

Rugged Adventures

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Rugged

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For use with the 4th Edition



Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, and Dungeon Master's Guide, Player's Handbook 2, Monster Manual 2, Adventurer's Vault core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC

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Introduction

The **Dungeons & Dragons 4E** rest system is built for campaigns where the characters delve through a dungeon, one encounter-filled room at a time, taking short rests between each one, until they reach the final room-encounter, and complete the dungeon. Now, the system can support more types of campaigns than just this, but if you, the DM, have found yourself challenging your PCs with just one or two encounters each day, the **D&D 4E** rest system is not doing its job for you. Daily powers and healing surges lose their value when a player has a full supply each encounter. The system assumes parties are being challenged by three to five encounters each day; and at eight to ten encounters per level, that's just two or three days between each time the PCs level up! Now, the system isn't broken, and it creates a certain type of experience, but if you're running a different type of campaign, you need a different type of rest system.

Rugged Adventures presents a system where players feel worn down after almost every fight, until they rest for the night. Their daily powers become available only once every several days, and one encounter per day (or two days, or more) will be all you'll need to offer your players to make sure they're being challenged. Character development will happen over years instead of having the players reach level thirty in just weeks or months in the game world. And all of this is achievable with just a few small changes to the rest system, with little or no impact to the remaining mechanics of the game.

System

The key to a rest system that supports turning your **D&D 4E** game from a dungeon crawl into a more dramatic roleplaying experience is this: a short rest now requires eight hours of rest, instead of five minutes; extended rests now require two full days of recuperation. In effect, an encounter doesn't 'end' until the characters have slept it off, and an 'adventuring day' now lasts as long as a week. The repercussions of these changes (both good and bad) are many, and we'll cover them throughout the rest of this book, but for now, let it sink in. Dungeons with an encounter in each room are off limits, as the players could only handle one room each day. Instead, players may be ambushed on the road; although victorious, they must stumble into town, weakened and bruised, requiring a night at the inn to tend to their wounds.

Mechanically, these changes almost don't exist. In very few places do the rules reference time in the game world; they instead rely on the short and extended rest durations to do the work. With that framework in place, changing what amount of time these rests require is a relatively simple matter.

Changes to the Short Rest

The standard short rest according to the **D&D 4E** rules is five minutes. The *Rugged Adventures* short rest is instead six hours of uninterrupted and mostly peaceful rest (and most often: sleep). In a dungeon, players overcome an encounter, rest up, and engage the next one, most usually in a matter of minutes in game time. With this system, though, the players will not be able to spend their healing surges freely or recover their encounter powers. The cleric's *healing words* will only be available twice per day in the early levels, and an unconscious character may be unable to waken until he's had a night at the inn.

Have you run encounters where afterward most or all the PCs were low on hit points but had plenty of healing surges remaining? Though in the fight they were on their last leg, afterward they quickly recover for the next battle. Now they will find themselves unable to replenish their hit points and encounter powers for potentially hours in game time. Being weakened as such keeps players on the edges of their proverbial seats: a feeling which is generally quelled by the question, "Can we take a short rest?" Now, with the answer, "No, you need to find somewhere safe to sleep," the level of tension will remain high, opening the door for a myriad of roleplaying and adventure experiences.

Imagine the hobbits hiding on the side of the road from the Nazgul early in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Now, these hobbits are afraid for their lives because they know they cannot hope to challenge the ringwraith. Every moment is tense, for until the Nazgul leaves, they must stay silent and hope it doesn't realize their presence. However, consider a party that is low on hit points and bereft of encounter powers from a confrontation earlier that day; would they not hide with the same trepidation? A failed Stealth-based skill challenge could result in a combat that one or more characters may not survive. Experienced **4E** players understand and fear the risks of taking on two encounters simultaneously or in direct succession. With that threat always on the table, you will have the freedom and power to create life-threatening and dramatic situations where choices and die rolls can have impact over the course of hours in a day rather than for only a few moments, as they might with a short-rested party.

Many players have also been unhappy with **4E** because of its perceived lack of verisimilitude, wherein characters can simply and quickly 'spring back' from near death, fully ready for the next encounter. The aspect of 'Schrodinger's hit points' has also been a complaint, where one never knows if hit point damage represents a fall in morale or a physical wound, until those hit points are restored. Though that issue isn't totally resolved, it can be better dealt with when the hit points are restored over a several-hour short rest rather than a five-minute one. Though super heroes many times recover within moments for their next fight, that feeling isn't something every play group prefers for their gritty adventurers.

Altering the short rest as such does have a few mechanical ripples throughout the system. Most specifically, some durations say they last, “until the end of the encounter, or for 5 minutes.” The idea is that the effect lasts for the encounter, but not for a second one, and if not in combat, the duration should be no longer than five minutes. Many times these restrictions are on abilities that the system doesn’t allow for lower level characters, such as flight. While a power may allow a character to fly around during combat, they shouldn’t be allowed to fly around all day if ‘the encounter’ never ends. In most cases, these restrictions will work just as they state; an encounter in *Rugged Adventures* doesn’t last any longer than a normal one would (it’s just that the rest is delayed), so the effect would end as normal. And if the effect is used outside of combat, it still only lasts for five minutes, as it is not intended that a character could fly (for example) all around as he or she wishes. However, you may find effects that you believe were intended for further usage than the altered rest system allows, and so you should keep an eye out to make that change.

Similarly, an effect may last until the next short rest. Many times you should allow this entire duration; the character doesn’t get her hit points or encounter powers back, so why should her effect’s duration end prematurely? However, keep an eye on these as well so they don’t break your game.

Some characters, such as eladrin with the Trance racial trait and characters with the living construct keyword, have the ability to reduce the time it takes them to benefit from an extended rest. Change these traits so that the characters’ short rest durations (instead of extended rest durations) are reduced from six to four hours, and they will be good to go.

The **D&D 4E** rest system does not have restrictions on how often a party can take a short rest—five minutes of uninterrupted ‘calming down’ is enough, and multiple short rests can be taken in sequence, such as for a cleric to cycle through uses of *healing word*. However, the **D&D 4E** extended rest specifies that one must wait sixteen hours between extended rests, simulating the day-night cycle by which people—and even adventurers—generally live. Since the short rest in *Rugged Adventures* has taken the six hour duration, it also adopts the ‘once-per sixteen hours game time’ restriction.

Changes to Extended Rests

The normal **D&D 4E** duration of six hours for an extended rest has been usurped by the short rest. So now, the extended rest’s duration must be longer. A weekend is enough for us modern workers to re-energize, so why should adventurers be any different? Two days of rest and relaxation—or at least relatively calm living—should be enough for a party to restore its healing surges and daily powers: the wizard can study his spellbook; the wounded characters can receive their medical attention. After a grueling five days traveling through the Savage Woods, the adventurers can enjoy an extended rest in the elven city.

The amount of two days is somewhat arbitrary. One full day may be sufficient, but the metaphor of the weekend seems far more appropriate without keeping the adventurers idle for too long. And, just as the extended rest had restrictions before to limit them from being taken too frequently, *Rugged Adventures* requires that five days pass between extended rests. That fills out an ‘adventuring week’ to a full seven days. The characters don’t have to have an encounter each day, but they can’t start fully resting again until five days have passed since their previous extended rest ended. You may find this requirement to be too steep and shorten it, or you may find it to be too short and lengthen it; or, you may have an altered week/month/year system in your campaign world, offering even more incentive to change what an ‘adventuring week’ means in your *Rugged Adventures* game.

In a standard **D&D 4E** dungeon, the characters may be exhausted, even with their short rests—they are low on healing surges and have expended their daily powers. They seek a safe room, an exit to the dungeon, or a fulfillment of their task and an end to the adventure. This search can be stressful or simple. They may carefully check each door, hoping to stealthfully avoid further encounters while trying to find an empty, safe room. Or they may simply backtrack to somewhere safe,



essentially hitting the 'rest' button: the screen fades to black, before returning to the full view of the characters fully rested.

Either of these options is available in the *Rugged Adventures* system. For example, lost and wandering in the Savage Woods, the players are exhausted from overcoming several encounters in sequential days, and require rest. Each day of traveling through the woods carries the weight of another potential encounter, and the avoidance of said encounter may come down to a Nature, Stealth, or some other type of check. On the other hand, the players may decide they can backtrack to a nearby river that's out of the thick of the woods. Spending a couple days there to re-energize, they enjoy their extended rest and prepare to head back into the heart of the woods. And, just as you could surprise a party while they sleep in the dungeon, you could decide to spring an unexpected encounter on the woods-wandering players even as they thought their river refuge was safe.

In a way, though, the Savage Woods example has become in essence an expanded dungeon. Instead of rooms, it has days of travel—but with the rest system modified, it comes out almost mechanically identical to the dungeon. What about a more political campaign where a combat encounter may only occur every few days or weeks? In this case, even the two days' requirement for an extended rest may be a simple matter for the PCs to have all of their resources available in a given encounter. If you wish to run this type of campaign and still have combat and the stress of low resources matter, you may decide to further increase the requirement for an extended rest.

One option is to artificially place extended rests between adventure segments, as according to your story. For example, two political factions are in a disagreement spanning several months, which may only cause a combat encounter to occur for the PCs once every couple weeks. In this case, you may decide that no extended rest can occur until after the negotiations—that is, when the adventure is over. You could even go so far as to say that a short rest, instead of taking place each night of sleep, happens over an extended period of days or weeks based on the severity of hit point damage a given character suffered. This alteration requires more attention to mechanical elements of the game and deciding how they're affected, but it can go a long way toward making characters less of adventuring super heroes and more into normal people who have had to rise to extraordinary circumstances.

Another option is to set a longer, but fixed, period of time for the extended rest: for example, a week. In this way, players may not know when they're resting—it could be interrupted at any time. Start the proverbial timer when they first wake up from their short rest. If seven days pass with no combat or similarly stressful situation, they have enjoyed an extended rest and reap the benefits. However, six and a half days could pass before you throw the next encounter at them, interrupting their rest and



requiring a restart of the timer after their next short rest the following day.

As a third option, you may determine that a fixed amount of time is not appropriate for determining an extended rest. Instead, the duration required for a character to recover is based on the percent of the character's total healing surges to be regained. For example, it may take a full day of rest for every 25% of the character's surges that were lost—or, for a longer rest, 10%. Daily powers may require a day of training and practice to recharge. The further you push in this direction, the more corner cases you will have to solve and the more potentially complex your game becomes to run, but if you prefer this precise control and style of realism, it's something to consider.

Rugged Adventures Extended Rest Options

Standard

– Weekend Two full days

Alternatives

1. **Adventure Segments** Rests occur between adventures
2. **Longer Duration** Longer rest, such as a week
3. **Health-based** Health lost determines time resting
4. **Situational** DM decides rest based on situation

You could also decide that 'the stress of negotiations' or somesuch is enough to prevent a character from being able to undergo an extended rest. Thus, until the issue at hand is resolved, all the characters' exploits will be mechanically equivalent to what would have been one day under the normal **D&D 4E** rules and rest system. By removing the aspect of game time from your rest system (or specifically, your extended rests), you open the door to a finer control over the pacing of your game and the resources of your PCs.

Extended Leveling

Different groups handle leveling differently, even within the confines of the **D&D 4E** rules as written. Some characters are allowed to ‘ding’ at any time, even in the middle of combat. Each monster is considered individually for experience points, and as soon as one falls that pushes the PCs’ xp total past the threshold, they level up. (Hopefully they had their next level character sheets with them!) Other groups wait to level up between encounters, or after the entire adventure or dungeon is completed; or the DM may even require that the characters spend days, weeks, or months in game time training up to their next level.

When encounters occur once a day, short rests take six hours, and an extended rest takes a weekend, it seems only natural that a character leveling up in the *Rugged Adventures* system take at least a few days to train. As mentioned in the introduction, a character in **D&D 4E** can reach thirtieth level in a matter of weeks or months. In *Rugged Adventures*, it may take that long just to level up once. You as the DM can pick and choose through this supplement to find the durations that match the pacing and style of the campaign you want to run. Some DMs don’t mind that the PCs level so quickly in game time. In fact, the storyline of the campaign may be predicated on the concept that the heroes have only a limited amount of time to learn their stuff and stop the old gods’ return. On the other hand, you may want to run a game where the human fighter’s ability to reach epic tier is truly threatened by his short lifespan; even a paragon tier martial character may be an aging veteran of war.

In any case, it will be much easier for players to swallow an extended level up time when their rest durations have been extended as well.

Milestones and Action Points

Adjusting milestones and action points for *Rugged Adventures* is simple. When players ‘awaken’ from their extended rest (be it two days, or whatever), they are awarded a single action point, as usual. When they complete an encounter or other noteworthy task, note it; and when two such events have occurred, the players have reached a milestone and are awarded another action point. The only point of confusion is that players’ action points are not reset when they sleep. Since in *Rugged Adventures* a six-hour sleep is only a short rest, this does not interrupt players’ action point reserve. Instead, their action points and milestones are only reset during an extended rest.

Using the System

Now that you’ve read up to this point, you’ve picked out your extended rest duration and made a decision about how leveling up works. You’ve chosen your style of campaign and you’re ready to go. Well perhaps, but here are a few tips and pieces of advice on building encounters, dealing with certain other durations in the game, and using your new system to support the mood you want in your campaign.

An Adventure’s Encounters Encounters per Day

‘Encounters per day’ carries a new meaning now. With only five minutes needed to rest up, taking on two encounters in succession pretty much required some serious flubbing on the part of the players, such as by opening the door to the next room in the middle of an encounter . . . either that or the DM was feeling particularly vicious. With a rest not taking place until six hours of sleep have passed, the players now have to find refuge and sleep safely for that long—just in order to freely spend healing surges and recover encounter powers. That’s a lot of time for the players to find trouble, or for trouble to find them. As the DM, you will have to plan ahead and be careful. The purpose of the *Rugged Adventures* system is to raise tension, challenge the players, and introduce a type of roleplaying to **D&D 4E** that it didn’t previously have; the purpose isn’t to kill the players.

Don’t put two encounters in the same day; the players haven’t rested yet. A major cause of TPKs in **D&D 4E** is an accidental ‘pull’ of a second encounter before the players have had their short rest. The fact that there’s a lot more time for PCs to get into trouble in *Rugged Adventures* doesn’t mean that they can handle the trouble.

Don’t put two encounters in the same day; the players haven’t rested yet. (That’s worth repeating.) Well, don’t put two standard or hard encounters in the same day. The **D&D 4E DUNGEON MASTER’S GUIDE** defines the level of an encounter as easy, standard, or hard, based on its relative level to the PCs. The level of an encounter is based on its experience point total: the combined xp value of all the monsters of that encounter. The level of the PCs is the variable n , so if the encounter is two levels lower than the level of the PCs, that encounter is rated $n - 2$, which the DMG defines as ‘easy’. If you’re going to run multiple encounters in a day (that is, between short rests), they should be ‘easy’ or easier.

Encounter Building

Much of **D&D 4E** is built around its combat system, the fun of which is heavily based on its encounter system. Five monsters versus five PCs can make for a dynamic, challenging, and exciting fight. There's no reason to abandon that. Almost always, you should utilize **D&D 4E's** encounter system, running one combat each day (or two days, etc., based on your extended rest duration) of game time. Use a mix of $n - 2$ encounters ranging up through $n + 3$ encounters, varying them from day to day throughout the adventure. The players will take their 'weekends' or other extended rests, and you can continue. Whatever options you choose for rest durations, it is important not to abandon the encounter system—**D&D 4E** is based on it, and in many ways it's what makes the game fun. However, there are combat options that *Rugged Adventures* makes available . . . and some that it makes tougher to accomplish.

So what about the days when the story just demands more than one fight in a day? Well, you need to keep the fights relatively simple. For example, five level one goblins won't be a challenge for a group of five fifth level characters, but the goblins will drain at least a few of the players' hit points and possibly encounter powers. If they then fight later in the day a level five elite enemy, the fight will again most likely be simple, but will drain more resources from the players. One way to do this is to add together the encounters planned for the whole day into a single $n + 2$ or $+ 3$ encounter, then break the pieces into separate fights. For example, the five level one goblins are worth a total of 500 xp, and the level five elite monster is worth 400 xp. A level seven encounter ($n + 2$ to the fifth level PCs) is worth 1,500 xp, so you have 600 xp remaining to buy further fights that day. By the end of the day, the players will have faced essentially a single level seven encounter, but it will have been easier due to the separation of the monsters.

There are a couple challenges with this method. The **D&D 4E Dungeon Master's Guide** warns DMs not to use monsters too much lower than the party's level. Doing so means the players will almost always hit, and the monsters will almost always miss. Though this method can be a 'cheap' way of buying a bigger encounter when you want to run more than one in a day, it can turn into a fight where the players lose far fewer resources than you might have expected. Similarly, running too few monsters in an encounter can turn into a slaughter fest in the PCs' favor, even if the monster was of a challenging level. For example, a single level seven standard monster against the group of fifth level PCs may only get in one or two attacks before the group chops it down—and what if one or both of those attacks missed? As you can see, there's a careful balance to be struck when breaking down encounters. The role of the monsters involved will also be important, but selecting the correct monsters will depend on the makeup of your party. Running 'multiple encounters' in a single day like that can make for an interesting scenario, but most of the

encounters in an adventure should focus on the standard **D&D 4E** encounter system.

When awarding action points and considering milestones while using this encounter structure, only consider an encounter as such when its entire experience point quota has been met. That is, the five goblins worth a total of 500 xp do not count as an encounter to the fifth level players; neither does the level five elite monster. Not until the third battle of 600 xp has been completed is the entire 1,500 xp day considered one finished encounter.

The Rugged Dungeon

The beginning of *Rugged Adventures* clearly defined itself as being separate from the dungeon delving **D&D** experience . . . but it doesn't have to be. Carefully using the techniques above you can create a day's, or perhaps many days', worth of encounters in rooms within a dungeon setting. Perhaps the intrigue-laden adventure leads to a dungeon experience. While the players may have had only a few encounters over the past several in-game months, they will now face many encounters a day. When using the **D&D 4E** rest system as written, you may have compromised on the side of the political encounters, allowing the players to blow their daily powers and trounce your monsters. With *Rugged Adventures*, you have options.

One simple solution is to use a different rest system in different situations: outside the dungeon, use the *Rugged Adventures* rests, and within the dungeon, use standard **D&D 4E** rules. This has the benefit of the system adapting to suit your needs. However, it does have the disadvantage of simulation-threatening inconsistency. But, if you find a way to have it make sense, or are willing to disregard that issue, it's a quick and easy fix.

The other option is to consistently use the *Rugged Adventures* rest system, and change your dungeon to meet your new needs. If you're creating a one-day dungeon, simply use the suggestions in the previous section to take a single hard encounter and break it in into multiple pieces, spreading the pieces throughout the dungeon. On the other hand, you may want a bigger, more expansive dungeon.

In this case, gauge the difficulty you want for an average encounter, perhaps an $n - 3$ or $- 4$, and spread some number of them out as normal throughout the dungeon. Each day, the players will take on two to four of these encounters before requiring their sleep, just as in a standard dungeon crawl. The major difference will be the level of tension: instead of starting an encounter with full hit points but few healing surges, they will be starting with reduced hit points and only a few ways to spend their surges. Another difference will be the duration of the encounters. They will undoubtedly be shorter, but with the possibility of more tension in every roll. In a way, these smaller and shorter encounters will be simpler, but with the constant drain of resources, you should be able to find a way to still make every fight

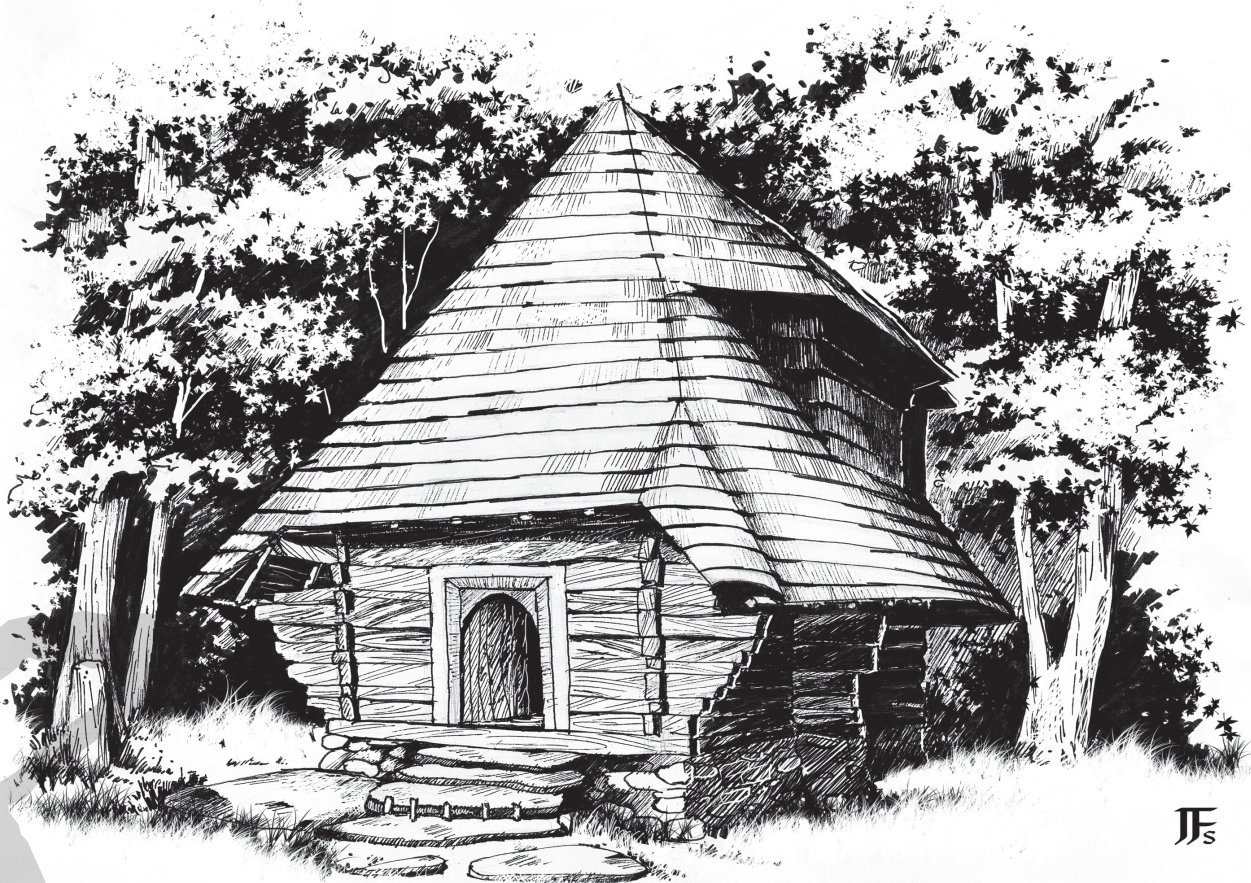
feel like a challenge. Though the five goblins in the *n* - 4 encounter may not have any chance of beating the players, the characters will nonetheless be carefully watching each hit point they lose, knowing full well what it could mean for them further into the dungeon.

The total number of encounters you expect your players to complete within the dungeon should add up to about a full day's worth of adventuring in normal **D&D 4E**; that is, don't put more monsters in there than what you expect your players to defeat before needing a weekend's worth extended rest. In standard **D&D 4E**, players can essentially camp out indefinitely within a dungeon, taking extended rests in empty rooms as required until they've completed their task. In *Rugged Adventures*, they won't be able to take an extended rest until they've left the dungeon and found somewhere safe and peaceful; the dangerous and stressful environment of the dungeon will prevent the players from resting there. Thus, the combined xp total of the dungeon should be no more than what a party using the standard rest system could defeat in a single day. If you want to build a bigger dungeon than that, make sure to offer your players somewhere to spend their 'weekend'. Perhaps they stumble upon a small dwarven encampment underground that offers them refuge for a couple days before they delve deeper into the dungeon.

Rugged Items and Rituals

While most magic items and power effects utilize the rest system and the 'five minute mark' as their method of duration measurement, it is not so with most rituals. There are several factors to consider when using a ritual in *Rugged Adventures*. Firstly, if the ritual has a duration, is it combat or non-combat related? Say, for example, a ritual has a "24 hours" duration and is meant to bolster a character throughout the day in a combat-related capacity. It was written with the assumption that "24 hours" would last approximately until the character's next extended rest, thusly remaining useful throughout several encounters. In *Rugged Adventures*, that ritual's effects are only useful throughout a single encounter because of the time change. For rituals like this, consider extending the duration of the ritual to until the character's next extended rest.

There are also rituals that are expected to be used daily. For example, the Traveler's Feast ritual will feed five medium characters for one day. Since the characters' adventuring is essentially slowed by the altered rest system, so too will be their monetary gain. And so, the component cost of 35 gp for a Traveler's Feast becomes many times more significant for a party that needs to feed itself every day on a more limited budget than the standard **D&D 4E** adventurer. Consider dividing the costs of rituals such as these by five or even seven. Doing



so will make the ritual somewhat more attractive to the players, but the cost to keep the party fed over the course of one extended rest will remain roughly the same. For more examples of rituals of this category, think of the party that uses Eye of Alarm each night to protect them while they rest, or a party that utilizes the Floating Disc every day to help transport their treasure.

On the other hand, some rituals require no special treatment. Some rituals' usefulness are based on how often they are needed in an adventure rather than a day. Since the resources of the adventure are not based in time, things like Cure Disease, Speak with Dead and Voice of Fate require no alterations.

As with rituals, there are some items that draw their usefulness from being available daily. Since a daily power, even with magic items, is now only available once a week or so, some expectations of certain items may be thrown out of whack. While a +1 flaming sword's daily power is purely combat related and should therefore be used only once per extended rest, a wondrous item such as the feather boat has certain other expectations. The item is supposed to be able to act as a boat for twelve hours each day. Consider changing powers such as these to encounter powers so that they can be used as expected.

One type of magic item that deserves special attention in *Rugged Adventures* is the healing potion. In the standard **D&D 4E** rest system, healing potions are generally useful only in combat, when character's don't otherwise have free access to their healing surges. Once they've taken their five minute short rest, they've spent their surges to recover their hit points, leaving a healing potion mostly useless; in addition, many times the ten hit point potential gain from a potion may not be worth the expenditure of a healing surge. However, in *Rugged Adventures*, characters will end a fight and may not have the chance to take their six-hour short rest for a good amount of in-game time. If they are expecting to face another encounter (or mini-encounter, or what-have-you), such as in a rugged dungeon scenario, the ability to spend a healing surge to recover ten crucial hit points can make all the difference. In fact, you and your players may find potions to be so pivotal in your *Rugged Adventures* experience that you may decide to reduce the cost by up to half their gp values, so that the now-critical consumable items don't break the party's bank. On the other hand, you don't want to allow potions to overrun your campaign and remove the aspect of tension your new rest system tries to create. Perhaps the best solution is to 'sell' potions at their normal price, but occasionally distribute caches of them as treasure for 'free' or at reduced cost against the party's treasure parcels.

Using the System for Mood

After just making the few alterations discussed up to this point, your game's feel and experience will already have changed. Following are some concepts that will hopefully inspire you in best utilizing the *Rugged Adventures* system to control your desired mood in-game.

Running Away and Hiding

As discussed earlier, *Rugged Adventures* resting will more frequently result in players finding the need to hide. In standard **D&D 4E**, hiding and running away aren't necessarily frequent. While prudent adventurers will recognize the need when it arises, the game is designed with the PCs as heroes, so the mechanics don't generally result in the need presenting itself. While some DMs may sometimes place monsters in the path of the PCs that they cannot hope to defeat, most DMs instead present only monsters that are appropriate for the PCs' level, as according to a daily encounter list that the players are expected to be capable of accomplishing. Indeed, this is a major design tenet of **D&D 4E** and all advice in the **D&D 4E Dungeon Master's Guide** leads to this setup. As a result, a party may rarely, if ever, come across a challenge it cannot overcome. The players will not hide from the ringwraith—they have just finished their five-minute short rest and are ready for battle, so they leap from the trees and into the road to challenge the evil creature. While it is possible for a group to run itself completely thin, desperate for an extended rest, this kind of desperation and tension is far more common in *Rugged Adventures*.

Feel free to use this to your advantage. When the players are on their way into town and are ambushed in an $n + 1$ encounter, they overcome their attackers, but are weakened. Continuing into town, some dark and ominous riders must be avoided, for the players know they will be in no shape for another fight until they have rested for the night. Even a casual tavern brawl seems risky in their circumstances. The tavern ruffians might surprise the road-weary heroes by proving to be much more of a fight than they might have otherwise been.

Imagine that the players avoid the ominous riders. They allow the riders to pass; and, upon reaching the town, they find that the riders have ransacked the town and set it ablaze. A standard **D&D 4E** party would have enjoyed their short rest, fully able to head into town to stop the sabotage. However, the *Rugged Adventures* party finds itself still too weak—they must hope to find a nearby place in the woods to take their six-hour short rest; or they may search the woods surrounding the town for escaped survivors, being careful to avoid the attention of the violent riders. Or, perhaps they will risk their lives, biting off more than they can chew, in a valiant suicide mission to end the riders' attack. If they rest and stage an attack the next day, they may be able to retake the city, but at what price? A wraith may not be too much of a challenge for characters in standard **D&D**, but if they

see one, can't destroy it, and are forced to watch it burn down a village, and are only then able to hunt it down the next day to finally catch up to and destroy it, the situation can create a rewarding experience complete with rising tension, foreshadowing, and an eventual catharsis.

Standard **D&D 4E** has a wealth of adventure options, but *Rugged Adventures* opens up new possibilities, many times with tough choices resulting from how often the characters are able to rest, and what they seek to accomplish before that rest can be attained. It's tough to get a **D&D 4E** party with seemingly endless resources to make tough choices at their own risk, but with your modified rest durations, you may find your adventures inspiring the players into strategic retreats much more frequently than before . . . and that's one of the main benefits of *Rugged Adventures*, so take advantage of it!

Once per Day Second Wind

With short rests occurring only once per in-game day, the second wind as well becomes a daily feature. While it is still just as useful in the midst of an encounter, it gains the additional benefit of being one of the few ways a character gains access to his or her healing surge pool without sleeping. In a way, the second wind takes the role of the short rest from the standard rest system.

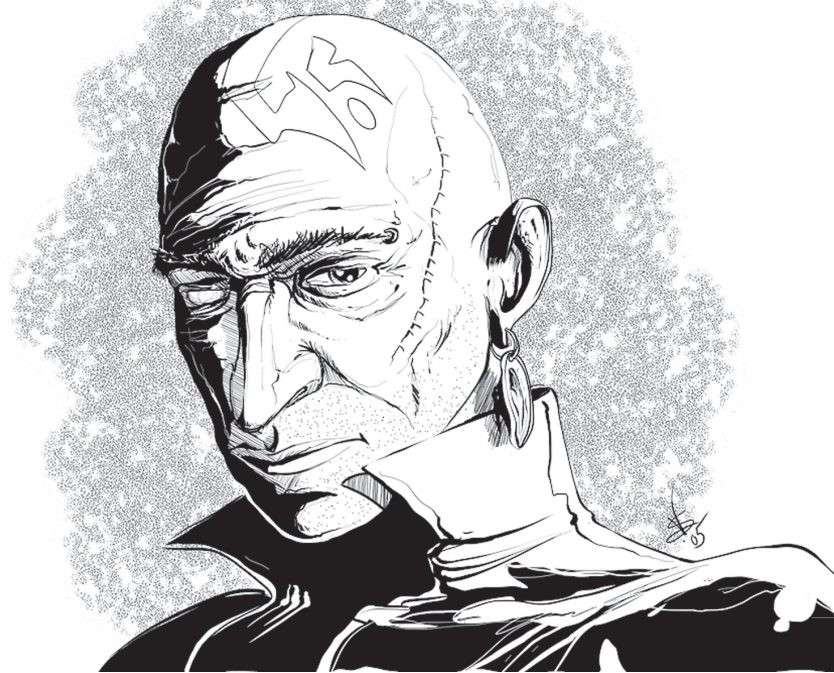
When an encounter ends where a character didn't use his or her second wind, but has enough hit point loss to warrant its use, the character may find that to be the opportune time to spend a healing surge. Though the character can only spend one surge, rather than as many as he or she likes, as in the standard five minute short rest, it nonetheless can create a feeling of heroic vigor in an otherwise resource-tight style of play.

Using the second wind out of combat does have its opportunity cost, though; when not in combat, the +2 bonus to defenses seems hardly useful, but the benefit of not needing to spend the standard action in combat makes up for it. In the end, characters will use their second winds when they need them during combat, but they will be just as—if not more—exciting and useful outside of combat.

Heroic Recovery

Supposing you readily adopt the *Rugged Adventures* rest system, or you at least try it out. And supposing you run your players through a few months of in-game adventure, running an encounter every few days, and even a rugged dungeon full of 'half-encounters'. Well now you find yourself really needing more. You need to run two encounters in a single day, and not any partial half-encounters, either. You need two full-fledged challenging encounters, one after another; the climax demands it.

Well, here's your solution: the heroic recovery. Your players don't need to know you're going to give them a heroic recovery. They don't even need to know it exists. Heck, you don't even need to know you're going to give your players one ahead of time. But, it's something



you can keep up your sleeve when running *Rugged Adventures*.

The players have just won an encounter against the king's guards; they seek audience with the king, believing he has been kept sheltered from what his vizier has wrought across the kingdom. Having defeated his advisor and guards, they break into the king's chamber, weary of battle, but with the completion of the quest in their sights. But when they enter, the king bellows and laughs haughtily. Bodies of the king's victims lie strewn across the chamber, and a final living victim—a girl the players came to befriend throughout the adventure—is strapped to the altar, struggling to free herself before the king plunges his ceremonial dagger into her flesh. A battle with the king seems inevitable . . . but the players are weakened from their previous encounter, unprepared for another fight.

In amazement at the revelation of the king's true scheme and the players' own failure to realize it, they feel a heroic surge of power overcome them: a glimpse of what it must be like to be an adventurer in standard **D&D 4E**, to be sure! They know the king must be stopped, and their friend must be rescued; the kingdom must be saved. The players experience a short rest in but a moment, now ready for a full confrontation.

HEROIC RECOVERY

- ◆ A heroic recovery is granted by the DM at a time he or she deems appropriate, most especially when a plot twist that demands combat is revealed to the players.
- ◆ Players granted a heroic recovery may adjust their characters' current statistics as though they had just taken a short rest: healing surges may be spent freely and encounter powers recharge. Other benefits of a short rest occur as well. The only difference is that the recovery takes but a moment rather than five minutes or six hours.
- ◆ In the case that a player is allowed to grant him- or herself a heroic recovery, the choice to trigger it takes place at the start of the character's turn or at the beginning of the encounter. The heroic recovery may require an action point, and it may take place only in circumstances related to the character's backstory and/or his or her personality.

So . . . what about the second heroic recovery? Once you've given them one, the players will undoubtedly see another one around every turn. "We just got ambushed, so we get a heroic recovery to attack these ominous riders, right?" Indeed, the second heroic recovery will be much trickier to award. The key is in awarding one only at a dramatic plot twist moment. When the players see a tough challenge ahead, they will ask for a heroic recovery. But the surge of adrenaline that creates a heroic recovery comes only from an astounding revelation that occurs simultaneously with a call to battle. The players thought the king's chamber would be a safe place to speak with the king—they were not expecting the carnage within. It was this surprise that triggered their heroic recovery. And so, just as the players won't see the plot twist coming, neither should they expect their second heroic recovery when it finds them.

Heroic Recovery as a Player Resource

Instead of using the heroic recovery as a plot device to allow certain experiences in your campaign, you may choose to hand it over to your players. In this case, tread lightly; the heroic recovery is a very powerful tool in an otherwise dangerous game. Triggering a heroic recovery may require one or more action points. Alternatively or additionally, you may require that players decide ahead of time on certain character attributes; then, a heroic recovery may only be activated when circumstances inspire that character to action (vengeance, valor, etc.)

