

Heroes Rise

A MINI-ADVENTURE FOR 4-6 1ST-3RD LEVEL CHARACTERS IN AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT

Night falls, but heroes rise.

A village has fallen to Night, and the PCs need to recover it. For an average group, solving the puzzles and cleansing the village of Night should take approximately 2-4 hours of play.

Heroes Rise can be used as part of an ongoing campaign, or as an introduction to the system. Used as an introduction, the pre-generated characters should be given additional equipment to represent the preparations they made before arriving at the village.

Each pre-generated character should receive an adventurer's pack as additional equipment – a backpack containing six torches, 50' of rope, a week worth of rations, a waterskin, flint and steel, and a bedroll. Additionally, players should be given the option to spend some or all of their 5 sp on equipment before beginning.

If used as part of an ongoing campaign, the village may be simply encountered along the road, or the characters may be informed of it and choose to seek it out.

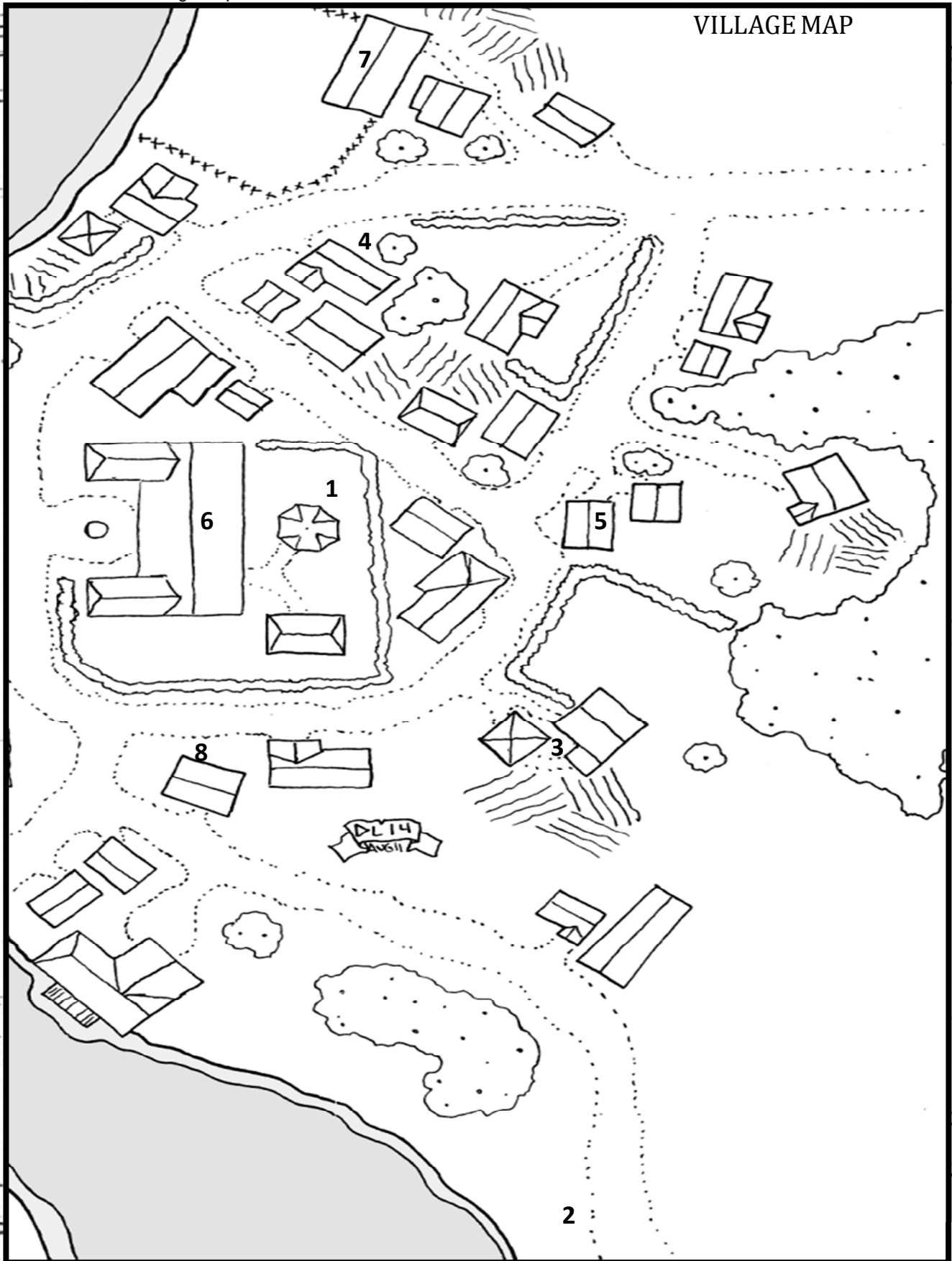
In either case, the adventure proper begins on the outskirts of the village. Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

You round a bend in the road, allowing a small village to come into view. At first you are cheered, but unease creeps in as you look at it. There is something simply...wrong about this village. The air in the village looks almost smoky. Lights seem dimmer. Even the sunlight is pale and wan as it filters through what looks almost like a visible barrier against its entry. Shadows seem longer than they should be, and a chill wind sweeps through. Cart tracks and hoofprints clutter the road as normal until they reach the border, the same border that seems to be stopping sunlight's entry. Within that border, the ground is smooth and unmarked. There are no fires, no smoke rising from cottages, and no sign that anyone lives in this village.

Consult the Village Map for the general layout of the village. Many areas of the village are not labeled specifically as points of interest. When those places are examined and explored, the GM should feel free to improvise or otherwise offer description as they feel appropriate. For example, there are a variety of cottages on the Village Map that are not described here. If the players wish to explore them, use the Empty Cottage description as a baseline. They are not identical, however, and so minor details can be added to them to differentiate them. The Additional Details table can be used to help describe what sort of details differentiate these, or other places, from each other. The GM may also feel free to use the Additional Details table to flesh out the points of interest with as many additional details as desired.

Melad Crossings by Dyson Logos (dysonlogos.com). This map was modified for use in the Against the Fall of Night Quickstart for use as the Village Map.

VILLAGE MAP



ADDITIONAL DETAILS

ROLL	DETAIL
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- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | All fire within the location is a sickly yellow-green color. |
| 2 | The air inside shimmers, as with heat. |
| 3 | Spiderwebs cover every flat surface. There are no spiders. |
| 4 | While within the location, all characters have a metallic taste in their mouths. |
| 5 | The furniture is scored by deep gouges, as claw marks. |
| 6 | The joins around any windows or doors ooze a colorless liquid that smells like wet stone. |
| 7 | The location smells of freshly baking bread. |
| 8 | The sound of rats scrabbling along the floor is audible. There are no visible rats or any other signs of rats. |
| 9 | All dishes and cutlery are pleasantly warm to the touch. |
| 10 | A few sticks of firewood have been dropped shortly inside the door. |
| 11 | The sound of rain is audible while inside. A small leak in the ceiling drips water inside. |
| 12 | Every part of the interior appears freshly scrubbed and immaculately clean. |
| 13 | The location is lit from above with a harsh, bright white light. All color is shifted to shades of grey under that light. |
| 14 | Dust motes dance through the air. They never seem to fall. |
| 15 | The floor is sticky with no physical cause, regardless of composition. |
| 16 | There is no glass anywhere in this location. |
| 17 | The location is extraordinarily cold. |
| 18 | There is no visible ceiling from the inside. Regardless of light sources, the ceiling is lost in darkness. |
| 19 | The location smells of roasted pork. |
| 20 | Viewed from outside the doorway, bright sunlight streams in through the windows. Viewed from inside, the light is like the rest of the village. |

The Village Map is labeled with eight points of interested, numbered 1-8. These points of interest are described below.

EMPTY COTTAGE

The village has a variety of empty cottages and untenanted buildings scattered around it. They are rough-built wooden structures, usually single-room, that appear to be suffering from a great deal of neglect. They may have flooring of wooden boards or packed dirt. Furnishings are damaged and strewn about, then covered with what looks like years of dust accumulation. As mentioned above, each cottage may have its own oddities which can be added with the Additional Details table.

POINT 1 - THE WELL

In the center of the village square, there is a communal well.

The well is surrounded by leaking bits of darkness. All light around it is dim light (even light that the players bring towards it). Viewed carefully, the haze of almost-smoke that fills the village appears to be emanating from the well, like steam from a simmering pot. The well is currently capped with a wooden cover. The cover has four runes engraved on its surface, at 12, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock. Each of these runes can be found scattered around the village. If all four runes are brought to the well and touched to themselves upon the cover, the cover slowly fades into darkness, which itself slowly brightens back to dim light, revealing the open well below.

POINT 2 - THE BANDIT CAMP (VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS)

The bandits have a camp a little bit outside the village outskirts, a few hundred feet or so. They have been spending some time looting the village, and have a pile of goods and coin already looted. They are not immediately combative, but they are

both somewhat hostile and are scumbags. They warn the PCs off, saying that this is their strike, and they're not going to allow any claim-jumpers to take their loot away from them. They are unwilling to stop looting and are unwilling to share. If the PCs are willing to promise not to loot anything, the bandits will not attack. They will attack if the PCs insist on looting or try to stop them from looting. There are two ordinary bandits in the camp as well as the bandit leader. The ordinary bandits use the statistics for Bandit, while the bandit leader uses the statistics for Soldier.

The bandits have already looted a total of 27 sp, as well as some usable items. Their camp contains two tents, a lantern, four blankets, and nine torches. In addition, one shortbow carried by the bandits survives the fight.

POINT 3 - THE DIRT PATH (GOBLINS)

A group of four goblins sits on a dirt alley between buildings. The goblins are sitting in a circle around something. The goblins will, upon noticing the PCs, stop doing what they are doing, look at the PCs creepily, and immediately attack. Upon defeating them and examining what the goblins were doing, they appear to have been rubbing sticks on a dead bird, perhaps in an attempt to cook it despite a fundamental misunderstanding of how fire works. One of the sticks has a rune on it, no shenanigans required, just a free rune. One of the goblins is wearing a dirty and smudged yellow hat, while another is wearing mud-spattered boots of cracked blue leather that may have been bright once.

POINT 4 - THE SMITHY

The forge with the anvil is an enclosed building with bits of wan sunlight coming through the slats of the walls, and through the door. The PCs can see all right, but it is dimly lit unless they bring in their own light. The smithy has clearly been abandoned. The forge is cold. In fact, it has ice on it. The quenching buckets are empty and dark. They seem supernaturally dark, as in fact, they have shadows hiding in them. The anvil contains a false compartment. The fake compartment was very

poorly closed and is obvious to anyone who spends time inspecting the anvil. However, when the compartment is opened, the shadows rise up and attack. There are two animate shadows in the quenching buckets. The dim light in the forge means that the shadows do not suffer their penalty for bright light. A lit torch is sufficient to shed bright light around it, so if the PCs light up a torch for it, the shadows will suffer their light vulnerability. Once the shadows are dealt with, the false compartment in the anvil can be examined. It contains a charred and blackened rune. The rune constantly drips ash and grit, but despite its seeming fragility, always retains its shape. If searched, the smithy contains a few remaining weapons; a pair of daggers and a spear can be found scattered about.

POINT 5 - THE COTTAGE

Read or paraphrase the following to the players:

As you enter the brightly-lit and cheerfully decorated cottage, you see a family going about the business of dinner. They all turn to look at you with gentle interest. The wife, standing by a steaming tureen of soup, says "Oh, we have guests! Would you like some soup?" Suiting action to word, she fills a bowl with soup and offers it to you. As the bowl comes closer to your reach, the entire scene twists and disappears, and you are left looking into a dark, ruined room. You recognize the table and chairs, damaged though they are, from the vision you just saw, but there is no sign of the family.

The soup tureen is visible sitting on a dusty, wooden countertop. It is filled with some sort of black goo. If washed out or otherwise dealt with, a rune is left inside the tureen. This rune is a dull pea-green color and sticky to the touch. The black goo is dangerous and harmful should a character simply try to reach in or drink it or any such thing, dealing 1d4 magical damage (Toughness test for half damage). (Ordinary defensive techniques are not applicable, as this is not an attack.)

POINT 6 - THE TOWN HALL

The combined town hall and inn is the largest building in the village. Calling it an inn is probably an overstatement; it has a room about the size of a normal bedroom with some pallets on the floor. The town hall section is mostly a single room to gather in with a bar and a podium to address people from. Carved into the underside of the podium is one of the runes. The podium is heavy and difficult to move, but not impossible. If the rune is carelessly hacked off, it triggers a trap (Quickness test or suffer 1d6 physical damage from a launched spike). However, if the podium is carefully examined, it can be found that the podium is designed to be separated for easier movement, and a relevant skill check can be used to disassemble it carefully and bypass the trap while still making it small enough to carry.

POINT 7 - THE MAYOR'S HOUSE

Hidden in the dark corners of the mayor's house, three gremlins have taken up residence. The gremlins will spook around in darkness, but if light is brought in or they are confronted, they will attack. Documents are scattered all around. Most of them refer only to the ordinary functioning of the village, and are uninteresting. One document calls attention to itself; it is written in a large, jagged scribble across the face of the page and says only "somebody....please...bring back the light." A drawer in the mayor's desk contains 12 sp and 8 cp.

POINT 8 - THE CHILDREN'S COTTAGE

Like Point 5 (The Cottage), this cottage has a sense-memory flashback to the time when the village was happy and peaceful. In this flashback, three brothers are playing in the cottage while their parents sit and watch them indulgently. One of them is wearing bright blue leather boots, while another one is wearing a bright yellow broad-brimmed hat. After watching them play for a bit, the children look at the characters, and the scene twists and disappears to reveal a cottage just like the other

empty cottages, dusty and ruined. The cottage contains nothing useful other than the flashback.

DESCRIBING THE VILLAGE

This village has fallen under the influence of Night, and nothing is quite as it should be. The effects that the players notice as they enter the village are only the beginning. Focus on its unreality, on the interplay of light and shadow in ways that shouldn't normally happen. Smoke hangs in the air instead of flowing with the wind, and there are often odd unexplained sounds and smells. Characters' voices may bend and twist, sounding warped, or may sound like old friends and family to the listener (instead of their normal voice). The influence of Night is a slow corruption, a loss of what makes things normal. GMs shouldn't worry too much about consistency; consistency is a thing of day. At night, nothing is what it seems. Just like a pile of clothing might seem to be an intruder in the dark hours of the night, what is normal can become threatening under the influence of Night. Things can shift and change with disturbing alacrity, or they can remain subtly wrong. If left unchecked, the influence of Night will turn anywhere it touches into a waking nightmare, and only the light of heroes can save it. It's up to the GM how much you want to focus on these effects in the village.

DOWN IN THE WELL

Once the well cover is opened by bringing the four runes to it, the party is able to enter the well. There are handholds carved into the side of the well, making it possible for any character to climb down without too much difficulty. The well extends nearly sixty feet down, and takes minutes to travel. It may be advised for players to rest before heading down into the well; nothing untoward happens when the well cap is opened and there does not seem to be any rush.

Three gremlins are waiting in the shadows at the base of the well, hidden in darkness beyond the circle of light that the opening projects downward. They will wait for the PCs to leave the circle of light, and then attempt to extinguish their torches as they attack. PCs who peer into the darkness will notice them, but PCs who walk blithely ahead will be ambushed.

Beyond the gremlins, the well turns into a single tunnel, slowly curving, until it reaches a circular 'room', an artificial cavern, 30' in diameter. Ephialte, who is the Anchor of Night here, is waiting there. When Ephialte is slain, Night withdraws from this town.

Upon entering the room with Ephialte, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

As you continue along the gentle curve of the tunnel, your light spills out into a larger room. An artificial cavern has been dug out here, about thirty feet across, with dirt walls and a hemispherical roof curving up into the darkness. In the center of this room stands a creature of no kind you have ever seen before. Eight feet tall, with three claws a foot long on each hand and jagged spikes of shadow reaching out from every surface on their body, they certainly do not appear a friendly creature. They speak, and their voice rasps out into the room. It scrapes across your ears and sounds like rusted metal being tortured. "So....we see they have found some among them who think they are heroes. What is it that you value over life, we wonder? Is it light? Courage? Warmth? Before the end, we will take all of those from you."

The creature then attacks!

After defeating Ephialte, the party may leave the well and enter the village. The haze is gone, and sunlight shines down. The shadows are only as long as they should be, and the town no longer bears its aura of menace. Night has been cleansed from this town, and Sunset has been pushed back. The heroes have succeeded.



ADDITIONAL MONSTERS

GREMLIN (LEVEL 1)

Wounds 4, Vitality 4

Armor 1

Combat Skill +1, Magic Skill +1

Toughness +0, Quickness +1, Mind +0

Attack Techniques and Spells (1 AP, 2 MP total):

Basic Attack* (0 AP): The gremlin slashes with claws. 1d20+1 to hit, 1d4+1 damage.

Darken* (2 MP): The gremlin attempts to extinguish a torch, lantern, or similar light source that it can see. If a creature is holding the light source, that creature may make a Quickness test; on a failure, the light source is extinguished. If the light source is unattended, it is automatically extinguished.

Defense Techniques (1 DP total):

Dodge (1 DP): Make a Quickness test; if the result is greater than the original attack roll, the attack deals no damage.

Passive: Home in the Dark: In total darkness, the gremlin gains +2 Armor and +2 DP. The gremlin never considers darkness a disadvantageous circumstance.

ANIMATE SHADOW (LEVEL 2)

Wounds 8, Vitality -

Armor 4, Aura 2

Combat Skill +2, Magic Skill +0

Toughness +0, Quickness +2, Mind +1

Attack Techniques (2 AP total):

Draining Touch* (0 AP): The shadow reaches out with its touch. 1d20+2 to hit, 1d6+2 damage.

Grab (2 AP): The shadow attempts to grab its target. 1d20+2 to hit; on a hit, do not deal damage. Roll 1d6+2, and if the result minus the effect of any defensive technique used (but do not subtract Armor) is greater than the target's remaining Vitality, they are grabbed. Shadows never interfere with each other; it is always an advantageous circumstance for a shadow to attack a target grabbed by a shadow.

Defense Techniques (2 DP total):

Dodge (1 DP): When attacked by a physical attack, make a Quickness test (1d20+2). If the result is greater than the original attack roll, the attack has

no effect.

Passive: Light Vulnerability: An animate shadow has -2 Armor and -2 Aura in bright light. The penalty increases to -4 Armor, -2 Aura, and -2 to all tests in bright natural sunlight.

EPHIALTE, NIGHT'S ANCHOR (LEVEL 3)

Wounds 8, Vitality 12

Armor 3, Aura 1

Combat Skill +3, Magic Skill +2

Toughness +3, Quickness +1, Mind +1

Attack Techniques and Spells (3 AP, 4 MP total):

Night Claws* (AP 2): Ephialte slashes out with their claws of night. Make two attacks. 1d20+3 to hit, 1d6+3 damage each.

Amplify (2 MP) – After hitting a target with Night Claws, Ephialte may spend 2 MP. If they do so, the target must make a Toughness test or be blinded (Toughness ends).

Sudden Darken (2 MP): Ephialte attempts to extinguish a torch, lantern, or similar light source that it can see. If a creature is holding the light source, that creature may make a Quickness test; on a failure, the light source is extinguished. If the light source is unattended, it is automatically extinguished.

Defense Techniques (3 DP and 4 MP total):

Shadow Thorns (1 DP): Ephialte protects themselves with thorns of shadow. Make a Combat Test; on a success, the attack's damage is reduced by 1d4, and the attacker takes physical damage equal to the damage reduced. (Armor can reduce the damage from the thorns, but cannot reduce it to 0 or lower, as normal.)

Amplify (1 MP): When using Shadow Thorns, Ephialte can spend 1 MP. If they do, the damage dealt to the attacker is magical damage instead of physical.

Passive: Home in the Dark: In total darkness, Ephialte gains +2 Armor, +1 Aura, and +2 DP, and regains an additional 1 MP each round. Ephialte never considers darkness a disadvantageous circumstance.

Dialogue Table: Ephialte likes to taunt their enemies. Up to once each round, as desired, you may roll on the Dialogue Table, below, to see what Ephialte says. (You may desire to reroll if Ephialte has already used that taunt.)

ROLL (1d8)	TAUNT
1	Only Night is eternal!
2	Darkness will consume you; darkness unending.
3	Only sunset, and already there are no true heroes left.
4	Your world will never see another Dawn.
5	Your life is only the first thing we will take from you.
6	Light is a poison. Embrace darkness and know your true form!
7	We were like you, once. It is not too late to welcome the Night.
8	We will exult in your fall!

EXPERIENCE

If using the Slow experience progression, characters should gain 1 XP for completing Heroes Rise.

If using the Normal experience progression, characters should gain 3 XP (Defeated a meaningful challenge, pushed back the reach of Night, GM's discretion – solved puzzles) for completing Heroes Rise.

If using the Fast experience progression, characters should gain 5 XP (Defeated bandit leader, shadows, Ephialte; pushed back the reach of Night, GM's discretion – solved puzzles) for completing Heroes Rise.

ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

The difficulty may vary for different groups, especially of different levels or group sizes. The

listed details of each encounter were designed to create an average difficulty for a group of four first level characters. To adjust the difficulty as appropriate for your group, use these numbers instead.

Bandits (Village Outskirts)

Easy: One bandit. **Hard:** Three bandits.

Extreme: Five bandits.

Goblins (Dirt Path)

Easy: Three goblins. **Hard:** Six goblins.

Extreme: Eight goblins.

Shadows (Smithy)

Easy: One shadow. **Hard:** Three shadows.

Extreme: Four shadows.

Gremlins (Mayor's House)

Easy: Two gremlins. **Hard:** Four gremlins.

Extreme: Six gremlins.

Gremlins (The Well)

Easy: Two gremlins. **Hard:** Four gremlins.

Extreme: Six gremlins.

Ephialte (The Well)

Easy: Reduce Level to 2, Vitality to 8, Combat Skill to +2, Armor to 2. **Hard:** Add one gremlin to the fight.

Extreme: Add two gremlins to the fight.

In addition, it may be appropriate to add additional loot for a higher level party or to reward greater danger. If using the Hard difficulty, add an additional 30 sp each of coin and loot to what is described above. If using the Extreme difficulty, add an additional 60 sp each of coin and loot to what is described above. These values will increase the total to a value appropriate for four second-level characters or four third-level characters respectively.