

Nimble

A fast, tactical TTRPG



Game Master's Guide

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GM Guide BETA v 1.0

Beta Disclaimer!

This is an *unfinished BETA document*. More content is still in design. Note, the legendary monsters in particular are not yet balanced, they are pre-alpha concepts.

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?**
- **Any monster you'd NEED to see in the mini bestiary?**

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

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

Guidelines for edge cases

If something cool is happening but you're not sure how to resolve it:

Player: "I climb up 30 ft. and jump down, landing on top of the bad guy and attack him!"

Here are some guidelines. Encourage the creativity! Don't stop to look up the rule. When in doubt, rule in favor of your players and let it happen (maybe just this once, and you can reserve the right to change how it works in the future). Look up the rule later if there is one.

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.) but on the other hand they'd be landing on another character and that might soften the blow. Some options on how to handle it:

- Have the bad guy take 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 the fall damage.
- Have the character make a DEX save (when in doubt DC 10). On a success, the bad guy takes the damage, on a failure 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.

Let players do cool things!

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. **Your job isn't to foil the players, but to facilitate the fun for everyone.**

How to Prep an Adventure

The easiest place to start is with the included adventure (See "ADVENTURE" on page 50). Read the level 1 portion ahead of time and then get started! The first time you GM you will likely focus on teaching the rules, don't worry about getting too fancy.

For subsequent adventures, you'll likely have the mental bandwidth to do a bit more. The following tips should help:

What to Prepare

The cast of characters

Following the sage advice of other great GMs (see "Appendix of Inspiration" on page 58) prepping for an adventure includes making a list of secrets for our heroes to discover, awesome places to visit, and prepare some NPCs and monsters.

When Information Is Necessary

Rather than just telling them (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!

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Problems Not Solutions

It is guaranteed that your players will come up with ideas you never considered. Let it happen and go where the fun is. Don't worry yourself with planning an exact solution to a trap or other situation. Allow your players to be creative, anything that sounds reasonable, let it work. 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.

What to Include in a Session

- Something BIG to run from—or defeat with EXCEPTIONAL tactical/social wit (or cheating)
- Something to fight (3-5 "fair" combat encounters per adventure)

- Interesting places to explore (secret entrances, spots to hide & sneak, gain the high ground, branching paths, not strictly linear, it should ooze flavor without being too wordy).
- Problems/Situations to creatively solve. Only come up with problems, NOT solutions.
- Others to influence (bamboozle, charm, learn from, befriend, offend, rally, make enemy/ally, trade, bargain with).
- Traps (to spot, to disarm, to get stuck in and get out of, to creatively use against your enemies)
- Treasure (weapons/armor, single use, mysterious, something to start or help on a future quest)
- Lore/secrets they care about. (Secret passages, information, backstory questions)
- Dilemmas: If they choose X, they can't choose Y.

Additional GM Tips

When to call for a skill check. 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.

What you don't see...

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.
- **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.
- **Foreshadowing:** Describe a dark figure watching the party from the shadows as they camp, while the heroes are unaware.
- **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: this only works if your players are willing to PLAY ALONG. 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.

Making your own adventures

Make sure you include some of these different elements in your sessions for a more fun time:

- Don't punish curiosity or bravery!
- Problems/Situations to creatively solve. Focus on coming up with problems, not solutions.
- Something to fight (3-5 "fair" combat encounters per adventure)
- Something BIG to run from—or defeat with EXCEPTIONAL tactical/social wit (or cheating)
- An interesting place to explore (secret entrances, spots to hide & sneak, gain the high ground, branching paths—not strictly linear! It should ooze flavor without being too wordy).
- Others to influence (bamboozle, charm, befriend, offend, rally, make enemy/ally, trade, bargain).
- Traps (to spot, to disarm, to get stuck in and get out of, to creatively use against your enemies).
- Treasure (weapons/armor, single use, mysterious, something to start or help on a future quest).
- Lore/secrets they care about (monsters, secret passages, treasure lore, backstory questions).
- Dilemmas: If they choose X, they can't choose Y.
- Be CLEAR about danger. Allow them to retreat (with consequences if appropriate).

Tuning Encounter Balance

Not every encounter needs to be "level appropriate," some can be easy, others can be way too hard! 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.

A bit harder? Add minions. Focus fire. Move monsters away from martials, make them spend actions moving rather than attacking.

A bit easier? Move the monsters less, spread out damage if you reasonably can.

If you want to attack the hunter who hasn't taken any damage yet and ease up on the Commander who's looking rough. "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.

Be Fair & Believable.

Make sure anything you do in combat FIRST makes sense in the 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? Yep, better get that things stopped ASAP!

Minions coming out of the thin air just because the fight is easier than you thought? Don't do that. 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? You'll lose your player's trust.

If they feel like you're cheating (going easy on them or bending the rules to make it 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.

Roll in the open.

Even if you're NOT cheating (perhaps especially so) make sure play also feels to your party that everything is on the up and up. What happens is what was *supposed* to happen.

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.

Minor Boons

Instead of a Secondary stat increase:

- [COMING]

Major Boons

Instead of a Key stat increase:

- [COMING]

EPIC Boons

- [COMING]

LODGING

The cheapest rooms at an inn save you money but may lead to complications. To determine if there is a Complication, roll 1d4 for poor lodgings or 1d8 for modest lodgings—on a roll of 1, you get a Complication. On the other hand, some inns may allow you to pay a premium for a nicer room, giving you a Temporary Boon. **Typical Prices (per person)**

- **Poor (5 cp/day)** Roll 1d4 for the party each night, getting a Complication on a 1.
- **Comfortable (1 gp/day)**
- **Lavish (5 gp/day)** Gain one Temporary Boon the following day.

Poor/Modest Lodging Complications

2d6 Complications

2 Robbed! Your coin purse feels lighter than it should. You lose half your total coin.

3 Contract a disease, must find out how to cure it. Gain 1 permanent wound until healed.

4 Pests got into your supplies, will cost 1d20 gp to replace. Sabotage?

5 Restless sleep. Recover either Hit Dice or a wound, not both.

6-9 You... got a good night's rest? No complication!

10 You make a contact that could prove very useful in the future.

11 You overhear a valuable clue about something you really wanted to know.

12 Choose any Temporary Boon or Complication on this page.



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, so he has Medium Armor. That golem that's completely made out of metal? Heavy Armor.

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

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 with an extra movement), and roll saves with an unmodified 1d20 roll, though some monsters may have Advantaged/Disadvantaged saves when appropriate.

GOBLIN CR 1/4

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

15

Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attacker misses you, deal them 1 psychic damage.

Reading a Stat Block

This stat block for a goblin serves as an example. No Speed or Armor is 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. Whenever an attack misses him, his special ability triggers.

Tweaking Monster Difficulty

For an easier game at lower levels, use Flunkies: same as a regular monster, but they can't crit.

Minions

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 in heavy armor feel cool by blocking 5 attacks at once, spellcasters and berserkers can blast or cut down huge numbers of enemies in one go!

THEY JUST KEEP COMING!
Try having minions appear every round (1–2 per hero) until their leader is killed or some other event happens!

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

All minions move at the same time, and each minion 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, they do not add anything to their roll, they miss on a 1 and can not crit. Heroes can Defend or Interpose against multiple minion attacks as if they were a single attack.

Do not track a minion's HP. Any time a minion takes damage greater than or equal to their die size, they die (e.g., 4+ damage for a 1d4 minion). At the GM's discretion extra damage can overflow to other minions within range (a 20 damage crossbow attack could take out up to FIVE d4 minions in a line!).

Minion Size/Party Level

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

Impact of Adding Minions to an Encounter. Use 1–4 level appropriate minions per hero to quickly dial in the encounter difficulty. Using only 1 minion per hero will have 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.

Improvised Encounters

Sometimes you may need to improvise a combat encounter, plan on having a good mix of armor types and 1–3 monsters per Hero and you may optionally give some of the monsters a flavorful ability:

- **Easy Encounter:** 1 monster per hero
- **Medium Encounter:** 2 monsters per hero
- **Challenging Encounter:** 3 monsters per hero

Level Appropriate Monster Stats

HP: 10xParty Level Armor: None Attack (2x): 1d6+Party Level damage.

Flavorful Monster Abilities

Shifty: Can move after they attack, or after they are attacked.

Aggressive: Can move twice as far if moving toward an enemy.

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.

"Invulnerable": All damage done is reduced to 1 until crit.

Flying: Flying speed and immune to opportunity attacks. May FALL when crit.

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: Rolls 1 additional die whenever rolling critical damage.

Climbing: Can traverse walls or ceilings as normal ground.

Ranged: Deals more damage but can *only* attack from a distance.

Formation: Armor increases 1 step for each adjacent ally (None, Med, Heavy).

Disgusting/Venomous/Heavy Blows: Attacks also dazes the target.

Monster Tactics

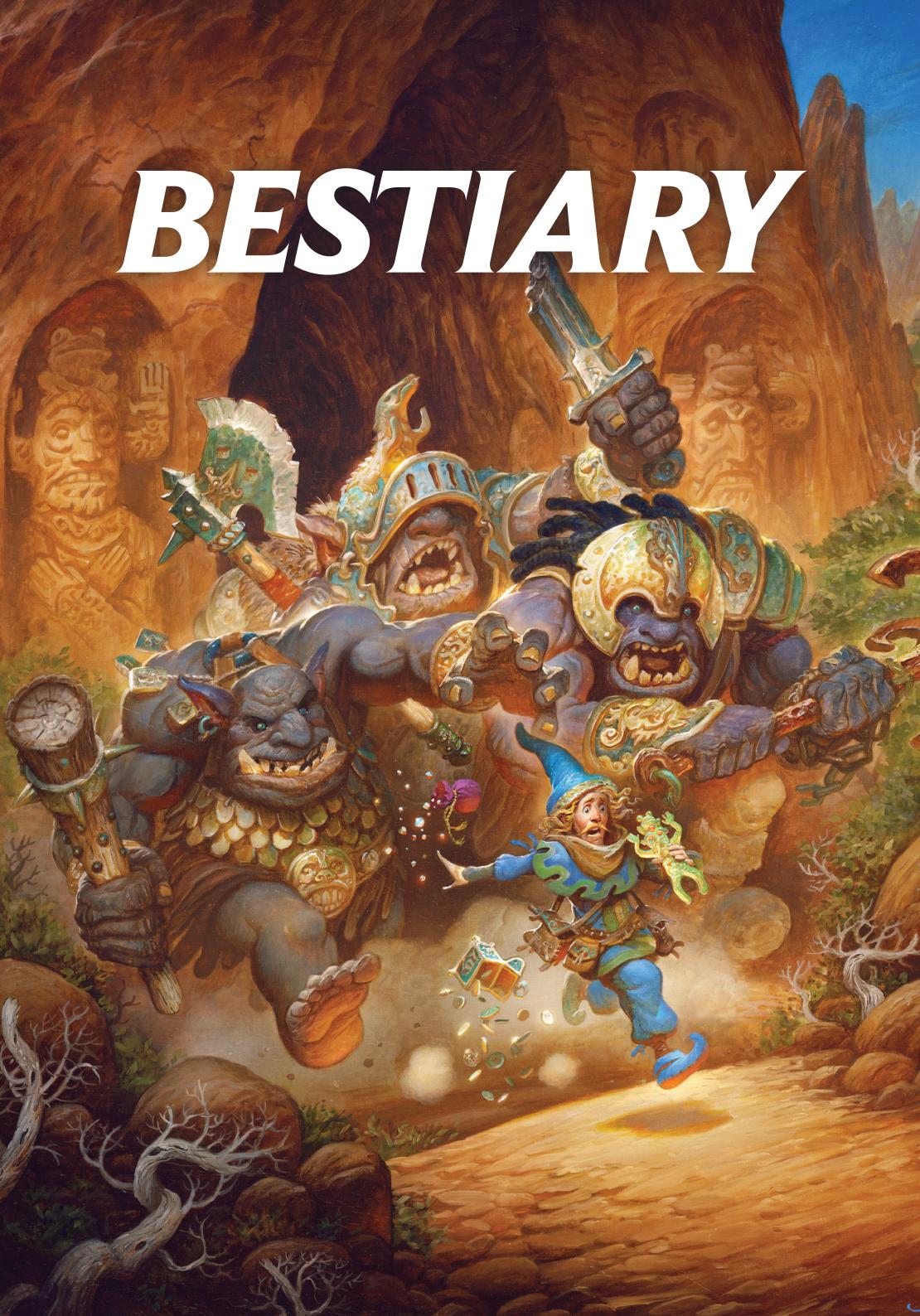
- **Move monsters every turn!** This makes martial characters use their Actions on movement rather than burning them all attacking. It also lets players use opportunity attacks.
- **Go for squishy characters.** Make them use their Actions to Defend or run away and hide behind their stronger friends! Let the tanks feel good about Defending and Interposing.

- **Be 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...
- **Vary the encounter difficulty.** Not every encounter has to be a very difficult one. 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)! Easy encounters can whittle down their resources some, which is not nothing.
- **Scaling up or down the difficulty.** The more you spread out damage across the heroes the easier an encounter will be, if you focus on just one or two heroes the same encounter will become much more difficult.
- **Be flexible with initiative.** If, after the first player's turn it looks like the bad guys are in for a trouncing, move them up in the initiative order instead of waiting till the end of the round (the sooner the monsters act the harder the encounter, and vice versa).
- **Roll in the open.** It's good for players to know the results are real and fair.

Combat Encounter Design

- Typical armor allotment of monsters in a session is: 60% unarmored, 30% medium, 10% heavy.
- Give a good mix of different monster armor types. Unarmored at first. Then add in some medium monsters, then the occasional heavily armored foe. If they've only been fighting medium armored foes for a while, 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.
- If an encounter calls for 8 vanilla goblins. You can make one of them the leader by doubling his HP, giving him heavy armor, increment his damage die size by 1, and give him 1 more attack.
- If you have an encounter with a group of bandits all with the same armor, you can adjust the armor level for variety without breaking the encounter. Try giving half of them medium armor!
- 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.
- Because of the hero's ability to Defend, 5e compatible monsters without multiattack (in particular very low CR monsters) can benefit from multiattack, in exchange remove their

- ability to crit.
- 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.



BESTIARY

Goblins

*Green, cunning & thriving on the edge of chaos. Will mock you mercilessly if given the chance.
Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attacker misses you, deal them 1 psychic damage.*

GOBLIN MINION

Stab. 1d6 (can't crit)

♥ 1 HP

GOBLIN CR 1/4

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

♥ 15 HP

BUGBEAR CR 1

Choose 1:

- **Cleave.** 2d6+4
- **Javelin.** 1d6+2 (60 ft. range)

♦ MED ♥ 30 HP

GOBLIN CAPTAIN CR 1

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

Choose twice:

- **Stab.** 1d6+2 (or Shoot 60 ft. range)
- **Get in here!** Call a goblin minion to the fight.

♦ MED ♥ 30 HP

GOBLIN RATRIDER CR 1

CHAARGE! Attack with advantage once if you moved at least 20 ft. first.

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

► 50 FT. ♥ 30 HP

[UNFORMATTED]

Kobolds

Small, maniacal, fiercely protective of their own.

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

- **Kobold** Minion. 1 HP. 1d4
- **Kobold** 12 HP. Stab (or Sling) 1d4+2 (60 ft. range) (1/8)
- **Kobold Sneak.** 24 HP. Stab 1d4+2. Sneak. Whenever an ally dies move up to 30 ft. (1/2)
- **Kobold Trapper** 24 HP. Throw Scorpion (2x). 1d4+2 (60 ft. range)
Reaction: 1/ encounter each. When an enemy moves adjacent to you or an ally, choose one:
 - BEEES! Deal 5d4 damage them. Half as much to all adjacent creatures.
 - GOTCHA! They are Restrained until they can escape (DC 10 STR or DEX).
- **Kobold Denwarden** MED Armor, 24 HP. Adjacent allies gain Medium Armor. Stab (2x) 1d4+2. (1/2)

Goblins

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

Haha, missed me! Whenever an attack misses you, deal 1 psychic damage in return.

- Goblin Minion 1 HP. Stab 1d6 (can't crit)
- Goblin 15 HP. Choose one: Stab 1d6+2. OR: Shoot 1d6+2 (60 ft. range) (1/4)
- Goblin Captain. Med Armor. 30 HP. (1) Meat Shield. Can force other goblins to Interpose for him. Choose two: Stab 1d6+2; Shoot 1d6+2 (60 ft. range); Get in here! Call a goblin minion to the fight.
- Goblin Ratrider (1) 30 HP. Speed 50 ft. Charge & Stab. 1d6+2 (with advantage is you first moved 20 ft.), on crit knock prone. Stab. 1d6+2.
- Bugbear Medium armor. 30 HP (1) Choose 1: Cleave. 2d6+4 OR: Javelin 1d6+2 (60 ft. range)

[UNFORMATTED]

Undead

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

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

- **Skeleton** 10 HP. Grave Arrow. 1d4+4 (60 ft. range) (1/4)
- **Zombie** 10 HP. Crunch. 1d4+4, on damage: grappled. (1/4)
- **Ghoul** 30 HP. Sickening Claw (2x). 1d4+6, on crit: dazed. (1)
- **Specter** Medium Armor. 30 HP. Deathly Touch. 1d4, on damage: set HP to 0. (1)
- **Ogre Zombie** 80hp Greatclub (x2). 1d4+10 Knock prone on crit. (2)
- **Giant Zombie** 100 HP. Decaying Swipe (x2) 1d4+14, on hit: knockback 5 ft. x roll. (4)
- **Wraith** HP 60. Soul Rend (2x). 1d4+10 (60 ft. range), on hit: deal 1 Wound. (5)
- Vampire

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.** HP 12. Slice 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 60 ft.) (CR 1/8)
- **Bandit Bruiser.** Med armor. 45 HP. Bash (2x) 2d8+1. (CR 2)
- **Bandit Captain.** Medium Armor, 70 HP. Slice 3x. 1d8+1 (or Shoot, Range 60 ft.) (CR 3)
- **Bandit Mage.** HP 40 Arc Lightning. 3d8 lightning damage to a target within 120 ft. The bolt also strikes the next closest creature to your target. If this attack misses, the lightning fails to find ground and strikes you instead. Reaction (after taking damage): Spark Step. teleport up to 20 ft.

[tentatively planned monsters]

Animals

- Blood Hawk
- Wolves
- Bears (black/brown)
- Bulette
- Owlbear
- Ankheg
- Blink Dog

Dungeon Denizens

- Stirge
- Oozes
- Black Pudding
- Gelatinous Cube
- Mimics
- Giant Spiders
- Animated Armor
- Animated Weapons

Hills & Field

- **Hill Giant.** 130 HP. Speed 40 ft. Saves STR+ Choose one:
 - Tree Club (2x). 1d6+15, on hit: knockback 5 ft. x number rolled.
 - Boulder! 1d6+20 (range 60 ft.) (5)
- **Griffon.** 50 HP. Fly 60 ft. Choose twice:
 - **Talons.** 1d6+6 On damage: grappled.
 - **Fly & Drop.** If grappling: Fly 60 ft. up and release. (fall damage is 1d6 per 10 ft.)
- Gnoll
- Gnoll Packleader
- Troll
- Worg
- Roc
- Bulette
- Ankheg



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:

- They act after EACH hero's turn.
- They have one or more Legendary Resistances (see below).
- They have interesting mechanics and weaknesses that can uncover through role playing research or using the Assess action in combat.
- They gain additional abilities as their HP drops to a certain level.

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.

Legendary Resistance. This is a special ability that lets Legendary monsters negate damage from a single attack, negate a condition, or succeed on a failed save. Using them almost always has a steep cost both narratively (a terrible scar or an appendage being lopped off) and mechanically (losing their next turn or suffering some other setback) to compensate the heroes.

Legendary Resistances: are there to make the encounter *MORE FUN* by maintaining balance and keep scary monsters SCARY. It can feel bad as a player to have a very cool effect or ability negated. Use Legendary Resistances *ONLY* on an ability that would severely trivialize the encounter (e.g., incapacitation), and ruin the v – and congratulate the heroes when they do something so powerful that the monster is forced to use up one of its legendary resistances.

Bloodied. When a monster has been reduced to half their HP.

Last Stand. Some legendary monsters have an ability that triggers when they would first be reduced to 0 HP. Instead their HP is reset to a specified amount and they gain dangerous new capabilities. The tide shifting back and forth in a Legendary battle will help make it memorable!

Legendary Monster Stat Guidelines

HP: 30xParty Level **Armor:** MED or HEAVY **Saves:** 1 or more advantaged save
Legendary Resistance: 1-3, and suffers some setback on use (e.g., skip next turn or lose a passive ability for 1 round).
Actions: Acts after each hero's turn and can either move OR attack.
Bleeding: Gain an ability that can change the tide of battle.
Last Stand: Gain a small amount of HP and a BIG combat ability that forces the heroes to change tactics and pull together.

Using 5e Legendary Monsters. You can run 5e legendary monsters as written just like other monsters, or you can adapt them to act after each player's turn like Nimble legendary monsters. For instance the 5e Adult Black Dragon, its Acid Breath is a single use ability that recharges when it is Bleeding. Instead of its Multiattack, after each hero's turn choose one: Fly up to 80 ft. and make a Bite; Make a Claw attack and a Tail or Wing attack. For its Last Stand ability, it can choose twice each turn. Very scary!

Level 2 Solo Dumb Ogre

Pudge the Blunderer

HP: 60
Armor: MED
Saves: STR+, WILL-

Legendary Resistance: 1. On use, Pudge stumbles and skips his next turn.

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

- **Move & Grab.** If no one is within melee range, Pudge moves up to 30 ft.
- **Grab & Bite.** $1d10+2$ bludgeoning damage. If the target is damaged by this, they are also thrown at another hero within 30 ft. Both make a DC 12 DEX save or take $1d10+2$ bludgeoning damage and are knocked prone, half damage on save.

BLOODY: At 30 HP, Pudge can Move AND Attack each turn.



Level 3 Solo Owlbear

Grimbeak the Unyielding

Legendary Resistance: 1. On use Grimbeak stumbles and skips her next turn.

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

- **Savage Screech.** (1 time use) Creatures within 90 ft. take **2d6** psychic damage. Characters are Frightened 1 round on a failed **DC 12 WILL** save.
- **Move** up to 40 ft., **Beak** attack for **2d6+4** slashing damage.
- **Rend & Tear.** Attack for **2d6+4** slashing damage. Repeat. Knock Prone if both damage the same target.

BLOODYED: At 60 HP, Grimbeak's Savage Screech recharges.

LAST STAND: At 30 HP, Grimbeak's Attacks use d8s instead.

HP: 120
Armor: MED
Saves: STR+

Level 4 Solo Human Criminal

Thorn Quickblade

Special Ability: Strikes Back. If crit, he makes a Heart Piercer or Stormquill attack in return.

Legendary Resistance: 2. On use, he skips his next turn.

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

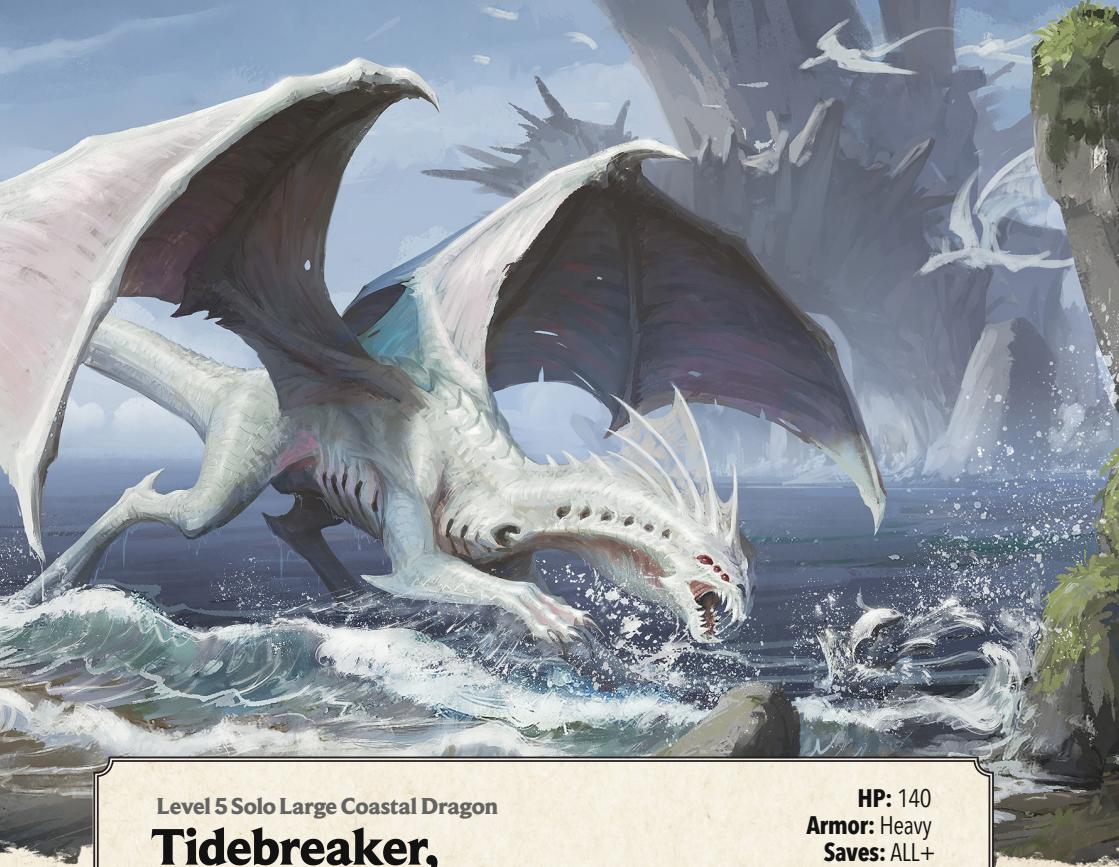
- Move up to 40 ft., Heart Piercer (Rapier). **2d4+6** piercing. On Crit, target is dazed.
- Move up to 20 ft., Stormquill Crossbow (2x). **1d12+6** (Range 50 ft).

BLOODYED: Smoke Bomb. At 75 hp Thorn immediately tosses a smokebomb becoming invisible until his next turn. He may move up to 40 ft. without provoking opportunity attacks.

LAST STAND: Mortal Panic! At 30 HP, Thorn Strikes Back EVERY time he's attacked.

HP: 150
Armor: MED
Saves: DEX+





Level 5 Solo Large Coastal Dragon

Tidebreaker, Hunter of the Reefs

Legendary Resistance: 2. xx

SPECIAL ABILITY: xx

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

- **Move.** Tidebreaker can fly up to 60 ft.
- **Bite.** Melee attack.
- **Breath Weapon**

BLOODYED: xx

LAST STAND: xx

HP: 140
Armor: Heavy
Saves: ALL+



Level 6 Solo Large Matriarch of Spiders

Queen Aranya, Broodmother

Legendary Resistance: 2. On use, Weave Web is suppressed for 1 round

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

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

- **Move & Shoot Web.** Queen Aranya can move 40 ft. across floors, walls, or ceilings, ignoring difficult terrain. **Shoot Web.** (30 ft. range) **1d8+8** bludgeoning damage, on hit target is entangled in sticky web and Dazed. On crit: Dazed again.
- **Impale (2x).** (10 ft. reach) **3d8+8** piercing damage.

BLOODYED: "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: At 40 HP, summon a spider minion (1d6) per hero after each of her turns.

They act immediately.

HP: 160
Armor: MED
Saves: STR+, DEX+



Level 5 Solo Manticore

Ravager of the Lowlands

Special Ability: Feral Instinct. Whenever Ravager is crit, he can fly up to 40 ft.

Legendary Resistance: 2. On use, Armor reduced to None for 1 round.

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

- **Move.** The Ravager can fly 40 ft.
- **Attack:** The Ravager uses both of his attacks (if available).
 - **Venomous Stinger.** (1 time use) Reach:15 ft. **6d10** damage.
 - **Tooth & Claw (2x).** **2d10+6** slashing damage.

BLOODYED: At 95 HP, his Venomous Stinger recharges.

LAST STAND: At 40 HP, his Feral Instinct triggers whenever he takes damage and he can make a single Claw attack after he lands.

HP: 190
Armor: MED
Saves: STR+, DEX+



Level 6 Solo Floral Dragon

Florindris, Bane of the Forest

HP: 200
Armor: MED
Saves: ALL+

Aura of Wind: Ranged attacks have disadvantage. Adjacent creatures are moved 10 ft. at the end of Florindris' turns (see Forced Movement).

Legendary Resistance: 3. On use, Aura of Wind is suppressed for 1 round.

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

- **Move.** Florindris can fly up to 80 ft.
- **Petal Storm:** (One time use) Creatures within a 60 ft. radius take **10d4** slashing damage, or half on a **DC 14 DEX** save. Florindris then moves.
- **Bite:** **1d10+4** piercing damage. If damaged, target gains **Pollenblight:** Forced movement also knocks you prone. Magical healing ends this effect.
- **Gust:** **1d10** (20 ft. reach) bludgeoning damage, and moved that many 5 ft. squares.

BLOODYED: At 100 HP, Florindris' Petal Storm recharges.

LAST STAND: At 50 HP, Aura of Wind deals **4d4** slashing damage before moving creatures.



Level 8 Solo Huge Flame Titan

General Flameheart

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

Legendary Resistance: 2. On use, all areas ignited by Molten Fury are extinguished.

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

- **Move.** Flameheart can move up to 50 ft.
- **Attack:** Flameheart can use both of his attacks.
 - **Inferno Cleave.** Strike a 10 ft.x10 ft. adjacent area for **2d12+10** fire damage.
 - **Molten Fury.** Lob a molten ball of fire, igniting a 10 ft. x 10 ft. area in flames. Creatures there take **2d12+10** fire damage and are vulnerable to fire as long as they are in the flames (*target the hero furthest away, not already in the flames*).

BLOODYED: At 110 HP, on his next turn he uses Molten Fury a number of times equal to half the number of heroes (rounded up).

LAST STAND: At 50 HP. The area of Molten Fury and Inferno Cleave increase to 15 ft. x 15 ft.

HP: 270
Armor: HEAVY
Saves: STR+, WILL+



Chén

Level 9 Solo Shepherd of Death

Vael, Undying

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

Legendary Resistance: 3. On use, Bane is sacrificed and Vael spends his next turn moving and resummoning it.

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

- **Move.** Vael can move up to 30 ft.
- **Veilwalker's Rebuke.** Deal **2d12+6** necrotic damage to a target within 60 ft. Deals double damage against those behind cover. 1/round Vael may swap places with them.
- **Overwhelming Darkness.** (Can only target a bloodied enemy) **DC 15 DEX** save or deal **6d8** necrotic damage, half on save.

BLOODYED: At 140 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. At 60 HP, Vael 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.

HP: 280

Armor: None
Saves: WILL++



Level 7 Solo Large Grey Drake

Nalzar, Apex Predator

Legendary Resistance: 2. On use, she is injured and heroes gain advantage on the next save they make against her.

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

- **Move.** Nalzar can fly up to **50 ft.**
- **Wing Buffet.** Creatures in a **40 ft.** cone make a **DC 14 STR** save or take **5d6** bludgeoning damage and are knocked prone, half damage on save. Standing behind cover or another hero grants advantage on the save.
- **Devour.** (Reach 10 ft.) **5d12** piercing damage (can only target a prone creature).

BLOODYED: At 110 HP, her Wing Buffet increases to a 60 ft. cone and DC 16 STR save.

LAST STAND: At 55 HP. She can use ALL of her Actions each turn.

HP: 220
Armor: MED
Saves: STR+, DEX+

Level 10 Solo Gargantuan Skeleton

Titan of the Deep Woods

HP: 260
Armor: Heavy
Saves: STR++, WILL+

Brittle Bones. Resistant to Piercing damage. Vulnerable to Bludgeoning damage.

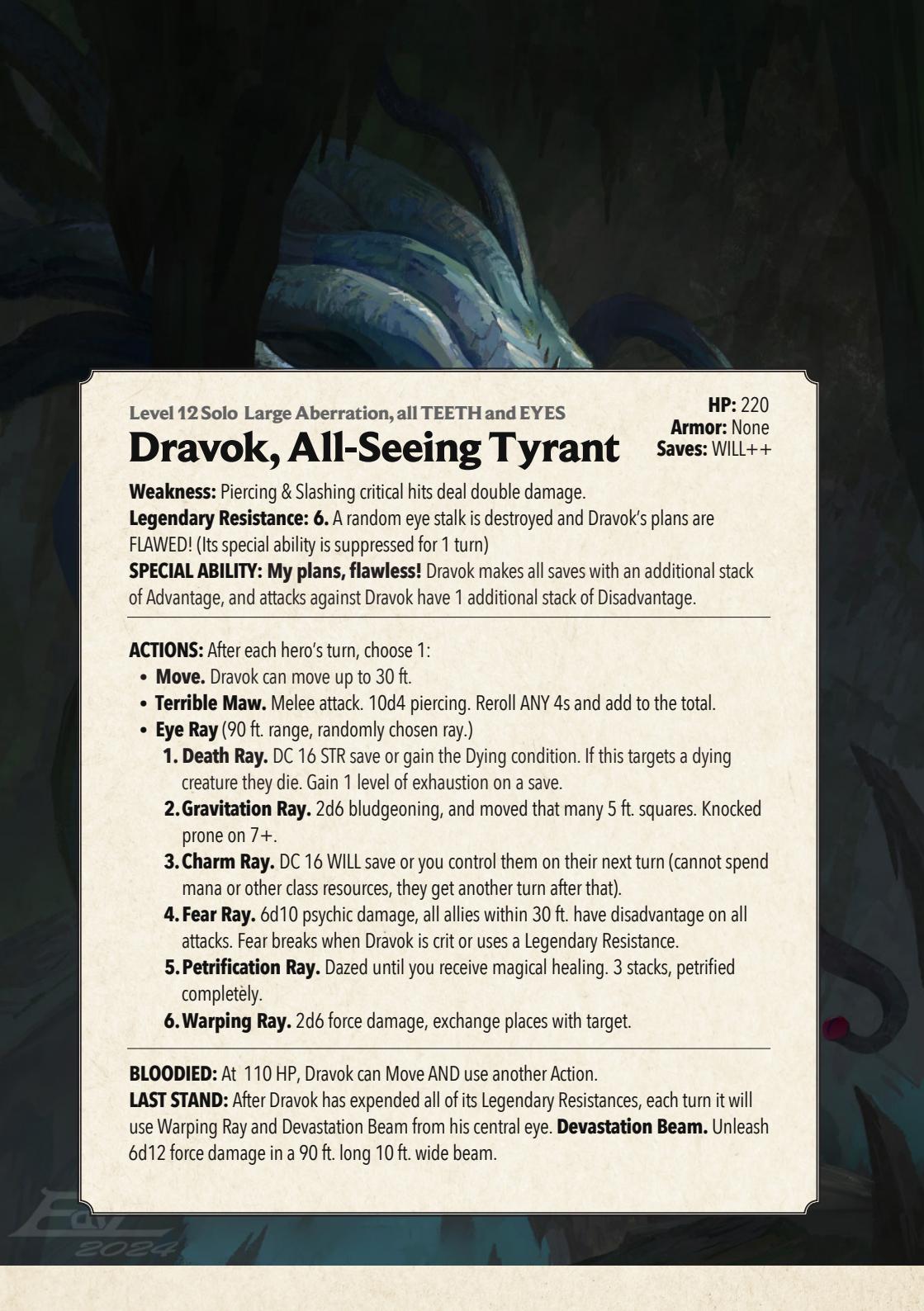
Splintering Legions. Whenever Titan suffers bludgeoning damage or a critical hit, a portion of his bones splinter off and animate, forming a **1d12** minion.

Legendary Resistance: 3. Titan skips its next turn.

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

- **Crushing Stomp.** Move 40 ft. and deal **1d4+50** Bludgeoning damage to 2 different targets along the path. On a hit, a target is knocked prone.
- **Devastating Swat.** (Reach 20 ft.) **1d12+20** Bludgeoning damage. Knockback a number of 5 ft. squares equal to the primary die.
- **Beckoning Doom.** The 2 furthest heroes make a **DC 16 STR** save or are moved adjacent to Titan.

LAST STAND: Shattered Legion. At 0 HP Titan collapses into 4 skeleton minions (**1d10**)/hero. If any remain they reassemble into the Titan the next evening.



Level 12 Solo Large Aberration, all TEETH and EYES

Dravok, All-Seeing Tyrant

HP: 220
Armor: None
Saves: WILL++

Weakness: Piercing & Slashing critical hits deal double damage.

Legendary Resistance: **6.** A random eye stalk is destroyed and Dravok's plans are FLAWED! (Its special ability is suppressed for 1 turn)

SPECIAL ABILITY: My plans, flawless! Dravok makes all saves with an additional stack of Advantage, and attacks against Dravok have 1 additional stack of Disadvantage.

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

- **Move.** Dravok can move up to 30 ft.
- **Terrible Maw.** Melee attack. 10d4 piercing. Reroll ANY 4s and add to the total.
- **Eye Ray** (90 ft. range, randomly chosen ray.)
 - 1. Death Ray.** DC 16 STR save or gain the Dying condition. If this targets a dying creature they die. Gain 1 level of exhaustion on a save.
 - 2. Gravitation Ray.** 2d6 bludgeoning, and moved that many 5 ft. squares. Knocked prone on 7+.
 - 3. Charm Ray.** DC 16 WILL save or you control them on their next turn (cannot spend mana or other class resources, they get another turn after that).
 - 4. Fear Ray.** 6d10 psychic damage, all allies within 30 ft. have disadvantage on all attacks. Fear breaks when Dravok is crit or uses a Legendary Resistance.
 - 5. Petrification Ray.** Dazed until you receive magical healing. 3 stacks, petrified completely.
 - 6. Warping Ray.** 2d6 force damage, exchange places with target.

BLOODYED: At 110 HP, Dravok can Move AND use another Action.

LAST STAND: After Dravok has expended all of its Legendary Resistances, each turn it will use Warping Ray and Devastation Beam from his central eye. **Devastation Beam.** Unleash 6d12 force damage in a 90 ft. long 10 ft. wide beam.

Level 15 Solo Huge Balor feeling hot & spicy

Azriel, Lord of Pain & Flame

HP: 320
Armor: Heavy
Saves: ALL+

Legendary Resistance: **3.** On use, the next time his special ability would trigger, it doesn't.

SPECIAL ABILITY: YES! PAIN!! When Azriel is crit, the creature who struck Him is also damaged by the critical hit dice.

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

- **Move.** Azriel can fly up to 50 ft.
- **Crackling Whip.** (Reach 20-60 ft.) 3d12 slashing damage. On hit, the target is grappled and pulled adjacent to Azriel.
- **Doom Sword.** (Reach 10 ft.) 3d12 slashing +20 fire damage to all creatures within reach. Knock them back 10 ft.

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

LAST STAND: At 80 HP, he can use ALL of his actions each turn.



Level 15 Solo Huge Rot Dragon

Gloomwing the Cruel

Aura of Rot: Creatures within 30 ft. take **10** necrotic damage at the start of their turns.

Legendary Resistance: 3. On use, end Cruelty's Gift on 1 creature or Aura of Rot is suppressed for 1 round.

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

- **Move.** Gloomwing can fly up to 80 ft.
- **Rot Breath:** (One time use) Creatures in a 40 ft. cone take **8d10** necrotic damage, or half on a **DC 17 DEX** save. Then use a Claw, Bite, or Tail attack.
- **Bite:** (reach 15 ft.) **2d20** piercing damage. If damaged, target gains **Cruelty's Gift:** Vulnerable to necrotic damage until they receive any amount of healing.
- **Claws:** (reach 10 ft.) **4d12** slashing +**10** necrotic damage.
- **Tail:** (reach 20 ft.) **2d8** bludgeoning, and moved that many 5 ft. squares.

BLOODYED: At 220 HP Gloomwing's Rot Breath recharges.

LAST STAND: At 110 HP, His Aura of Rot range and damage is doubled.

HP: 440
Armor: HEAVY
Saves: ALL+

Level 20 Solo Gargantuan Terror

Desolation, World's End

HP: 620
Armor: Heavy
Saves: ALL++

Legendary Resistance:

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

- **Reflective Carapace.** Ranged attacks that miss are reflected back at the attacker.

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

- **Move.**
- **Attack.**

BLOODYED:

LAST STAND:



MAGIC ITEMS

Interesting Magical Items

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 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.

Phoenix Helm

If you die while wearing this helm, your body explodes in flames and hot ash. You rise anew from the ashes...

FOR THE GM'S EYES ONLY

Fiery Phoenix

You are reborn as a golden fiery phoenix. Enemies within 30 ft. must make a **DC 16 DEX** save, or take **Level 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 Focused 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.

Pocket Cauldron

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

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

Why this is great

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

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. Its goal is to gain trust and to help his owner out *juuuust* enough to get them into great trouble.

*“Ah, another mortal thirsting for knowledge.
Think you can handle the truths I hold?”*

*“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**? ”*

*“History remembers the victors, not the
virtuous. What legacy do you wish to leave
behind?”*

Interesting Combat Items

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*

Weapon of Slaying

Any base weapon can have this attribute. Deal an additional die of damage against a particular creature type. Those creatures may stop at nothing to end you for wielding such a weapon. For example:

- **Scimitar of Giant Slaying** (Uncommon) +1d4 damage against giants, but risks drawing their ire.
- **Bow of Giant Slaying** (Rare) +1d6 damage against giants, but risks drawing their ire.
- **Dagger of Giant Slaying** (Very Rare) +1d8 damage against giants, but risks drawing their ire.
- **Rapier of Giant Slaying** (Legendary) +1d10 damage against giants, but risks drawing their ire.

As players hear about the existence of these weapons, they may want to craft them, or even disguise their weapon to look like one to draw monster's ire away from the party!

Weapon of Animosity

Whenever you attack with this weapon, roll an additional animosity die. The weapon deals that much additional damage to your target on a hit. Whenever this weapon misses, you take that damage instead. The price of this weapon increases with every die size.

- Weapon of Greater Animosity (Uncommon). +1d4 damage. You take that damage on a miss.
- Weapon of Superior Animosity (Rare). +1d6 damage. You take that damage on a miss.
- Weapon of Supreme Animosity (Very Rare). +1d8 damage. You take that damage on a miss.
- Weapon of Limitless Animosity (Legendary). +1d10 damage. You take that damage on a miss.

Not mere damage increases, interesting choices must be made.

Weapon of Many Hands

While equipped, this weapon grants the wearer additional arms. While equipped the wearer can use the extra arms to perform any task their normal hands can do. Carry equipment, grapple enemies, climb, etc. but does not allow the wearer to perform actions any faster. The extra appendages may be off-putting or horrifying to people in polite society.

- Weapon of Many Hands (Uncommon). +1 arm.
- Weapon of Many Hands (Rare). +2 arms.
- Weapon of Many Hands (Very Rare). +3 arms.
- Weapon of Many Hands (Legendary). +4 arms.

A creature with 1 extra arm can wield a 2-handed weapon and a shield, grapple up to 3 creatures at a time, etc. A creature with 2 extra arms can, for instance: dual wield multiple 2-handed weapons at a time, wield a weapon and multiple shields, or cast spells while their other hands are occupied.

[MANY MORE COMING]

Secret Spells

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But... This spell is notoriously difficult to cast manually. It is most frequently 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.

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

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

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

Speak With Dead. Temporarily animate a corpse you touch and 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.

—ADVENTURE— DOOM COMES



JUSTIN
GEVARD

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 and make his way to the door, before turning around, arming 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 small hooded figure yells “Get ‘em boys!” before *woosh* vanishing before your very 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: looked like a halfling? He was carrying something glowing.) What happened to the hooded figure (DC 10 Arcana: he teleported away) 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, & attacking. Heroes can spend 1 Action to move up to your 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.



GOBLIN MINION

Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attacker misses you, deal them 1 psychic damage.

Stab. 1d6 (can't crit)

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.

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

Aftermath

With all the goblins dispatched, some of the commoners pour out into the village square. 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 symbol 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. New navigator is chosen.

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 laughing and throwing rocks at another goblin on the back of a giant rat (looks pretty beat up).

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!

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 rat rider's speed to go for the hero with the least armor or HP. Allow the party time to observe, ask questions and plan how to deal with the situation. This encounter kicks off when the party jumps into action; or if you feel they're taking too long, the giant rat begins sniffing the air suspiciously in their direction and growling. ROLL INITIATIVE!



GOBLIN FLUNKIE

Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attacker misses you, deal them 1 psychic damage.

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

15 HP



GOBLIN RATRIDER

Haha, Missed Me! Whenever an attacker misses you, deal them 1 psychic damage.

CHAAARGE! Attack with advantage once if you moved at least 20 ft. first.

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

50 ft.

30 HP

Loot. A permanently wet rock. And a note: "Tell pinky he better not come back without my ingredients! WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT" –Greenthumb

On the back side of the note is a map with odd symbols, (will need to ask someone in town about it).

muffled "Uh, little help here?" It's Moonblossom! 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. Let them know that they will level up the next time they Long Rest in town.

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.

Congrats on reaching level 2!

[See Leveling Up!]

Into the Den

(Level 2 adventure for 2–8+ heroes)

[COMING SOON! levels 2-3 are drafted & in revisions]



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 Medium; +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 (-1 Action for 1 round).

5e Spells

5e combat related spells should not be necessary to use 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 main ability stat bonuses 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.
Acrobatics → DEX save. Deception/Persuasion/Performance → Influence.
History/Religion → Lore. Investigation/Medicine → Examination. Sleight of Hand/Acrobatics → Finesse

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, super cute TTRPG that has deeply inspired my own design.

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