

DawnforgedCast Presents

BEFORE PHANDELVER

A TUTORIAL AND ALTERNATE START FOR
LOST MINES OF PHANDELVER

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VERSION 1.0

For many newcomers to DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, *Lost Mines of Phandelver* is their introduction to the hobby. It comes with the *Starter Set* and is designed to teach new Dungeon Masters how to run a D&D game. However, while the tutorial thread that runs throughout the adventure is suitably instructive, I believe DMs running that all-important first session could benefit from a little extra guidance. With that in mind, I've devised an alternate beginning for *Lost Mines*, one designed specifically to help new DMs introduce the game to new players.



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THE MAIN POINT

Your objective with the first session is **not** to achieve a flawless execution of the rules.

The goal is to get your players excited to play Dungeons & Dragons.

Use this as your prevailing mantra!

DM PREPARATION

While this tutorial will certainly be helpful to new Dungeon Masters, it assumes a general level of knowledge on your part. Apologies friend, the burden of work is going to fall on you, but your efforts will pay off!

You'll need to be at least one step ahead of your players, capable of leading them through the rules and the adventure. Before you sit down with your players, make sure that you read and understand the *Starter Set Rulebook* (or the *Player's Handbook*, specifically chapters 7-9), the content below, and at least the introduction and parts 1 and 2 of the *Lost Mines of Phandelver* adventure.

PREMADE CHARACTERS

If you are using the premade characters from the *Starter Set*, spend at least a few minutes with the players before the game to introduce them to the general concepts of their chosen character. Make sure to also emphasize the **Background** section of the character sheet, particularly the part about their **Personal Goal**.

For players who choose spellcasters, create a separate sheet that lists and explains the spells they have available. Spellcasters are generally *not* recommended for players entirely new to roleplaying games.

CUSTOM CHARACTERS

If you choose to create characters with the players, try to do so during a separate session *prior* to the first session.

Below are some tips for coaching your players through the character creation process.

- Help your players envision the fantasy character they want to play. Use real-world or fictional examples to illustrate the different classes. For example, Joan of Arc embodies the spirit of a paladin; Robin Hood might have been a ranger; Hermione Granger was a wizard.
- Have the players focus more on the feel of their character than on the numbers. Ask them how their character would react in different situations and then help them find the abilities that best fit their answers.
- Some new players may come to the game with ideas and character concepts not easily replicated with the

rules as written. This is reasonable and to be expected. However, I recommended sticking with one of the basic classes and races included in the *Player's Handbook* until they get a firm grasp of the rules and gameplay. There will be ample time in future campaigns to play out-of-the-book concepts.

- Spend some extra time on the background rules described in chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook*. Make sure your players have some semblance of a history, however vague, before their first session. More importantly, help them devise a **Personal Goal** for their character. Even 'I adventure to kill monsters' is better than nothing. The ideals and bonds they pick (or roll) will help with this.
- Use this exercise as an opportunity to introduce the dwarf **Gundren Rockseeker** as a significant NPC in their backstory. Ask them how they know the prospector and how he came to be their patron.

PREPARE THE GAMING SPACE

Below are some tips for setting up a tabletop game environment.

- Reduce background noise and distractions. Some players may feel uncomfortable playing around people not involved in the game. As far as possible, find a space that is isolated, comfortable, and quiet.
- Dice can and will go on unexpected journeys, so roll them where they can be easily retrieved.
- A hungry player is a distracted player, which is why refreshments are ubiquitous at D&D tables. However, try to avoid snacks and drinks that are particularly messy or apt to spill. One solution is to provide food before the game. You shouldn't be expected to do this every session, though.
- Do not underestimate the effect of temperature on your players' attention and willingness to engage. Like Goldilocks, find a place that's not too hot and not too cold.

PREPARE THE GAMING TABLE

The gaming table is where you and your players will spend most of the game session. Make sure it's comfortable and conducive to gaming.

- Select a table big enough for you and your materials, and the players and their materials. You will need a little more room than your players. An extra chair or side table will help in this regard.
- Set up the table at least 30 minutes before the game.
- Have an ample supply of paper and pencils on hand. It may only take a minute to scrounge these items during the game but that's a minute spent not playing the game, and worse, a distraction.
- Consider setting a place at the table for each player, with pencils, notepaper, dice, and their character sheets (if you have them). Having these items neatly arranged for the players ahead of time sets a strong precedent and lets players know someone organized is at the helm.
- Foster a mentoring environment by seating experienced players next to new players.
- Have your session notes in order. If you're using maps, make sure they're easily accessible.
- If you're using miniatures or tokens to represent your players and NPCs, arrange them in such a way that you don't have to dig around for them.
- Make sure everyone has the dice they need. Suggest to the players that they set aside any dice they won't often use. For example, if Ragnar Barbar's abilities don't require a d4 or d12, set those dice aside. Having a massive pile of dice in the center of the table may look cool, but it'll overwhelm new players, who may have trouble quickly identifying the die they need.
- The less time players spend with their heads buried in the *Player's Handbook*, the better. Have one available but keep it to the side.
- I do *not* recommend using a DM's screen for this opening session. A DM's screen is for hiding your notes and dice rolls from the players. They also have quick-reference rules printed on the inside. While this can be helpful, it also creates a psychological barrier between you and your players. For the first session at least, let them look. Don't worry if they glimpse your notes; they aren't likely to understand what they're seeing, anyway. Let them gain some appreciation for the work you've put into preparing this experience. Remember **THE MAIN POINT**.

PREPARE YOUR MENTAL SPACE

Close your eyes. Take a slow and deep breath. **It will be all right.** Most DMs have been where you are now: worried they won't provide their players a good time, terrified they'll ruin the hobby for them forever!

Take another slow, deep breath. It will be all right. You're not going to ruin anything.

Like every novice DM before you, you will make mistakes. There are a thousand things to learn and do to be a great DM. With perseverance, self-reflection, and a lot of trial and error, you'll slowly gain the skills you need to become a great DM. However, for now, the most important thing you can do is: **be present for your players.** Remember, they're nervous, too—they're uncertain about this strange game with thick rulebooks and funny-looking dice; they're afraid of making mistakes; of being asked to perform in front of others; of failing. Be there for them.

D&D can seem daunting at first, and in many ways it is, but you'll be figuring it out as a group. You will try together and fail together, improve together and succeed together, all the while enjoying a hobby unlike any other.

So take a deep breath—an amazing journey is about to begin!



PREPARE THE PLAYERS

Players will want to socialize before the game starts. This is normal, and it is important to allow time for it. Letting them chat now will (1) make it less likely they'll do so during the session, (2) calm their nerves, and (3) give them a chance to bond with one another.

To achieve a more immersive gaming experience, you'll want the players' focus to be on the game. However, expecting them to immediately switch mental gears is unreasonable, so ease into the transition with some prompting.

At least 15 minutes before the game starts, paraphrase the following to your players:

This is a great opportunity to introduce your characters and, if appropriate, establish how they know one another.

Please ask me if you have any questions about your abilities or the session. We'll begin soon!

About 5 minutes before the game starts:

We'll be starting in about five minutes. Please head to the table. The adventure begins soon!

Make sure you have the following (if you haven't already set up the space for the players):

- Your character sheet
- Dice (specifically the ones your class uses)
- A pencil and scratch paper for taking notes
- A mini or token to represent your character (optional)

If your favorite electronic device will be a distraction, please turn it off or silence it.

As the players are doing this, use these last few minutes before the game starts to review your notes, tell your nerves that you've got this, and take a deep breath.

When everyone is ready, paraphrase the following:

Greetings, adventurers! I'm excited to be playing D&D with you, and I hope you are as well! Before we start, I want to go over a few things.

First, if you have any **questions** about how something works, please don't hesitate to check with (mentors' names), who've offered to serve as rules consultants. If they don't know, ask me.

Second, while **taking notes** is not required, it can help you remember important names, clues, and objectives. Write down anything you think might be relevant later.

Third, D&D is a different kind of game. Unlike video games, you aren't limited by coding. There are no scripted dialogues—we supply those. There are no scripted actions—you're free to try anything. Unlike board games, you'll be working together, not against one another. Look around the table. These are your comrades in the great struggle that lies ahead.

That's my speech. Are there any questions before we start?

Answer any questions the players may have, but feel free to tell them that the answers to many of their questions will be covered in the first part of the adventure.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE: To increase immersion, DMs often use the second person when speaking to players during the game. "You" refers to the player's character. Likewise, players are encouraged, but not required, to use the first person "I" when referring to an action their character might take, though using the third person "my character" or "Alexi" is O.K. also.

USING VOICES

Some DMs will adopt different ways of speaking to help players become more immersed in the game world and also help them differentiate between various speakers. You do *not* need to be an elite voice actor to do this. With a few simple vocal adjustments, you can create a variety of voices. Try these simple techniques:

- Speak slower or quicker
- Speak louder or softer
- Speak at a higher or a lower pitch
- Speak with greater or lesser articulation

For the **Narrator Voice** which follows, try speaking more slowly and at a lower pitch.

For **Sildar's Voice**, try speaking more softly and as if you had a sore throat.

SESSION BEGINS

Take a deep breath.

AS THE DM: Let us begin!

IN NARRATOR VOICE: You've spent the last few days following the High Road south from Neverwinter, and you've just recently veered east along the Triboar Trail. You've encountered no trouble so far, but this territory can be dangerous. Bandits and outlaws have been known to lurk along the trail.

AS THE DM: For a point of inspiration—psst! You want these—please introduce and describe your character.

If needed, paraphrase the following, or have a **mentor player** go first.

As an example of how this can go: Hi, my name is (DM's name), and I'll be playing Alexi Lightborne, human Paladin of Light. Alexi is

an enormous man with an infectious smile, his flaming red hair and polished armor are only outshone by his beaming smile. He's an excellent negotiator, eager to laugh, but the massive maul on his shoulder isn't there for show. He is devoted to his goddess and a staunch defender of the meek and downtrodden. Alexi lives to thwart the nefarious powers of the world.

IN ALEXI'S VOICE: My friends, the dawn rises, and with it the unclaimed glory of a new day awaits! Let us seize it in our mighty hands!

Going around the table, have the players describe their characters and reward a point of inspiration for just about anything they say. Encourage them to learn the names of the other players' characters. When everyone has shared their story, continue.

AS THE NARRATOR: In the city of Neverwinter, a dwarven merchant and prospector named Gundren Rockseeker asked you to bring a wagonload of provisions to the rough-and-tumble settlement of Phandalin, a couple of days' travel southeast of the city. Gundren was clearly excited and more than a little secretive about his reasons for the trip, saying only that he and his brothers had found "something big," and that he'd pay you ten gold pieces each for escorting his supplies safely to Barthen's Provisions, a trading post in Phandalin. He then set out ahead of you on horseback, along with a warrior escort named Sildar Hallwinter, claiming he needed to arrive early to "take care of business."

AS THE DM, PARAPHRASE: We're going to enter a flashback now—yes, like in the movies—to help us better know your characters and the situation they find themselves in. Let's dive into it!

AS THE NARRATOR: You remember Sildar Hallwinter well, a kindhearted human knight, formerly of the Griffon Cavalry of Waterdeep. Though he was getting on in years, his keen eyes and prowess in combat had lost none of their potency. Before Gundren

SILDAR

Medium humanoid, lawful neutral

Armor Class 10 (no armor)
Hit Points 220
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, stunned
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Common
Challenge N/A (No XP)

Actions

Multiattack Sildar makes two attacks: one with his club and one with either Griffon Wing or Red Knight's Gambit.

Club Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 3 bludgeoning damage (Sildar does not roll for damage).

Griffon Wing Sildar sweeps his cape in a wide arc, creating a stinging magical wind that buffets all nearby foes. Each creature within 5 feet must make a **DC 10 Constitution** saving throw or be **blinded** until the end of their next turn.

Red Knight's Gambit Sildar weaves swiftly and unpredictably, disorienting all foes he passes through. Sildar moves in a straight line toward a foe within 30 feet and ends his movement behind them. Each creature in that line must make a **DC 10 Acrobatics (Dexterity)** or **Athletics (Strength)** check or be **knocked prone**.

dren would agree to trust you with his precious cargo, he had Sildar test your mettle to ensure Gundren wouldn't be risking either you or his supplies, though it was unclear which of the two the dwarf valued more.

You remember the chatter of a full tavern seeping down from above, the smell of cedar floorboards soaked with ale, the barrels stacked haphazardly against the cellar wall, and the now-purple bruises you received in that makeshift arena.

Sildar stands before you.

| **AS SILDAR:** I know that look... |

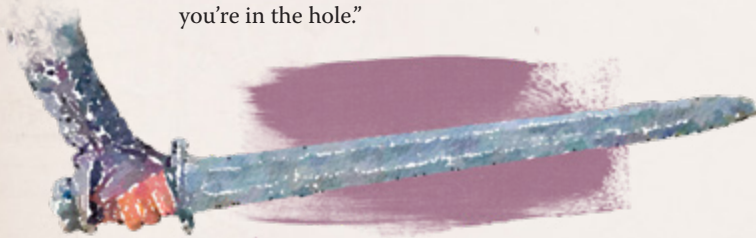
| **AS THE NARRATOR:** His grizzled face bears a knowing, empathetic smile, though the club in his hand conjures a different emotion. |

| **AS SILDAR:** ...I had it, too, many—too many—moons ago. But enough of that. Gundren has asked me to size you up, to make sure he's not throwing away his money—or your lives. I'm sure you have a skill or two you're eager to put to the test. Well, let us see if your talents can stand up to a bit of snagging. |

| **AS THE DM, PARAPHRASE:** Roll for initiative! Our first roll of the night! We roll initiative to determine who goes when in combat. Let's try it. Roll a d20 and add your initiative modifier, which is probably your Dexterity modifier, and keep the number in your head until I ask for it. |

Record the results from highest to lowest. **You do not need to roll for Sildar, who will go first and then after each player's turn.** This will make it easier to demonstrate each of Sildar's abilities listed below.

Tip: To keep combat flowing, let players know when their turn will be. Baseball jargon works well for this: "Player A, you're up; Player B, you're on deck; Player C, you're in the hole."



COMBAT SKILLS TUTORIAL

This encounter is designed to introduce your players to D&D combat. After you have read this section, you will understand the basics of combat and be able to guide your players through it. If there are any mentor players present, have them assist the new players.

COMBAT GUIDELINES

Sildar is here to assess the characters, not kill them. As DM, your goal is to teach the players about ability checks through Sildar. Complete the following objectives, and both you and Sildar will have succeeded.

- Use Sildar's **Club** attack on each character at least once.
- Use either **Griffon Wing** or **Red Knight's Gambit** on each character at least once. Using **Griffon Wing** will showcase **saving throws**, **conditions** (blinded), rolling with **disadvantage** (blinded), and how some abilities affect **areas**. Using **Red Knight's Gambit** will showcase **ability checks**, **movement**, **reactions**, and how **positioning** can affect combat. Red Knight's Gambit can also provoke **opportunity attacks**. Make sure it does so at least once.
- Optional objective: Briefly **describe** what Sildar looks like or is doing when he uses his abilities, and encourage the players to do the same. These descriptions should be short and add to the immersion of combat. For example, after a character misses Sildar with a melee attack:
Sildar bats your blade away with a flick of his wrist and brings his club down on your shoulder.
- Optional objective: Have Sildar **banter** with the party, commenting on their combat style, effectiveness, and areas for improvement. *"Not bad, your technique could use a bit of work. Goblins won't be as accommodating as I am. Put more oomph into your casting,"* and so on.
- Explain how to use **inspiration** in combat. Instruct the players to spend their inspiration point from earlier to make a roll with advantage.

A map of the tavern cellar is included at the end of this document.

After these objectives are met, have Sildar end the combat and move on to the next section.

A NOTE ON NPC ATTRIBUTES: At the end of "Cragmaw Hideout," the party finds Sildar as a captive of the goblins. As you know, his attributes as presented in this document are quite high and to the party members he may seem to be an indestructible juggernaut. How can it be, then, that Sildar ends up captured by pathetic goblins?

First, the philosophy behind his attributes and abilities in this introduction is that it makes him functional as a tutorial style "boss." For our purposes here, Sildar need not have any attributes at all. He attacks accurately enough to demonstrate all the abilities we want to showcase, and is as healthy as is needed to give the time to do so.

Second, there is a great way to reconcile this in game, and that is to explain that Sildar was weakened by the goblins through use of a poison given them by the "final boss" of *Lost Mines of Phandelver*, Nezznar the Black Spider. Not only does this use of poison justify Sildar's weakened state, it also provides a small thread between what happens at the beginning of the adventure and what happens at the end. You need not reveal the origin of the poison to the players, though perhaps Sildar speaks of its powerful effects and a goblin claims to have received it from "the great spider." An empty vial, containing trace amounts of the poison and bearing the mark of the Black Spider, might also be discovered.

SOCIAL SKILLS TUTORIAL

AS THE DM: A light sheen of sweat appears on Sildar's brow. He gestures to stop.

AS SILDAR: That's enough, I think.

AS THE NARRATOR: Sildar looks to each of you in turn. Is he impressed? Disappointed? Bored? It's hard to tell, but you can try.

AS THE DM, PARAPHRASE: On your adventures, you'll come across a variety of NPCs. Their moods may be enigmatic; their desires may not align with yours. In D&D, there are skills you can use to gain a better understanding of their nature and influence them.

How Sildar will report on you to Gundren, consequently affecting your payment or role in the mission, remains unknown. You can ask to make an **Insight** check to try and figure this out. As the DM, I'll sometimes call for you to make an Insight check, but you can also call for one yourself.

To use a skill like Insight, roll your d20 and add the appropriate modifier listed on your character sheet. If you're proficient in the skill, add your proficiency bonus. If you are not proficient, you can still use the skill but you can only add the modifier from the associated ability score. In the case of Insight, it would be the Wisdom ability score. Once you make the check, keep the total number in your head until I call on you to share the result with me.

Party, please make an Insight check!

A NOTE ON GROUP MANAGEMENT: When several players are simultaneously vying for your attention, it's easy to become overwhelmed. There are a couple of ways to handle this.

Begin by responding to the player who speaks up first. Once their problem has been satisfactorily resolved, quickly move on to another player. Try rotating clockwise around the table to ensure no one is overlooked. You are here to DM for *all* the players, not just the outspoken ones.

If you have a large group or a complex scene to straighten out, try using the initiative system (as you would with combat) to determine which problem to tackle first.

Ask each player in turn for their total, then share the following results based on their roll. Paraphrase the following:

INSIGHT CHECK RESULTS

Less than 5: You are unable to glean anything about what Sildar is thinking.

5-15: Sildar seems mildly impressed with your martial abilities, but there seems to be something else that he is mulling over.

15+: Sildar is impressed with what you've demonstrated, but you get the sense that it's more your conviction that he is trying to gauge—how determined you will be when the going gets tough.

A NOTE ON DM RECORDS: Take your own notes during the session. Write down: unexpected choices that the players make; their notions of what lies ahead; lore you improvised during the session; significant developments in a character's story; and important details you're likely to forget. Between sessions, review these notes and use them to tailor the campaign for your players.

When the results have been shared, continue.

AS THE NARRATOR: Sildar suddenly turns to you (gesture at one of the players, a mentor if available) and taps his finger on your chest where your heart is.

AS SILDAR: Convince me you have what it takes—in here!

AS THE DM, PARAPHRASE: To convince someone to see things your way, use one of the three social skills—Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion. Use **Deception** when you want to make someone believe something that isn't true. Use **Intimidation** when you think a threat of violence or a show of force is the best option. Use **Persuasion** when logic, reason, or the truth is likely to win them over.

Take a minute and consider your response to Sildar's demand, bearing in mind your character's personality and goals and how those might influence their response. Then choose one of the three skills that most embodies your approach in this moment.



THE TRIBOAR TRAIL

Some examples:

Persuasion: 'My order put their faith in me. I will not let them down.'

Deception: 'Yeah, his order sent me too. I like them a lot, so...'

Intimidation: 'Thunk needs no order! Thunk mightiest! Thunk no fail!'

When you are ready, share your response to Sildar's challenge. After you speak, make an ability check using the skill you've chosen.

A NOTE ON ROLEPLAYING: Roleplaying, a player speaking in character and aspiring to act as their character, is *not* required here. However, if they chooses to roleplay, be especially affirming and encouraging about it as the DM: "Great voice, love the way you phrased that," and so on.

Tip: To further incentivize the players, award advantage on the ability check for quality roleplaying.

Have each of the players respond to the question, beginning with the most experienced player if possible, then roll an ability check with the social skill of their choice.

Sildar does not respond until all the players have made their appeals.

SOCIAL SKILL CHECK RESULTS

Less than 5: Sildar looks concerned and encourages the character to vanquish their doubts, else it will be more than a wagonload of supplies at risk.

5-15: Sildar gives a slight nod of appreciation but encourages further development of their motivations.

15+: Sildar smiles and encourages them to continue on their path.

Note who totaled a 15 or higher. They will receive an additional five gold pieces ('Sildar's compliments') when they deliver the supplies to Barthen's Provisions.

Improvise and personalize Sildar's response to each of them, based both on what they say and the abilities they showcased in combat. *'Your faith will serve you well, though be sure to keep your shield up. Even with magical fire as potent as yours, you won't last long without friends. I like Thunk's odds, though he may want to tighten the cords of his loincloth.'* etc.

If a player replies to Sildar's response, go with it, improvising dialogue based on what you know of Sildar's personality and goals. But if a player responds to something another player character says—shut up, rejoice, and listen attentively.

Everyone will be going on the adventure, of course, regardless of the results. But the results may alter how the players view their characters and how they interact with the other party members.

Have Sildar end the conversation when you're ready to move on.

REST MECHANICS

AS THE DM, PARAPHRASE: Before we return to the trail, let's take a moment to talk about rest and recovery. Some days have passed since your encounter with Sildar, and in that time you've had a chance to recuperate. In D&D, this is called a **rest**. There are two kinds of rests you can take, a short one and a long one. We won't go into their specifics, but suffice it to say that if you find yourself low on hit points or your spells or abilities are depleted, it's a good idea to take a rest. To reflect the rest the party has had, restore your hit points and any spells and abilities you used while sparring with Sildar. Now, let's get back to it!

ADVENTURING SKILLS TUTORIAL

AS THE NARRATOR: The grunt of oxen interrupts your reverie. The hardworking beasts have suddenly stopped on the Triboar Trail and refuse to go a step further.

AS THE DM, PARAPHRASE: You have various skills to help with the challenges you encounter while adventuring. Some will be obvious, like using **Stealth** to sneak past a guard, or **Perception** to discover a hidden passage. Some will be less obvious, like using **Arcana**, **History**, **Nature**, or **Religion** to recall information to help you better understand the situation.

As with the social skills, you are welcome to advocate for the use of a particular skill to solve a problem. For example, "I'd like to use Animal Handling to get that cat to come over to me."

Speaking of which, let's return to the trail, where you can apply your skills to the party's current problem: the uncooperative oxen.

DM KNOWLEDGE

Make sure you read and thoroughly understand this section before the session. The scene before the party is a complex one: The oxen have stopped because they smell a dead body, which is at the bottom of a goblin pit trap set in the trail. The body is that of a male gnome and Tymoran priest named Yingle Yawnbringer, who was traveling from Neverwinter to Phandalin to help Sister Garaele with a problem. Unfortunately, his journey ended here. But before the goblins could loot his body, they heard two riders (Gundren and Sildar) approaching, forcing them to hastily cover their trap and flee.

ADVENTURING SKILL RESULTS

The party must complete the following for the adventure to continue. The DC for these ability checks is 10.

- Discover the pit trap using **Investigation** or **Perception**. The pit is 6 feet wide, 10 feet deep, and triggers when a creature attempts to cross it. If the trap is not detected, the character leading the search must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall in, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage. The pit's walls are not steep, so an ability check is not needed to climb out.
- Drive the oxen around the pit by using either **Animal Handling** to persuade them or **Athletics** to force them. Prompt the players to use other skills to learn more about the situation if they don't think to do so themselves. The DC for these ability checks is 8.

A NOTE ON SKILL USE: Rather than having every player make every ability check, encourage the players who are proficient in a skill to roll first. For example, it would make sense for an academic cleric to be the go-to option for Religion checks. This rewards players for their skill choices and more accurately portrays their character's role in the party. It also speeds up play.

- Use **Arcana** to discern that one object in Yingle's possession is magical—a *bead of replenishment* (see below), though its magic will fade within 24 hours.
- Use **History** to recall that in years past this section of the Triboar Trail has been beset many times by goblins. They likely live in nearby caves (where more traps await).
- Use **Medicine** to diagnose that Yingle died about a day ago, and that it wasn't the fall that killed him, but arrow wounds.

BEAD OF REPLENISHMENT

Wondrous Item, uncommon

This spongy, flavorless, gelatinous bead dissolves on your tongue and provides you with the effects of a short rest.

- Use **Nature** to discern the faint odor of wolf musk in the air, which is probably also bothering the oxen.
- Use **Religion** to recognize that the holy symbol the gnome wears is that of Tymora, the goddess of luck. If they return the symbol to a temple of Tymora, the goddess will likely smile upon them.
- Use **Survival** to detect the footprints of four to five goblins and the hoofprints of two horses. The riders passed through the area about a day ago.
- Try to engage every player at the table. If a player has been taking a lot of your time and focus at the expense of the others, don't hesitate to ask them to pause for a moment to give the other players some time in the spotlight. It is a group game, and if the players don't manage it themselves, it falls to you as the DM to make sure your attention is shared among all the players.
- After a session, ask for feedback from your players. What did they enjoy and would like to see more of? What didn't they enjoy, or what sort of themes or events did they hope would be in the session and weren't? Was there anything they found confusing? Accept all their thoughts and criticisms with whatever grace you can muster. Reflecting on this feedback and making necessary adjustments will not only make you a better Dungeon Master generally, it will make you a better Dungeon Master for those specific players that you have.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

At this point, you can resume the adventure as written in *Lost Mines of Phandelver*. Pick up at the Goblin Ambush section on page 6, but skip the traps in the Goblin Trail section on page 7. Take a breath. You've made it this far. Well done!

SOME FINAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take a 5-10 minute break every 2 hours or so. While it can be tempting to play nonstop for hours and hours, your brain and your body will thank you.
- If ever you're unsure of what to do within an adventure, don't have a ready response to a player's question, or your players take a very different direction than what you've planned for, don't hesitate to call for a short break to take the time to think over what your response or adjustments will be.

HELPFUL LINKS

[Tips for New DMs](#)
[How to Improve your DMing Skills](#)
[Answers to Tabletops' Top Ten FAQs](#)
[How to Create a Campaign](#)
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TAVERN CELLAR MAP WITH GRID



1 square = 5 feet

TAVERN CELLAR MAP WITHOUT GRID



1 square = 5 feet