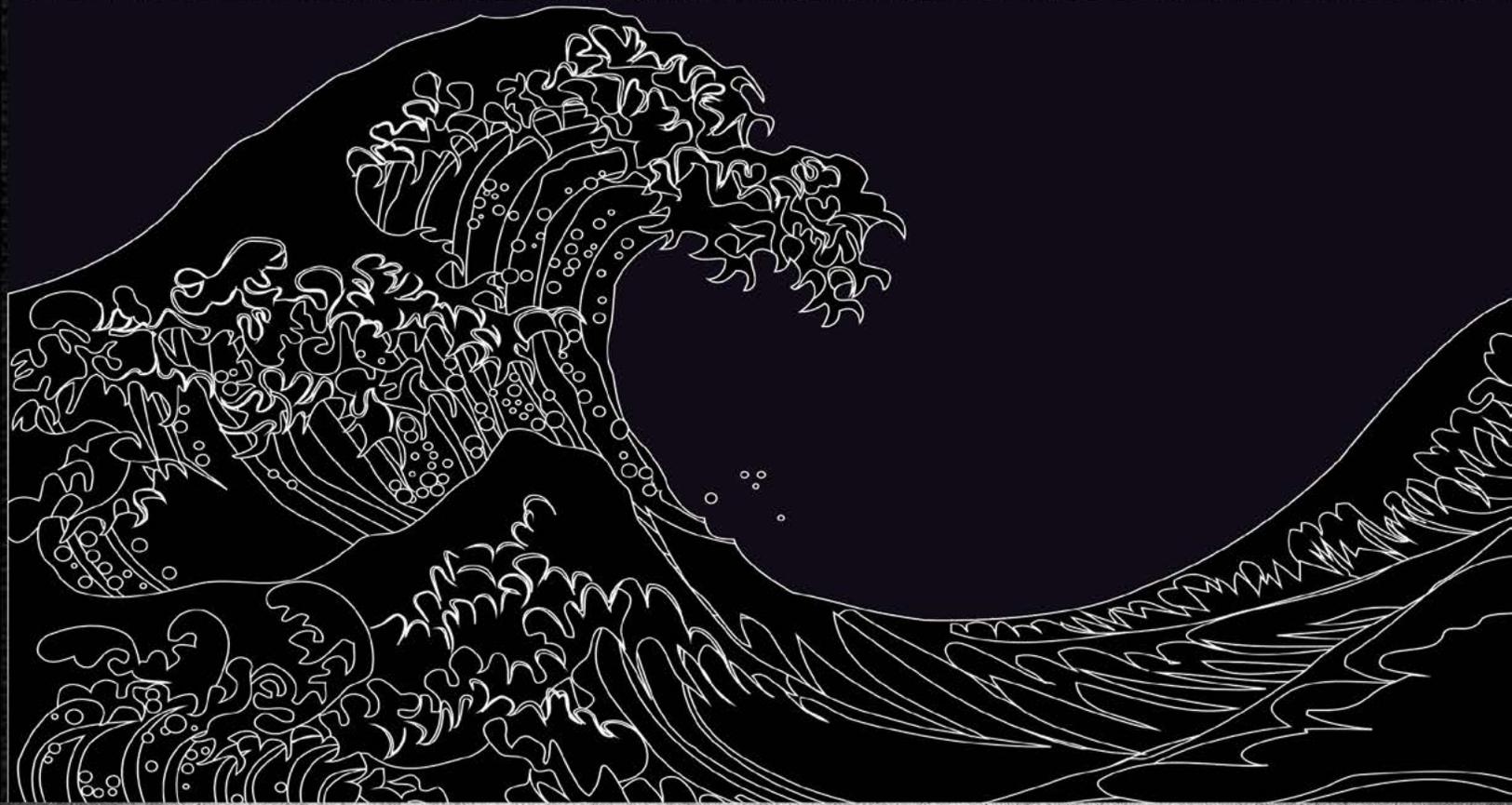


# SOLD HEROES



LONE ADVENTURERS AGAINST THE WORLD

**Labyrinth Lord**  
Compatible Product

# SOLO HEROES

## RUNNING *Labyrinth Lord* ADVENTURES WITH A SINGLE CHARACTER

Every GM faces a short player list sooner or later. It may be that half the group calls in just before the session, or a particular game can only get the attention of one or two other players. Most of the time a GM will simply call the session or break out the card games, but sometimes a GM is keen to play even with fewer than the usual number of players.

*Solo Heroes* provides a set of simple rules modifications that allow you to send just one or two heroes through a level-appropriate old-school adventure with some hope of success. These modifications do not require character sheet changes or module conversion. They fit in between the written adventure and the existing character sheet to allow the PC to stand up to challenges and foes that would normally require an entire party of adventurers.

These rules are intended for use with almost any old-school game with rules more or less equivalent to those used by *Labyrinth Lord*. Individual systems will have their quirks and additions, but these basic mechanics should fit almost all of them. Those interested in more solo tools should look into my new game, [Scarlet Heroes](#).

### PERILS OF SOLITUDE

There are several reasons why a solo *Labyrinth Lord* character isn't well-suited to bracing evil in its lair. The mechanics of the game and the resource depletion inherent in hit point loss and spell expenditure are calibrated for an entire party of heroes, and the system makes some basic assumptions about the availability of multiple characters to deal with dangerous situations. There are four major problems inherent in using a single hero to challenge a traditional pre-written adventure.

**Hit points deplete too quickly.** The biggest issue for a solo adventurer is hit point depletion. A party of six first level fighters has about 6d8 hit points spread out amongst its members, and enemies that go up against that group have to deplete the entire pool before the adventure is an unambiguous failure. Wounded PCs can cycle to the back of the party, the group can choose to behave more carefully when it is depleted, and the party in general has a certain margin of error allowed to it between the first blow and the dying gasp. This is not so much the case when you are a single novice fighter with four hit points.

Even those adventures without much in the way of direct combat have traps, environmental hazards, and other hit point-depleting challenges that would make short work of a lone warrior. Even if the hero has easy access to magical healing, such measures usually take too long to execute in the middle of a swirling melee. It doesn't matter how many potions of healing you have in your backpack if you don't have time to drink them before being cut down by a mob of foes.

**Enemies don't die quickly enough.** That same party of six first level fighters is probably throwing 6d8 damage at their foes on a round where everyone rolls well on their attacks. Due to the "focus-firing" habits acquired by most successful adventuring groups, even fearsome creatures such as ogres and minotaurs are likely to die under their blades if the monsters can't cull enough PCs to slow down the incoming damage.

This dynamic changes if there is only a single PC doing the fighting. One missed hit roll means that the enemy is unscathed for the round, and the hero often has to cut through as many as a dozen or more minor foes. By the time enough hits have connected to chop down an ogre or mop up a goblin war party the PC has been riddled by a dozen rounds of enemy attacks. Many old-school systems have rules for multiple attacks or augmented damage for PCs, but these are also scaled on the assumption that a party is involved in the fight. They aren't normally sufficient to make a single warrior capable of facing a foe meant for an entire party.

**Instant death and incapacitation effects can wipe out lone heroes.** Spells, poisons, monster special abilities and environmental snares often serve to incapacitate solo adventurers in a single die roll. When such luckless victims have four or five teammates around to save them or see to their resurrection, this danger is endurable. When a single failed saving throw is sure to consign a PC to a new career as a harpy's lunch it becomes more difficult to deal with these threats.

**Lone heroes lack the wide range of skills and abilities possessed by a party.** Many adventures assume that the party is going to have healing magic, arcane discernment, skill at picking locks and defeating traps, and a healthy number of burly warriors. Beyond this, some old-school games involve codified skills that are required for success in certain types of endeavors. A single hero is rarely in a position to have all these abilities to the same degree as an entire party of adventurers. This can stop the hero cold when confronted by some challenge or barrier that presumes access to abilities the character does not have.

All of these challenges can be mitigated by a sufficiently clever GM and carefully-designed adventure. By tailoring challenges to a PC and keeping them away from dangers that might kill them in a single roll, a GM can provide fun even to a one-PC party. Still, not every GM has the time or energy to tailor an adventure to a specific PC, and such an approach makes it very difficult to use existing classic or newly-written adventures without complete rewrites of the material. If a GM wants to use this existing material with a single PC, whether out of scheduling necessity or the simple novelty of the fun, different measures are required.

# RULES FOR SOLO ADVENTURING

## THE FIRST RULE: DAMAGE DICE

For a solo hero game, all damage dice are read in a different way. Instead of their full face value, each die does damage based on the roll; a roll of 1 does no damage, a roll of 2-5 does one point of damage, a roll of 6-9 does two points of damage, and a roll of 10 or more does four points of damage. If there is a modifier to the damage applied by strength or magic, the modifier can be applied to any single die in the damage roll.

Thus, someone wielding a  *dread greaxe +1* with a +1 Strength bonus to damage would roll the axe's base 2d6 damage dice and add 2 to the die of his choice. If the final results were then 5 and 6, the hit would do 3 points of damage in total. A magic-user with a -1 Strength penalty flailing away with his dagger would roll 1d4 and subtract 1 from the total. If his net result is 0 or 1, then his blow does no damage at all. A hero swinging a poleaxe with no modifiers would roll 1d10 and have a much better chance of inflicting 2 points of damage than the warrior slashing with a short sword that does 1d6, and might even roll a 10, and do 4 points of damage.

These damage dice rules are used for all effects that inflict a random range of damage on a victim. Fireballs, falls, arrow traps, falling rocks, and anything else that rolls dice of damage will use the interpretation of those rolls given above.

If an effect does a flat amount of damage, then one point of damage is done for each four full points given in the text. Thus, if the adventure states that touching a cursed bronze statue automatically inflicts 10 points of electrical damage on the blasphemer, only 2 points of damage are done to the luckless hero. Caltrops that automatically inflict 1 point of damage on those who cross them round down to zero, being too trivial a danger to threaten a lone hero.

## THE SECOND RULE: INFLECTING DAMAGE

Damage received by PCs is taken off their hit points as normal. If a fighter with 6 hit points is struck by an orc's spear, the orc rolls 1d6. If a 4 is the result, for example, then one point of damage is done and the lone fighter has 5 hit points left.

Damage received by NPCs counts as a *full hit die* for each point. Thus, if that same orc is hit by the fighter's sword and a 3 is rolled on the damage dice, one full hit die of damage is done to the orc. Since the orc is only a 1 hit die creature to begin with, it falls dead, skewered by the blade of its foe.

Monster hit dice are rounded to the nearest whole number. Thus, creatures with ½ hit dice, 1-1 hit dice, and 1+2 hit dice all count as 1 hit die creatures. High-level NPCs are assumed to have hit dice equal to their levels.

When fighting enemies of equal or lesser hit dice, the PC can roll a *Fray die* representing their mighty hewing, punching, kicking, biting, object-hurling, and other assorted fisticuffs or short-ranged combat spells delivered toward an enemy that does not clearly outclass them in skill. This is a separate die that can be rolled once per round. This die always does damage regardless of the hit roll,

so it is best to use a die of some different color than the others so it can be easily identified. Fighters roll 1d8 for their Fray die, clerics, thieves, and other non-strictly-martial classes roll 1d6, and magic-users and similar sorcerous classes roll 1d4.

The damage from a Fray die can only be inflicted on foes with equal or fewer hit dice than the hero- more experienced enemies are just too canny to be maimed without a focused attack. The exception is the Fray die of magic-users. Their eldritch bolts can harm any foe, even one of greater hit dice.

A hero who wishes to do something other than make an attack roll in a round can still roll their Fray die against any foes within reach, representing the murder they might be wreaking incidental to their other activities.

If enough damage is done to a monster to kill it, the PC can spend the rest of the damage injuring any other foe within range of equal or worse armor class. For example, an armored hobgoblin priest and his bodyguard of goblin warriors sets upon a hero. The hero swings his halberd against a goblin and hits for 2 points of damage. He also rolls his Fray die of 1d8, and which does an additional point of damage that does not require a hit roll to land. Goblins only have one hit die, so his flailing fray strikes down one of them. The hero then spends the remaining 2 points of axe damage chopping up another two goblins. He cannot spend the halberd damage on the hobgoblin priest, because the priest has a better armor class than the foe he struck with his attack. Likewise, if one of the goblins was perched up on a balcony or shooting from across an open field, it would be too far away from the melee to be threatened by the warrior's halberd or Fray die.

## THE THIRD RULE: HEALING

Healing dice and effects are treated just if they were "reversed" damage dice, healing as many hit dice of injury as they would have inflicted points of damage. Thus, a curative potion that the module indicates will heal 1d6+1 damage would be rolled as a "reversed" damage die, curing from 1 to 2 hit points for a hero.

After every fight or occasion of injury, a solo hero can take five minutes to bandage their cuts and catch their breath. This first aid will cure up to two points of damage, though it will not heal them above their total before the combat or injury, nor will it repair damage suffered from Defying Death.

### LIKE THIS? TRY *SCARLET HEROES*

Like the idea of a lone hero facing the perils of a hostile world? Try my new game *Scarlet Heroes*, an old-school RPG built both as a stand-alone game and a seamless overlay for your own favorite system. Use it to play existing OSR material or classic adventure modules with a single player and GM. *Right now it's being Kickstarted until March 2, 2014*, and you can pick up the full playable low-art beta for a trifling pledge.

## WHAT IT ALL MEANS

The damage conversion and the Fray die ensure that the PC is much slower to go down during combat and much more dangerous toward monstrous foes. Every round, the PC will usually do at least 1 HD worth of damage to any enemy of equal or fewer hit dice thanks to the fray die, and has a chance of doing more with their regular attack. A hero with a +1 weapon or a +1 modifier to the damage roll is guaranteed to do at least 1 HD in damage, and a fighter with a greatsword might even do 4 HD.

A typical novice fighter with 5 hit points and AC 4 from chain mail and a shield might run into a melee with four orcs during his exploration. Every round, his fray die can be expected to kill one of them, with a 1-in-6 chance of killing two. With a 1d8 sword in hand and a +1 Strength bonus, the fighter has an excellent chance of delivering 2 points of damage with every hit, leaving it possible that a lucky round might kill all four orcs at once.

Every round, the orcs can take a swing at the fighter, doing from 0-2 points of damage on each successful hit. It's a dangerous situation for the fighter, but he needs to be hit at least three times before he's in peril of his life. Compared to a lone hero using the usual rules for old-school combat, the fighter will probably win the engagement rather than being rapidly reduced to stewmeat by orcish spears.

Against more fearsome foes, things get uglier for him. Against an ogre with 4 hit dice and a 1d10 club, he can't use his Fray die because the ogre has more hit dice than he has levels. Furthermore, the ogre's club is much more likely to result in the high damage

roll that would inflict two or four points of damage on him. Still, it won't take more than about four hits for him to bring down the brute if he can stay alive long enough to deliver them. If he were to confront the beast at second level, with another 4 or 5 hit points of his own, the odds would be much worse for the hulking creature. A fourth-level solo hero would chop the brute down in two or three rounds, with his Fray die helping the monster to its well-deserved grave.

Instant-death poisons, death spells, inescapable pit traps, and mind-controlling sorceries that would leave a hero helpless are best answered by Defying Death. That particular rule is meant to take the finality out of "save or die" situations by converting a failed save into damage instead. Because the number of dice scale evenly with the level of the character, there's no level at which a PC can just wave away these threats- they're always going to eat about one hit point for each PC level, and if doom is dodged too often at the table it becomes more and more likely that the bigger dice are going to be returning two or four points of damage each.

These solo rules are intended to fit PCs for classic adventure without any need to change either them or the written module. A single canny 1st level thief with a good hit point roll and a little caution can dare the perils of Quasqueton with a reasonable hope of survival, and a 3rd level fighter with a stout sword arm has a decent chance of standing fast against the perils of the sand-swept Lost City. If you use the Enduring Protagonist optional rule, you can start a game with a first-level PC and still have reasonable expectations of seeing high levels with the hero.

### THE FOURTH RULE: DEFYING DEATH

Any time the hero is confronted by a failed saving throw against a death spell, a sleep-murdering assassin, a withering energy drain, an inescapable snare, a hopeless situation or an insurmountable barrier, they may choose to *Defy Death*. This lucky evasion lets them escape the effects of their calamitous situation, bypass an otherwise unavoidable condition, or get past barriers that would stop them cold, though it dangerously taxes their reserves of luck.

When a PC Defies Death, they suffer one damage die for every level they possess. The first time they dodge doom during a game session, they roll 1d4 for each level. The next time, they roll 1d6, then 1d8, and then 1d10 for each further attempt to dodge their fate. If the damage inflicted by this taxing of their luck would reduce them to 0 hit points, they are instead left at 1 hit point and whatever doom they were trying to slip affects them normally.

It is up to the GM to decide what situations and negative effects can be dodged. When combat is dodged, it usually means the PC has successfully fled an otherwise inescapable situation. When some arcane barrier is overcome by a PC with no access to Dispel magic, it might mean the hero recognizes the ward and knows how to spoil its effect. When a furious mob that has caught the hero

in an alleyway is dodged, it might mean some local official is an old friend and rides in to disperse the crowd. The GM is the final arbiter of what can be evaded and the form that evasion takes.

### THE FIFTH RULE: EXPERIENCE AND HENCHMEN

A lone hero earns only a quarter of the normal experience points for their deeds, reflecting the fact that they have fewer hands to divide the treasure.

Henchmen and retainers can be employed as normal, but they are treated as monsters for purposes of combat damage. A minion with 1 hit die is slain by one point of damage.

GMs should feel no particular obligation to send henchmen along with a solo adventurer. The extra bodies to soak up monster attacks aren't as crucial with these rules, and it can prove cumbersome to keep track of them all. In the same vein, GMs should be careful about including more than one PC in an adventure when using these rules- they might turn out to be far more fearsome than the adventure expected of its heroes.

# OPTIONAL RULES AND GUIDELINES

## ENDURING PROTAGONISTS

For some GMs and players, their intention is to play a single heroic PC through a number of adventures. They want to explore this particular hero's tale, and aren't interested in death or other ruinations that would otherwise terminate the PC's tale before they were done playing him or her. For these campaigns, here's an optional rule for protagonists meant to survive the worst the world can dole out.

An enduring protagonist always has maximum hit points for their class and level. Furthermore, zero hit points doesn't mean death. Instead, they are left for dead, lost in the swirl of battle, or make a hairs-breadth escape from death by some unlikely coincidence.

This good fortune comes at a price, however. The hero must retreat to lick their wounds and recover their strength. If the mission they were attempting to accomplish is time-sensitive, they will fail as time runs out while they regain their strength. If the task had no time pressure, then they realize that they were overmatched and must go pursue some other adventure before they can come back and make a second try at their goal.

Protagonists who wish to make a second try at a time-sensitive goal may choose instead to be captured by their foes, or their bodies stripped of belongings while they lay in seeming death, or otherwise substantially inconvenienced in exchange for being allowed to continue their attempt to stop events in time. Such determined heroes regain all lost hit points but must then manage an escape from their captors or scavenge some gear to replace their now forever-lost harness. GMs are advised to allow only one such second chance for any given adventure.

## CONVERTING OTHER GAMES

Many readers might be interested in using these rules with other gaming systems, including other *Sine Nomine* games such as *Other Dust* or *Stars Without Number*. Under most circumstances, these rules should work perfectly well for any system that shares the same basic mechanics as *Labyrinth Lord*.

Some other games give PCs substantially more hit points than the 1-8 per level range common to *Labyrinth Lord*. For these games, Constitution bonuses or starting hit dice floors might give a novice PC a dozen or more hit points even at first level. Under those circumstances, you may want to scale the PC's hit points downward a little- assume 10 hit points per level for an enormously tough fighter-type PC and 4 hit points per level as a basic minimum for a less martial character.

Other games add additional attacks, odd damage dice for weapons, or feat-based combat elaborations. Where these additions help a PC they can usually be left in place, but extra attacks are perhaps best translated into larger fray dice or more of them rather than full additional attack sequences.

## AUTOMATIC INITIATIVE

Losing initiative can take down even the mightiest warrior when a dozen goblins get lucky hit rolls with their javelins. To even the balance, you might optionally decide to simply let the hero automatically win initiative checks. The hero might still be susceptible to ambushes and other surprise attacks, but when facing foes in open battle they will always win initiative.

Aside from the combat value of this alacrity, it also gives a hero time to flee if faced by overwhelming opposition. In a party of standard size the monsters would usually busy themselves butchering one or two of the less fortunate members while the others flee- with only one hero, that kind of delaying action is impractical, and so it can be necessary to give them a more overt opportunity to run for their lives.

## EXTRA FRAY DICE

While perhaps not so much an optional rule as it is a game tool, a GM can always hand a hero extra fray dice for actions or situations that are particularly beneficial to them in combat.

A thief who leaps from ambush on an unwary bandit patrol might get not only his backstab multiplier on his regular damage, but also an extra couple of fray dice to represent the havoc she wreaks before the bandits realize what's happening to them. A warrior lashing out at a pack of orcs might gain an extra die from the brilliant sunlight that dazzles their bloodshot eyes. A halfling with a knife creeping up through the undergrowth on an unwary sentry might roll another three or four fray dice to ensure the poor human's doom.

Any bonus is the GM's choice, to be given as the situation recommends. As a general guide, one die should be given for a helpful but not overwhelming circumstance, two dice for a very advantageous situation, and three or more for a perfectly-planned coup. Only the best circumstance should be considered, so as to avoid giving undue benefit to a half-dozen trivial edges.

## ONE PAIR OF HANDS

A few adventures are written so as to practically require more than one adventurer to overcome certain obstacles or challenges. A vault may require two keys to be turned at once, or a stretch of badlands might be lethal to any group that fails to post a watch overnight.

For these situations, just elide the parts of the challenge that would otherwise require two people. Put the two keyholes adjacent to one another, for example, or arbitrarily decide that the pantherish senses of the lone heroine awaken her as some foe steals close to her lonely campsite. This may result in a challenge that is easier than what the adventure's author originally expected, but the other difficulties faced by a solo adventurer should be more than enough to compensate for the lack.

## SOLO RULES SUMMARY

### INFLECTING DAMAGE

When reading damage dice, don't count the usual totals. Instead, count each die as given on the table below. If you have a bonus to your damage roll, add it to one die of your choice before comparing it to the table.

DIE RESULT	DAMAGE DONE
1 or less	No damage
2 to 5	1 point of damage
6 to 9	2 points of damage
10 or more	4 points of damage

All damage dice are read this way, including damage done by spells, traps, and environmental hazards. Thus, a 5d6 fireball would do anywhere from 0 to 10 points of damage.

### TAKING DAMAGE

A PC takes damage as normal and will die at zero hit points. Monsters and NPCs lose one hit die for each point of damage inflicted. Thus, an orc would be killed by 1 point of damage, and an ogre by 4. Hit dice are rounded to the nearest whole number. When enough damage is done to kill a particular target, any left-over damage can be inflicted on any other victim within range with equal or worse armor class.

### THE FRAY DIE

Every round, the PC can roll one die to inflict damage on any enemies of equal or fewer hit dice, representing their martial hewing and smiting or the smaller combat spells of a trained sorcerer. Fighters roll 1d8, magic-users roll 1d4, and all others roll 1d6. Magic-user Fray dice can affect any foe- even those more powerful. This damage is automatic and does not require a hit roll. The fray die need not be targeted at the same enemy as the PC's attack, and a PC need not attack in a round in order to use their Fray die.

### HEALING

After every battle or source of injury, the hero can take five minutes to bind their wounds and catch their breath, healing up to 2 hit points of the damage they incurred in that battle or event. Harm from Defying Death cannot be mended this way.

Healing spells and magic acts like "reversed" damage dice, with the totals rolled healing that many lost hit dice or hit points. Thus, a 1d6+1 healing spell will heal from 1 to 2 points of damage.

### DEFYING DEATH

When the PC is hit by a save-or-die effect, caught in a snare they cannot possibly escape alone, trapped by mobs of foes, or brain-bent by a malevolent sorcerer, they can attempt to Defy Death. Any potentially adventure-ending challenge or danger can be dodged at the GM's discretion, though it inflicts a toll on a hero's luck and resilience.

To Defy Death, the hero rolls one d4 damage die for every level they have, taking the damage as described above. Thus, a 3rd level fighter would roll 3d4 when he wanted to Defy Death. If the damage reduces them to 0 hit points, they retain 1 hit point but suffer the full effects of the doom.

If the dodge didn't exhaust them, they escape it through some means decided by the GM. It may be that they threw off the magic at the last moment, found crumbling handholds in the wall, or happen to know what marks to cut to deactivate the magical barrier around their goal.

The more often a hero Defies Death, the harder it gets. The second time they dodge doom during a single session, they start rolling d6s. The next, d8s, and then finally d10s if they continue to evade doom. As the die sizes increase, dodging doom risks inflicting even more damage on their future prospects. Sooner or later, their luck is fated to run out.

### AN EXAMPLE ENGAGEMENT

The mighty-thewed samurai Shinji Haraldsen finds himself embroiled with six goblin warriors and their savage witch-priestess. Trusting in the steel of his *o-yoroi* armor and the edge of his father's axe, Shinji hurls himself into the fray.

Shinji is a level 1 fighter with 5 hit points, a +1 Strength modifier, a *hand axe+1*, and AC 2 from his plate armor and shield.

Against him stand six goblins with 1 HD each, AC 7, and spears that do 1d6 damage. The witch-priestess has more experience, and has 3 HD, AC 6, and a dagger that does 1d4 damage.

Shinji wins initiative and decides to cull some goblins first. He rolls to hit AC 7 and succeeds. He rolls 1d6 for the hand axe's damage and gets a four; adding his Strength and the axe's magical bonus to that results in six, which the table shows as 2 points of damage to the goblins. This kills one of them outright, and the excess damage spills over to kill another one within reach of his red-stained axe.

He also rolls his fray die of 1d6, getting a three, for 1 point of damage. He'd like to do something about that witch-priestess, but he can only apply the fray die to equal or inferior foes. One more goblin goes down as his backswing staves in its skull.

The goblins are driven on by the priestess and refuse to flee from the terrible warrior. Instead, all three attack, and by luck two of them hit the samurai. They roll 1 and 6 for their spears, doing zero and 2 points of damage. Shinji is down to 3 HP.

The witch-priestess now unleashes her sorcery, striking Shinji with a spell of inexorable *Sleep*. This would end Shinji's tale on the spot, so the GM allows him to *Defy Death*. Shinji rolls 1d4 as a damage die and takes 1 damage as he shakes off the spell.

Hard-pressed, Shinji fights on, this time smiting the priestess with his axe, inflicting another 2 points of damage. The witch is left with 1 HD left as Shinji's Fray die slays another goblin. Will victory be his, or shall his gnawed bones yellow in the wild?

# THE YELLOW TOAD GOD'S WELL

## A SIDE ADVENTURE FOR A 1ST LEVEL SOLO HERO

The peasants tell of the ruined village of Yellow Toad Well, up in the dry hills a half-day's journey from the hamlet. There is a god in the well, they say, a great god of bulging eyes and yellow skin, and he gave the villagers crops and abundance in exchange for their most precious treasures. Five years ago a band of hungry mercenaries came through and destroyed the village, leaving only scorched ruins and bones behind them. The peasants say that the god must not have been very strong to let its worshipers be slain that way, but still, it is best to leave its treasures untouched. It is still a god, after all, and they are still peasants. Who are they to rob a deity?

### THE TRUTH OF THE WELL

In truth, the god of the well is nothing more than an overgrown toad tainted with the foul magic of the evil *feng shui* that troubled the village. For a time, it could soak up the geomantic misfortune and shelter the inhabitants from its consequences, but eventually the bad luck was too much and the mercenaries came to blot out the unhappy village. The toad has intelligence of a kind, but it was always singularly indifferent to its worshipers, and is now merely annoyed that there are none to give it fresh offerings.

The neighboring peasants were right when they spoke of the villagers giving their most precious treasures to the god, but it was not gold or silver that they offered. They gave their children to the well, dressing them in such finery as the poor village could fashion before hurling them down into the water. Some the god ate, and some it used for worse purposes. The uneasy ghosts and slime-skinned toadspawn of these children still lurk below, along with one wild-eyed survivor who has evaded the god thus far.

### THE VILLAGE OF YELLOW TOAD WELL

The village itself is a scavenged shambles, old ashes, crumbled mortar, and a few man-sized statues of toads that have been broken almost beyond recognition. All that remain of its humble buildings. The few who survived the rampage of the mercenaries have fled far away, and there is nothing left worth stealing amid the ruins. The well itself stands in the center of the village square, four feet in width and framed in soft limestone slabs. It is fifty feet down to the surface of the water below.

#### 1. *The Pool of the Toad God*

The walls of this natural limestone hollow are slick with faintly phosphorescent slime. A thief could ascend without a rope, but less nimble souls would require some help to reach the wellshaft overhead. The water is twenty feet deep at its deepest, enough to cushion a fall. The floor of the pool is thick with small, crumbling bones, and many blind fish flit among them.

Heroes in metal armor will be unable to swim, though they can struggle through the bones to reach the shore before they start to suffocate. Those that do so will feel the sensation of dozens of small, unseen hands clinging to them until they leave the water, though this grip will not be enough to stop them.

#### 2. *The Tunnel of Memory*

This snaking passageway is lit by the same pale, phosphorescent slime that gives barely-sufficient illumination to the rest of the tunnels. On its wall, crude carvings of village life and adult figures can be seen, the works done with a childlike simplicity. Halfway down the passageway, four large lumps of slime will rear up from the floor to attack. These toadspawn rave of being left alone in the dark for so very long, even as they try to tear the throat from any interloper. Their bodies are soft and toad-pale, with clawed, webbed fingers and the hairless heads of children.

**Toadspawn** (4): MV 90' (30'), AC 8, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1d6 claws, SV F1, ML 9. One of the toadspawn still wears a tarnished silver necklace worth 100 gp.

#### 3. *The Sinking Chamber*

The floor of this cave is three feet deep in mud and water, halving movement rates and eliminating any Dexterity bonus to armor class. Those who cross will be attacked by the hungry ghosts of three children, their rotting remains clawing and biting beneath the surface of the murky water.

**Hungry Ghosts** (3): MV 90' (30'), AC 6, HD 1, #AT 1, DG 1d4 bite, SV F1, ML 12. They can be *Turned* as skeletons.

#### 4. *The Toadfather's Shrine*

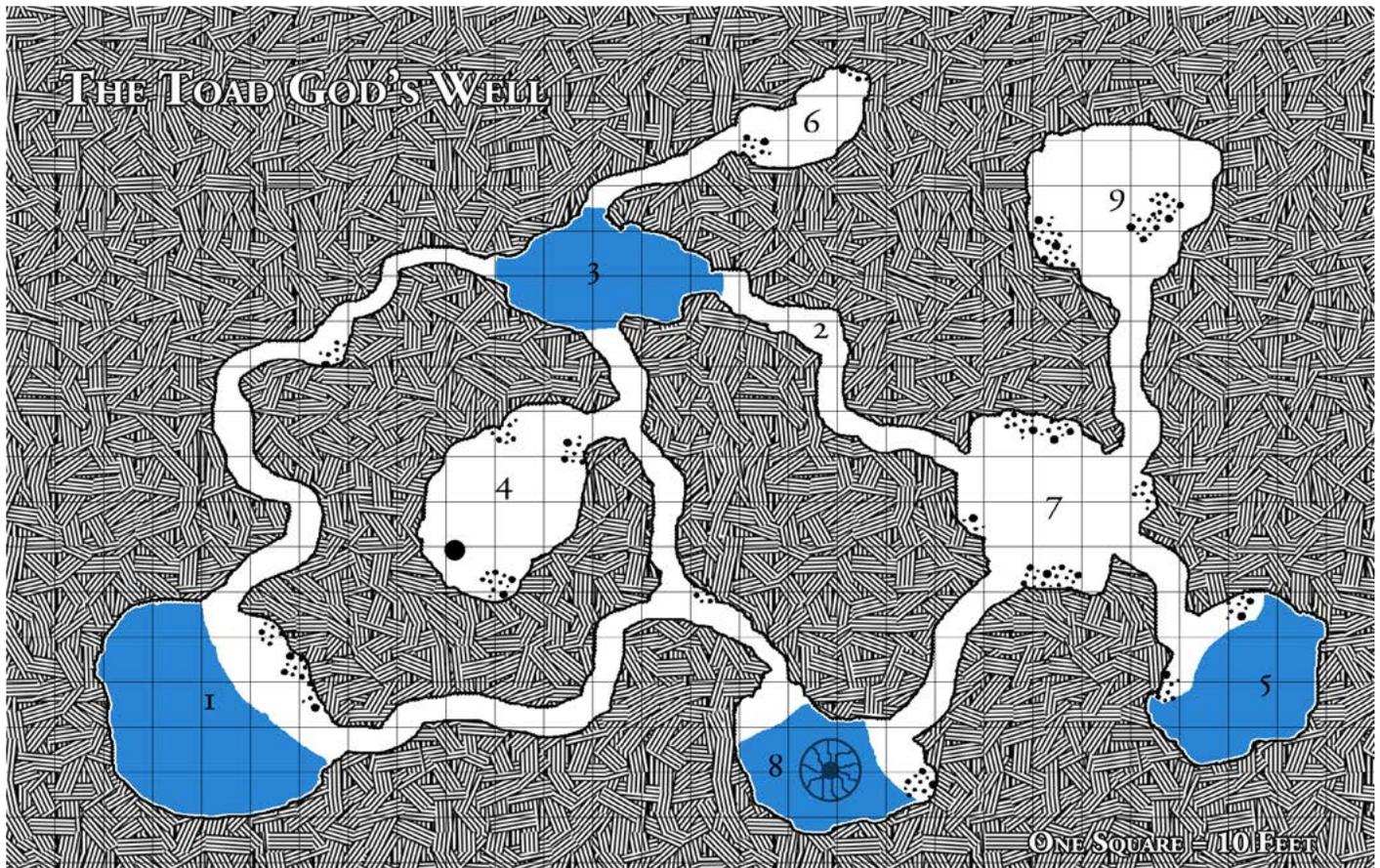
A limestone idol of a swollen toad dominates the far end of the chamber, executed crudely and with little skill. Before it a vast mound of rotting fish is piled in offering. A dozen small bodies are arranged in attitudes of reverent worship around the idol, their remains preserved by a thick layer of transparent slime. If the hero approaches the idol, the "corpse" nearest the icon will rise and attack. This toadspawn constantly spews the preservative slime as it attacks, forcing a save versus Poison each round for those who engage it in melee. A failed save inflicts 1 point of damage as it numbs the hero's skin.

**Toadspawn Priest** (1): MV 90' (30'), AC 8, HD 3, #AT 1 + slime, DG 1d6 claws, SV F3, ML 12.

The child-priest has nothing of value on it, but beneath the rotting fish are trinkets gathered long ago by the toadspawn. These golden pins and baubles are worth roughly 500 gp.

#### 5. *Tadpool*

This shallow pool has at least a dozen small skeletons in varying states of decay lying in the clear water. Among them flit dozens of child-faced tadpoles with sizes ranging from palm-long to a few as large as a man's forearm. If dragged from the water they shriek like unhappy infants. Prolonged crying will bring the toad god from its lair to investigate the disturbance in its nursery.



### 6. *Fei-lan's Refuge*

The last sacrifice offered by the village hides here, granted a half-hearted immunity by the strange whims of the gods. The Immortal Tendai, a god of deviation and aberrance, has blessed Fei-lan with a measure of clerical favor. While a dubious god to most, Tendai acts to break old patterns and disrupt the ways of the world. Fei-lan invokes her spells by instinct and inspiration, and her *Protection from Evil* enchantment held back the toad god long enough for her to flee. The god largely ignores her these days, waiting patiently for an opportunity to render her into the same manner of creature as her fellow sacrifices. The toadspawn and undead will not harm her, sensing in her a kindred offering.

Fei-lan is thirteen years old and more than half mad with the past five years of living on cave fish and dank water. She will refuse to believe the hero is real, convinced they are only a very realistic hallucination provoked by her loneliness. She will aid the hero with her spells, but will not face the toad god. She will resist any attempt to take her from the well- she cannot bear the thought of hallucinating herself free, only to wake up again in her cave.

**Fei-lan:** MV 120' (40'), AC 8, HD 2, #AT 1, DG 1d4 club, SV C2, ML 8. Spells: *Cure Light Wounds*, *Protection from Evil*.

### 7. *Scraped Cave*

The soft limestone floor is gouged by long scratches where the talons of the toad god have clawed it. Most of the traffic leads toward the tunnel that winds toward its lair.

### 8. *Sinkhole Room*

The standing water on the floor of this cave conceals a silty sinkhole. Those too burdened to swim must save versus Paralysis when nearing the sinkhole or slide into it. Those who can't think of a way to keep from plunging in may *Defy Death* to claw out of it.

### 9. *The Toad God's Lair*

The toad god has a 3 in 6 chance of being asleep when first encountered here. Thieves can automatically backstab a sleeping god, while other classes can get a free hit by sneaking up on it with a successful Dexterity check. If awake, the god will offer the hero its treasure if they bring it Fei-lan. It will only attack if this bargain is refused or if it is ambushed while asleep.

The god is a hideously corpulent blend of man and toad, six feet tall and covered with warts that pulse with caustic filth. If it is struck by an edged weapon, the attacker must save versus Paralysis or suffer 1 point of damage from the spray. The god will not pursue those that flee unless it is unhurt.

**Toad God:** MV 60' (20'), AC 7, HD 4, #AT 1, DG 1d8 claws, SV F4, ML 12.

The god has piled the best of its treasure against the far wall. Included are a **potion of healing**, a half-dozen semiprecious gems each worth 50 gp, a pile of coins worth 400 gp, and a **scroll of Read Languages**. A long coil of silk rope is too filthy and worn to be worth anything, but it could be used to hook a projection on the wellshaft and climb out of the pit if needed.

# SCARLET HEROES



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