecenas rhoncus lorem rhoncus purus tristique malesuada. Donec pharetra pharetra malesuada.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Proin ullamcorper, diam id rutrum varius, velit odio dapibus sem, quis vulputate nunc sapien pretium augue. Aenean imperdiet, neque a pulvinar consectetur, purus purus pharetra nisl, molestie ultricies eros ex ut sapien. Morbi at consequat mi, quis imperdiet orci. Vestibulum ultrices lorem nec nibh consequat, vitae pellentesque lectus placerat. Etiam fringilla eros non eros luctus, quis accumsan risus pulvinar. Sed dignissim vel magna luctus venenatis. Vestibulum feugiat at turpis eu placerat. Integer augue felis, semper quis consequat sit amet, lacinia in enim. Pellentesque id libero tortor. Ut eu tellus mi. Integer magna nibh, consectetur ac magna in, luctus vehicula sem.

Curabitur et vulputate dolor. Suspendisse cursus, enim eget tristique tempus, arcu risus commodo nulla, vitae pretium ex nisl ut turpis. In non risus laoreet, dignissim ligula id, sollicitudin felis. In in orci sit amet elit consectetur pulvinar. In in malesuada nibh. Nullam rutrum, arcu sit amet pretium sodales, odio nisi sodales purus, vitae tristique nulla ligula sed nisi. Donec vel consectetur ligula, non scelerisque dolor. Nam sed mattis turpis. Duis lectus orci, consectetur id odio eget, congue imperdiet purus. Aliquam ac sollicitudin quam. In luctus suscipit nunc euismod lacinia.

Aenean vel fringilla neque. Nullam feugiat ultrices nibh, eget tempor dui suscipit ac. Proin lobortis ultricies tellus, at consectetur augue sagittis vel. Pellentesque suscipit vel magna sed vehicula. Suspendisse tempor, elit ac convallis sagittis, elit elit hendrerit lectus, ut finibus turpis arcu sed arcu. Aliquam et finibus risus. Aliquam vel massa at ante viverra venenatis. Maecenas ultrices magna eu felis mollis suscipit. Quisque non blandit orci. Nunc iaculis nunc eu euismod gravida. Quisque eget dictum justo. Nulla quam lacus, volutpat a odio et, fermentum eleifend risus. Nullam eu massa placerat, auctor eros eu, tincidunt velit.

Phasellus interdum arcu quis tortor lobortis, id semper lorem pretium. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Aenean viverra urna eu urna placerat, et aliquam ipsum egestas. In maximus massa viverra nulla imperdiet posuere. Proin condimentum leo ac diam congue, ac cursus mauris commodo. Proin volutpat magna dignissim, dapibus quam nec, pretium lectus. Sed congue, lectus quis dictum blandit, dolor ipsum tempus turpis, sed sollicitudin velit justo in lorem. Pellentesque quis dui est. Pellentesque et consequat justo. Cras a velit eget nibh mattis efficitur eu non lacus. Praesent at augue luctus, luctus orci non, tempus mauris. Donec condimentum nulla eget dapibus accumsan. Duis rutrum lobortis erat, non tincidunt magna porta vel. Maecenas imperdiet quam leo, in accumsan elit pharetra et.

SHADOW BLIGHT

A nightmarish wasteland scarred by twisted trees and deep canyons filled with poisonous gas that seeps from the earth. Home to demons and eldritch beings, this cursed land is connected to many twisted dimensions beyond human comprehension, and thus only expeditions containing both a high-level cleric and wizard are authorized, but a few of scoundrels still dare to cross it's borders in the hopes of gaining power and patronage from profane entities.

Points of Interest

- Ancient Temple - Headquarters of high level keepers and expeditioners.
- Choking Pass - Natural trenches that spread all over the region.
- Nightmare Vortex - Extradimensional fissures that must be closed.
- Demonic Ruins - A hellbent necropolis dominated by hordes of chimeras.
- Erebus Vaults - Poisonous caves filled with all sorts of valuable jewels.
- Eldritch Gaol - Timeless prisons of dangerously powerful entities.

SKYREACH ISLES

A breathtaking landscape of islands suspended in the sky, connected by a maze of rope bridges, elevators and zip lines. This floating archipelago is home to the birdfolk, known for their creative minds and light hearts. Despite their peaceful nature, they found themselves in constant conflict with sky pirates and smugglers who keep crawling into the island's core to extract the floating crystals, an activity that puts the lives of all islanders in danger. Points of Interest

Points of Interest

- Birdfolk Village - Receptive to foreigners, but not for long.
- Air Temple - Home of the flying monks, protectors of the islands.
- Floating Maze - Inner tunnels carved to confuse crystal smugglers.
- Crystal Veins - Located at the core of the islands, protected by the keepers.
- Pirate's Hideout - A floating skyship, always hiding and moving around.
- Royal Nest - Lair of griffins and giant hawks, rulers of the sky.

Legendary Monsters of the Skyreach Isles

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.

Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.

Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

GROWLING MARSHES

A treacherous expanse of murky waters and tangled vegetation, where the air is thick with mist and the sounds of unseen creatures. Named for the eerie, rumbling noises that echo through the fog, the marshes are the domain of witches and crabmen, who navigate the swamp's twisted channels and hidden groves with ease. Adventurers brave enough to enter are drawn by the promise of rare magical creatures, whose organs are highly valuable to alchemists.

Points of Interest

- Sparkling Grove - Hidden areas full of hallucinogenic mushrooms.
- Monster Hives - Nest of all sorts of hideous supernatural abominations.
- Sunken Village - Ruins of abandoned towns, now full of corpses.
- Hungry Gardens - A bosk of magical plants guarded by maneating trees.
- Witch's Hamlet - A humble throne for those who rule over the marshes.
- Rotten Lake - Lair of an eldritch creature resting in deep slumber.

A frozen kingdom where the air is crisp and the snow perpetually blankets the landscape. The surface is inhabited by hulking trolls, but the true rulers lies in ancient fortresses carved into the mountain's depths. Ever the masters of metal and stone, the Dwarves–and their *human* queen–offer valuable goods for trading partners and invaluable services for loyal friends.

Points of Interest

- Dwarven Hold - Great bastion of the last tribe of dwarves in the region.
- Troll Caves - Hidden by the never ending blizzard, full of animal corpses.
- Fallen Fortress - An ancient dwarven stronghold taken by goblins and orcs.
- Sealed Mines - The gold veins are still plenty, but now belong to a dragon.
- Lost Forge - The secret recipe to create magical weapons lies here somewhere.
- The Abyss - Entrance to the mythical underworld of primordial flames.

Legendary Monsters of the Iceforge Mountains

Florindris

Adventure Hooks

The Golden Company is hiring arms to protect the caravans to Stonefist Hold and offering a good prize for Troll heads.

The Dwarven King is hiring competent warriors and assassins to expel the orcs from the fallen fortress to facilitate the access to caravans.

The Thelemite Institute is secretly hiring scoundrels for a specific task: to discover a way to pass through the foolish maze.

Rumors that a powerful dragon is trapped inside the old mines, but the king forbids anyone from entering it.

A Merivale's tavernier is looking for poachers to capture a couple of iron goats from the mourning summit for his farm.

A mysterious wizard is hiring escorts to the lower depths of the abyss, the objective is secret.

What's Happening / Secret Plots

The golden company has a good relationship with the dwarves and trades with them regularly, but their prices are raising more and more since the dragon took their old mines. The thelemite institute took the opportunity to secretly sabotage even further their political rivals by hiring Orcish leaders to take the fallen fortress and summoning trolls to assault the caravans. The thelemites are also interested in stealing the dwarven secret rites to craft powerful artifacts.

ENCOUNTERS

Cave Muskrat - A plump rodent that burrows through the underground soil, considered a delicacy when roasted.

Iron Goat - Sturdy creatures with a hide tough enough to be used as armor, herded by dwarves

GROWLING MARSHES

A treacherous expanse of murky waters and tangled vegetation, where the air is thick with mist and the sounds of unseen creatures. Named for the eerie, rumbling noises that echo through the fog, the marshes are the domain of witches and crabmen, who navigate the swamp's twisted channels and hidden groves with ease. Adventurers brave enough to enter are drawn by the promise of rare magical creatures, whose organs are highly valuable to alchemists.

Points of Interest

- Sparkling Grove - Hidden areas full of hallucinogenic mushrooms.
- Monster Hives - Nest of all sorts of hideous supernatural abominations.
- Sunken Village - Ruins of abandoned towns, now full of corpses.
- Hungry Gardens - A bosk of magical plants guarded by maneating trees.
- Witch's Hamlet - A humble throne for those who rule over the marshes.
- Rotten Lake - Lair of an eldritch creature resting in deep slumber.

for their alcoholic milk.

Crag Stalker - Giant arachnids with scorpion tails and sharp claws. It hunts in packs and uses its venomous bite to paralyze prey.

Goblin Thieves - Small and treacherous creatures with an inclination to group ambushes. Attracted to shiny things and repelled by spiders.

Orc Bandits - Natural enemies of the dwarves, forever at war. Orcs want nothing from life but to steal the hard work of their enemies.

Summit Troll - Hulking territorial brutes with a preference for dwarven meat. Their blood has rapid regenerative properties.

Dwarven Patrol - Carrying heavy armor and warhammers, these patrols are ready to face any dangers in the summit's caves.

Merivale's Caravan - A group of lost merchants and caravan guards trying to find their way to the Dwarven Hold.

Stonelurker - A lizard that blends seamlessly into rock walls to ambush its prey. Their razor-sharp claws can rend through metal.

Behemoth - Towering constructs made of enchanted metal and rocks. Awakens when it senses intruders in the deepest reaches of the Summit.

Magma Worm - A large anelid that erupts from magma rivers. Highly aggressive and capable of spitting streams of molten rock.

Moldread, the Vicious - A colossal dragonkin with a body of twisted horns, rocky scales and molten veins. The dwarven's greed reached the depths of the world and disturbed the slumbery creature, which now roams their tunnels devouring every living creature that crosses their path. This dragon cannot be harmed by mundane weapons and it's immune to any mind controlling spells.

TREASURES

Forgefather's Crown - A rune-etched crown of black iron, said to grant the wearer command over fire and metal.

Grimbeard's Warhammer - A mighty hammer with a head of adamantine and a handle wrapped in dragonhide.

Endless Cask - A dwarven cask made of enchanted oak. refills itself with a potent brew that heals wounds and bolster courage.

Frostwarden's Shield - A large, ice-blue shield that glows faintly in the dark. Radiates a cold aura, freezing enemies who strike against it.

Dragon's Touch - Forged in dragonfire, this gauntlet grants the wearer immunity to heat and the ability to manipulate flames with a gesture.

Deepstone Charm - An amulet carved from a single piece of obsidian. Allows the wearer to pass through stone as if it were air.

Trollbane - A massive greataxe that hums with a hateful vibration near Trolls and Goblinoids, cutting through their flesh like butter.

Dwarven Compass - A magical device that allows dwarves to locate themselves inside underground mazes and precious gemstones in the nearby vicinity. Useless to a non-dwarf, unless they teach how to use it.

Nightshard - A blade forged from pure black crystal, imbued with the essence of a ravenous shadow. Pierces through armor like a ghost, striking and devouring the very soul.

Chisel of the Runemason - Shape stone as if it were soft clay, allowing the wielder to craft intricate designs or carve tunnels through solid rock.

Mourning Heart - A massive ruby gemstone that pulses with a deep, inner light. Contains the essence of an ancient dwarven god.

Runeforged Anvil - Relic of the ancient dwarven smiths. This relic allows a runesmith to craft magical equipment and the infusion of runic enchantments in mundane equipment.

LOCATIONS

Serpent's Pass - A long and serpentine trail leading to the Dwarven Hold, often haunted by Trolls and Goblins.

Troll Caves - Scattered over the Summit's surface and hidden by the never ending blizzard, some have stolen goods from failed caravans.

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 underground halls.

Trading District - Main place to trade foods, craftwork and ores. The merchants sit scattered at the center surrounding the fountain, while the smiths and workshops are installed against the walls. The King's castle stands at the end of a long street of dinners and taverns.

King's Bastion - Home of the dwarven nobility and their close servants, an imposing structure of talented work.

Mushroom Farms - A huge aquifer where farmers work on all kinds of underground crops. Storehouses and distilleries are also located here.

New Mines - Miners have been working here since they run away from Moldread, but these new tunnels are not as rich as the old ones.

Foolish Maze - A labyrinth of tunnels and staircases created to prevent underground dwellers from reaching the main hold. The only way to pass through is with the guidance of a dwarven compass.

Fallen Fortress - Heavily guarded by goblins and orcs, this stronghold was once the safest entrance to the Mourning Summit.

Sealed Mines - Richest mines of the summit, with veins still full of gold, now hostage to a primordial dragon from the abyss.

The Abyss - Entrance to the world of primordial darkness, ever hungry for light's warm. Only those born from shadow may walk through it.

Primordial Kiln - Forge of the first dwarflings, long engulfed by shadow. The first ember still glows, radiating a warm light.

Appendix of Inspiration

Return of the Lazy Dungeon Master by Michael Shea– Step by Step guide on how to prep and run a TTRPG.

Knave 2 by Ben Milton–Lots of great tables for getting the creative juices flowing.

Forge of Foes

The Monsters Know What They're Doing by Kieth Ammann–how to bring more life to your combat encounters.

Flee, Mortals! by MCDM–Super crunchy, exceptionally well-balanced monsters.

Mausritter–A lightweight, charming TTRPG that has deeply inspired my own design.

Oz and Neverland by Andrew Kolb–5e compatible settings. Absolute masterpieces of layout, design and creativity.

ARTIST: ALENA

Unless otherwise noted, ongoing effects lasts for up to 1 minute or until Chaos is triggered again.

1 **Elemental Eruption.** Creatures within 30 ft. of you must make a DEX save. Taking INT d10 fire damage on a failure, half on save. You fail the save.

2 **Backfire.** Gain 1 Wound. The spell you just cast also targets you (or an enemy if it was a beneficial spell).

3 **Aww, Nuts!** You polymorph into a cute squirrel until you take damage. Your TOP priority is to find acorns (squirrels can't cast spells).

4 **Summon Aetherlings.** At the end of each of your turns, summon INT aetherlings (1d6 hostile minion creatures) adjacent to you that act immediately after you.

5 **Graviturgical Grace.** A random enemy is pulled adjacent to you at the end of each of your turns.

6 **Liquefy Legs.** You fall prone, cannot stand, and your speed becomes 0 while out of water.

7 **Elemental Entanglement.** An enemy controls 1 Action for you at the start of each of your turns.

8 **Ethereal Cocoon.** You are enveloped in a magical cocoon until the end of your next turn. You fall prone, are unable to move or speak and are immune to damage. You must spend all of your Actions casting cantrips at the nearest other creature.

9 **Manastorm.** The last spell you cast is cast again for free, against a random target.

10 **Reality Warp.** Everywhere around you within 30 ft. is difficult terrain.

11 **Displacement.** Teleport. 1d4:

1. The worst place! (GMs choice)
2. UP! 30 ft. (3d6 falling damage)
3. Player's choice 30ft.
4. Player's choice 60ft.

12 **Chaos Step.** Swap places with any creature you can see.

13 **Mindfire.** An enemy with the lowest INT within 120 ft. takes INT d6 damage, and gains the burning condition.

14 **Emerge beautiful.** You sprout butterfly wings from your back, gain a flying speed.

15 **Unbiggen.** Your size is halved, gain advantage on Stealth checks and attacks against you are made with disadvantage.

16 **Embiggen.** Your size is doubled. Gain INT d10 Temp HP and advantage on STR saves instead of disadvantage.

17 **Awakening.** A 3rd eye appears on your forehead, gain advantage on the Assess action and all attacks.

18 **Diamond Skin.** Multiply your Armor by INT; you can Defend for free each round.

19 **Mighty Mana.** Your spells (including the one that triggered this effect) are empowered and are cast as if you spent 2 additional mana on them.

20 **Elemental Overload.** Enemies within 60 ft. 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).

5e CONVERSION

5e Monsters

You can use any 5e compatible monster stat block with Nimble with minimal tweaks on the fly.

- **Monster Attacks.** Like heroes, 5e monsters simply roll their damage dice + stat modifier. They miss on an attack by rolling a 1 on their Primary Die, and crit by rolling the maximum.
- **Monster Armor.** 5e monsters that have **14–17 AC have Medium Armor**, and monsters with **18+ AC have Heavy Armor.** Monsters with 13 AC or less are unarmored.

> ***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 kind of armor, the GM can upgrade/downgrade some of them for variety. Unarmored should be the bulk of monsters your party encounters (~60%). Medium should be uncommon (only about 30% of the monsters in any given session) while Heavy should be quite rare (~10-20%).*
>
> *At lower levels you might increase the armor of 1 or 2 bad guys per session. At very high levels (when many monsters have very high AC) you may want to downgrade armor and increase HP to compensate: +50 HP when downgrading Medum; +100 HP when downgrading from Heavy to unarmored.*

Additional Optional Tweaks

- **Monster Saves.** For speed of play, default to rolling saves without any bonuses.

> *However, as the GM you can let the story take the lead. If a monster is particularly Strong/Frail, Fast/Slow, or Smart/Dumb they can roll those respective STR, DEX, & WILL saves with advantage/disadvantage. Legendary monsters can have advantage on 2 or even all 3 different saves.*

- **Multiattack.** Since low CR monsters typically have 1 attack and small damage dice they will tend to crit more often. Combine that with the ability for heroes to Defend and encounters can be a bit swingy in the early levels. You may give these monsters a 2nd attack but remove their ability to crit.
- **Player Agency.** When a monster would take away agency in some way from Heroes (incapacitate, paralyze, petrify, or stun) consider the new Dazed status instead (3 Actions for 1 round).

5e Spells

5e combat related spells should not be necessary to with Nimble (but if you'd like, chat with your GM, most of them should be easy enough to use with Nimble as is), but some of the more unique utility spells could make the game more interesting. Use common sense, but here are some rules of thumb:

- The spell's level is how much Mana it costs.
- Cantrips, Bonus Action, or Reaction spells cost **1 Action**; other leveled spells cost **2 Actions**, Large AoE spells cost **3 Actions**.

5e Magical Items

Divide any major ability stat bonus in half (round up). Stats are less game breaking in Nimble.

5e Races & Classes

- **Race & Background:** pick a Nimble race & background and flavor them however you like.
- **Classes:** you can use any 5e compatible class and use the Nimble Attack and Armor rules. Just don't mix & match 5e and Nimble spells, feats, or other options.

Skill Checks & Saves

Animal Handling/Nature/Survival → Naturecraft. Athletics → Might. Deception/Persuasion/Performance → Influence. History/Religion → Lore. Investigation/Medicine → Examination. Sleight of Hand/Acrobatics → Finesse

- **Promote One.** If an encounter calls for 8 vanilla goblins. You can make one of them the leader by doubling his HP, giving him Heavy Armor, add 1 damage die, and give him 1 more attack.
- **OOPS! All Minions.** Try making a very large encounter with only minions. The heroes can handle far more minions than you might think. Things will get crazy, but it'll run quickly and be quite memorable.
- **THEY JUST KEEP COMING!** Try having minions appear every round (1–2 per hero) until their leader is killed, the portal is closed, or some other event happens!
- **Difficulty is Relative.** An "easy" encounter may be challenging to a party that uses poor tactics (splits up needlessly, lets individuals get surrounded or spreads their damage out too much), and a difficult encounter can be made much easier with smart tactics.