

# There's Someone Back Home: Rules for Distant Loved Ones

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# Introduction

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If I see one more single, orphaned adventurer I'm going to die. I can't handle it anymore. I mean, why would *anyone* in this fantasy world *ever* have kids? What if they're destined to be an adventurer? That's pretty much curtains for you. I wouldn't risk it.

I'm sure plenty of people wouldn't mind if their character had a family out there somewhere, but you certainly don't want to have them tagging along while you're fighting phase spiders and negotiating with goblins.

## Using This Supplement

*There's Someone Back Home* is a supplement to add a little structure and depth when you want your character to have distant loved ones. The supplement is designed for both **players and Dungeon Masters**. Before you—in either role—reads further, understand that using this supplement is a **collaborative** process. You'll want to work closely with one another to see what portions of the following mechanics and ideas are the right fit for your group and your game.

The supplement contains a mixture of **roleplay suggestions, worldbuilding mechanics, and challenges**. As poetic or romantic a supplement about love *could* be, most of the supplement's content offers sections of worldbuilding or roleplaying mechanics that will enable ways for players to make little decisions about maintaining their relationships with loved ones.

Dungeon Masters are simultaneously offered ideas to add occasional **complications** that can create anything from **social encounters** to **side quests**. By working with your players, you can create moments of **crisis** for the adventuring party as one or more members must overcome obstacles to provide for, or remain in contact with, their family.

## Or Ignore All of This

While the contained rules are good guidelines, the main purpose of this supplement is to facilitate the roleplaying. You may find it easier to hand wave most of these options in favor of flat fees or other streamlined rules for your characters to mail loved—do what feels natural in your own game and what works to best promote continued engagement from your players.





## I. Family Ties

The first step in roleplaying a (usually) off-screen family is to know who they are. This first section provides ideas and guidelines for figuring out who's at home rooting for you as you go on wild adventures with your companions.

### Significant Others

A spouse, a 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend,' a domestic partner—whatever the title, whatever the details, you may have a special someone you write home to. You may even consider them as casual as a 'lover,' or have multiple significant others in a polyamorous relationship; there's little else to say here other than to choose whether or not to include such relationships as they make sense for your character.

### Children

The pitter-patter of little feet. Or claws. Or hooves or...you know. Whatever.

If you have a significant other or family group at home who could provide a home for children,

consider rolling **1d4-2** to randomly determine the number of children your character has.

If you want your children to still be children, roll **3d6-2** for each child to determine their age. This tends to assume that 17 is considered to be 'adulthood,' but some races (such as Half-Orcs) mature more quickly and may have different cultural beliefs about the age of independence.





Keep in mind that your children don't have to be the same race as you; as part of your backstory the children could be adopted, or brought into the picture by your significant other or other family.

## Extended Relatives

Many cultures, by tradition or necessity, see relatives beyond a 'nuclear family' (significant other and children) as part of the household.

This can include **parents, aunts, uncles, cousins**, or even people considered part of the family household despite not being related by blood.

If you want to randomly determine the age of one or more family members, use the table below. The table doesn't account for every possible year of a humanoid's life, but follows the guidelines for when player races reach maturity and old age based on the entries in the *Player's Handbook*.

**Table 1.1: Approximate Random Age by Race**

	Child	Adult	Elderly
<b>Dwarf</b>	3d6-2	80+12d10	250+10d10
<b>Elf</b>	10d10	100+(4d10x10)	600+12d10
<b>Halfling</b>	2d10	20+8d10	100+5d10
<b>Human</b>	3d6-2	20+4d10	60+4d6
<b>Dragonborn</b>	2d8-1	15+4d12	60+2d10
<b>Gnome</b>	4d10-3	40+(3d10x10)	350-500
<b>Half-Elf</b>	3d6	20+10d12	150+3d10
<b>Half-Orc</b>	2d8-1	15+4d12	60+3d6
<b>Tiefling</b>	3d6-2	18+5d10	75+4d6

## Not All Families Are Family

Not everyone has a nuclear or extended family at home, despite the introduction's joke about orphaned do-gooders. Adventurers, especially those with particular backgrounds, might have an organization, group, or institution that they call family even if they aren't related by blood. A cleric or paladin may have a home temple, while a bard

or rogue could have a criminal organization, circus, or performing troupe.



**Table 1.1** on the next page shows some suggestions for alternatives to blood-relatives that you might have based on your character's background. Each one might have special factors that impact their baseline lifestyle or how easy it is to keep in contact with them. **Note that the mechanics touched upon in this table are detailed further on.**



**Table 1.2: Alternate Family Groups**

<b>Background</b>	<b>Possible Alternate Family Groups</b>	<b>Notes for Alternate Group</b>
Acolyte	Established temple or shrine, or loose sect.	Baseline modest lifestyle.
Anthropologist/ Archaeologist	A museum, school, university, or similar academic institution.	Baseline modest lifestyle.
Charlatan	A traveling troupe, circus, performers, criminals, or con artists.	Mail takes 2d4 days longer to reach this group.
City Watch	The guards and other constabulary of that city.	Player has advantage on checks to locate kindhearted strangers to deliver mail back home (1/week).
Clan Crafter	A group of tradesmen (usually gold or shield dwarves) who taught you your craft.	Baseline comfortable lifestyle.
Cloistered Scholar	A library, temple, or monastery.	
Criminal	A thieves' guild or similar group of criminals.	You and your family group can pass disguised messages with something similar to Thieves' Cant.
Entertainer	A circus, traveling troupe, etc.	Mail takes 2d4 days longer to reach this group.
Faction Agent	A faction group you closely associate with or specific fellow agents.	Mail relating to faction-specific business or goals is half-priced.
Folk Hero	People of the town or location where you gained your fame.	You can always find a kindhearted stranger to carry mail within 100 miles of this location.
Guild Artisan	The community of artisans where you learned your craft or had your practice.	Baseline comfortable lifestyle.
Knight of the Order	The members you work(ed) with or the ones who initiated you to the order.	Your Knightly Regard feature can extend to kindhearted strangers.
Outlander	A druid conclave, wild tribes, etc.	You pay half price for <i>animal messenger</i> spell services.
Sailor	Your captain and/or former crew.	Your Ship's Passage feature can extend to delivering mail across bodies of water.
Soldier	Active or inactive members of the army you served with.	Player has advantage on checks to locate kindhearted strangers to deliver mail back home (1/week).
Urchin	An orphanage or foster home.	Parcels of money or other support are sent at half cost.



## Supporting Family Financially

Many see adventure as a means of attaining fame and fortune, but plenty of adventurers have families in their hometown that they also support with the coin they make. When discussing how loved ones back home live, use the same lifestyle guidelines provided for players in the *Player's Handbook*, which encompasses anything from 'squalid' to 'aristocratic' lifestyles.

After a player has crafted their character's backstory, they should work with the Dungeon Master to establish the **baseline standard of living** for the household. It's assumed that a reasonably healthy adult at home can support themselves at least a minimal (poor) level, or higher if they have more advanced trade skills or other factors. If you are responsible for children or elderly individuals who cannot work, they are assumed to live at the same level of lifestyle expense as the rest of the household, but their **costs are halved**. Children may consume less food, and neither children or elderly folks have the kind of 'equipment maintenance costs' that are factored into a working adult's lifestyle expenses.

Based on the specific details of a character's backstory or home life, the **baseline standard of living** might be very different. Someone with the urchin background is more likely to have a home living standard of 'poor' regardless of how many able-bodied people in the family work; someone with a 'noble' background could easily have an extended family at home living in luxury, even if most of the family members don't work. For most working families, the player and Dungeon Master should work together to determine how much money the family makes versus their expenses, which is best done when creating the character and building their backstory.

As adventurers earn more and more coin, they may wish to supplement whatever income is available at home with their own earnings, raising their family above their normal baseline standard

of living. They can most easily do so by sending back parcels of coin or saleable items.

Something to consider when an adventurer sends money home is that extra coin can't hurt—a family's lifestyle is precarious at any extra expenses or a lost money parcel would send them into financial oblivion. Extra money can be saved by loved ones back home to deal with the possibility of financial crisis (see section III. **Crisis**).

## Family Bond Options

Consider one of the following options for how your adventuring relates to your loved ones.

d8	Result
1	I go on adventures to get away from a hostile or chaotic home life. I'd rather face down dragons than the expectations at home.
2	My adventures are my means of increasing my family's wealth and honor. This is the best way I can ensure they have a comfortable, good life.
3	I am in self-imposed exile for an infraction against my family or their community. It's better if keep my distance as best I can for now.
4	I have wanted to be an adventurer for most of my life. My family supports my dream and encourages me whenever and however they can.
5	I have wanted to be an adventurer for most of my life. My family thinks it's too risky and try to keep in contact because they fear for my safety.
6	I want my family to rise to power. My fame and fortune as an adventurer is the best way of accomplishing that.
7	My family pressured me into becoming an adventurer. They have expectations or goals set out for me to accomplish as part of my wanderings.
8	My family or lineage has adventurers in it. I'm furthering a family tradition!



## II. Keep in Touch

Barring magical means, the most reliable way to communicate with a distant loved one is by sending notes and letters, and the best way to support them monetarily is to send back money or items in a parcel.

Most common handheld parcels are no more than five pounds, and as approximately fifty coins weighs one pound, couriers can deliver a package containing up to 250 coins of any given denomination.

While the *Player's Handbook* suggests that a messenger cost 2 copper pieces per mile, this is generally meant to reflect the price for a courier whose sole burden and purpose is the delivery of the given message. Many towns, settlements, and cities understand the importance of keeping lines of communication open between each other and have either government-sponsored or for-profit mail services, which can significantly reduce the cost of sending a letter over long distances. Designated messengers will always be fastest and tend to be the most expensive as distance grows; towns with tax-supported mail services are rather inexpensive but are slower as messages often stop at several towns along the way; for-profit mailing services run a middle ground of cost and speed but tend to be more appealing at larger distances.

In a pinch, one can always search for someone travelling in the right direction and ask them to deliver the letter for you. While **such kindhearted travelers** may be happy to deliver your message for little to no cost, there are additional risks and complications associated with relying on them for your delivery.

### Paid Messenger Services

**Standard Messenger.** A messenger hired specifically to carry your message or small parcel. Designated messengers have a very fast travel pace; it's assumed that over the course of their journey these messengers will either be mounted or that they hand off the letter to a fresh runner to keep up the pace for a greater part of each day.

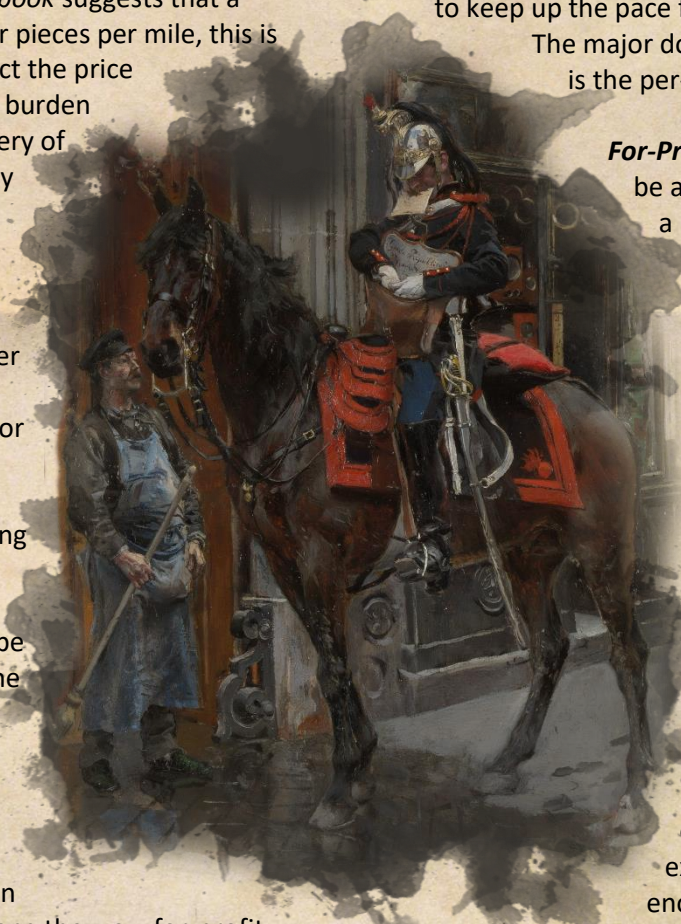
The major downside of such a messenger is the per-mile cost.

**For-Profit Postal Service.** This can be a guild, local business, or even a powerful regional company.

This kind of delivery service is a bit slower than a designated messenger and a good deal less expensive. It's still a faster option than a government-run service, as the higher price often lets the business swap couriers or provide mounts for better per-day speed.

### Government Postal Service.

Local governments, regardless of type, tend to recognize the need of their citizens to stay in touch with one another. With few exceptions, villages don't have enough of a tax base to support a local delivery office, but towns and cities are large enough to support such services. Even if an overall region isn't under a single government's rulership, towns with these offices are treated as connected for the purpose of deliveries. This





**Table 2.1: Available Messengers by Settlement Size**

Town size	Spell Services DC	Kindhearted Traveler DC	Delivery Services
Village (pop. <1,000)	20	16	Messenger, For-Profit, <i>animal messenger</i> (2nd level only)
Town (pop. <6,000)	15	14	All Mundane, <i>animal messenger</i> and <i>sending</i> (up to 4th level)
City (pop. <25,000)	10	10	All Mundane, <i>animal messenger</i> and <i>sending</i> (up to 6th level)

option is the cheapest of the 'safer' delivery methods, but it is also the slowest; couriers stop at each town as parcels and letters are sorted, delivered, and collected.

**Spellcasting Services.** Adventurers might be familiar with the idea of visiting local temples for holy magic, but there are other local magical resources for those who need to send word back home to loved ones. In any populated area, one can search for someone who knows the spell *animal messenger*. In towns and cities, one might find someone who can cast *sending*. The *sending* spell gives the benefit of instant delivery across any distance and an instant reply—though using the caster as an intermediary means there's no privacy for both messages.

### Special Messengers

When you want to find a means of delivering your message without using a standard courier service, it requires some searching. When you specify what kind of special messenger you're looking for, you spend at least **two hours** searching for them. At the end of this time period, you make a **Charisma (Persuasion) check**, which represents time spent talking to locals, inquiring about local resources, and speaking with your desired messenger. Each additional hour spent searching grants a **+1** bonus to the roll, up to a maximum of **+5** (7 hours total). Another person can help you while you search, granting **advantage** on the check. The DM compares your result to the **Spell Services DC** or **Kindhearted Traveler DC**, depending on what kind of special messenger you were searching for. If your check result is at least

equal to the DC, you locate someone who agrees to cast the spell or travel with your message.

You can attempt to find a **kindhearted traveler** while on the road who will bring your letter or parcel to their destination and then send it using whatever local paid service is available. If there are travelers going in the opposite direction who are not hostile, you can attempt a **DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check** to convince them to do this for you. You must provide at least enough money to cover the government or for-profit cost of the delivery; travelers might ask for some additional money for their trouble.

### The Risk of Failure

Just like adventurers on the road, letter-carriers face a number of risks. Sometimes, these risks might cause your message to be lost and never reach its destination. When you use a paid service to deliver your letter or parcel, the DM rolls a single **d20**; on a **1**, the message is lost somewhere in transit as crisis hits (killed by bandits, attacked by mean dogs, etc.). When you use a **kindhearted traveler** to deliver your letter or parcel, the DM rolls a **d20 for each day of travel**, and the item is lost in transit on a result of **1**.



**Table 2.2: General Pricing for Messenger Services**

Mundane Delivery Services	Cost	Speed
Standard Messenger	1cp/mile; 1gp/50 mi.; 10 gp/500 mi., etc	48 mi./day
For-Profit Postal Service	1gp up to 50 mi.; 2gp up to 200 mi.; 3gp up to 500 mi.	36 mi./day
Government Postal Service	5sp up to 50 mi.; 1gp up to 200 mi.; 2gp up to 500 mi.	24 mi./day
Spellcasting Services		
<i>animal messenger</i>	10gp, plus 5gp per each slot level above 2nd.	See spell
<i>sending</i>	30gp	Instant

## Receiving Replies

Obviously, adventurers would like to hear back from the folks at home and know that things are all right. However, one of the common tropes of being an adventurer is that they are constantly on the move—going to various towns and cities, spending weeks at a time in the wilderness, and spending days in the depths of a grim dungeon. There are a few ways traveling adventurers can still receive word from loved ones:

**A home base.** If a group consistently works out of a certain settlement, or if they have a special headquarters to call their own, they can reasonably expect letters to be delivered to, and held at, that location until they return from their current excursion.

**Forward my mail.** As part of their downtime or as a short errand before they head into the wild, players can always tell a local delivery office to send their mail on to their next expected destination. This usually requires them to put down a reasonable fee for the cost of forwarding whatever mail comes through from this town to the designated one. It's still the player character's responsibility to check in with that final destination for whatever items may arrive.

In both of the above suggestions, a character can inquire about these options at the inn where they're staying, if any. Inns that provide a wealthy lifestyle or better will forward mail to another

town within 25 miles as a free courtesy service for their recent patrons.

Loved ones at home can always find a kindhearted traveler to carry the letter or parcel for them, but such individuals will only bring the item to the designated town or location; they will not forward the item to another location if the adventuring party has already moved on.

## For DMs: The Language of Love

If one or more of your players embraces the idea of writing back and forth with loved ones, it can be an exciting (or terrifying) challenge. Here are a few brief pointers for writing letters to your characters from the perspective of their friends and family:

1. Being conversational or formal is both part of an NPC's character and a way of reflecting the nature of the relationship between the NPC and your player's character.
2. Given that your adventurers could go many ingame days (which could span multiple sessions) between sending and receiving mail, you have ample real-world time to craft messages that your player will receive. There's no pressure!
3. The process is collaborative. While you're writing as an NPC, it's far more personal to your player than a random shopkeeper. When in doubt, ask your player to create details about this NPC. Work together to create memories that this character would have with the NPC. This also serves to add depth to your player's backstory.



## III. Crisis

Nothing stays good forever. Occasionally, events outside an adventurer's control occur. Family life is no different—inconvenience, sudden illness, and tragedy can strike at any time. This section details a number of crises that can throw a wrench in an adventurer's plans, often leaving them torn between their family's interests and their current personal goals.

### Neither Rain nor Goblins nor...

As player characters grow past the early levels in a campaign, money from adventures begins to pile up rapidly. The cost of common goods and services soon begins to become irrelevant. Charismatic party members find it easier to locate spellcasting services or kindhearted travelers.

As the Dungeon Master, you may elect to introduce a variety of complications that makes it more difficult for characters to keep in touch with their loved ones. As most campaigns progress, the overall plot begins to grow more dire; darker days and increased danger can have an effect on the various lines of communication between people and towns.

The following difficulties might be region-wide as tensions increase, or specific to towns and individuals. Side-quests and tasks might alleviate such local issues and allow normal communications to continue.

**Short-Term Crises:** These are often local issues that are specific to a particular town. The following ideas, or ones you come up with, can be anything from amusing distractions, to brief errands, to encounters or side-quests. Usually, resolving these issues consists of agreeing to a future service or taking less than a day to solve a local problem. As the DM, you can pick entries from this table or roll **1d4 times** whenever the player characters reach a new settlement.

D10	Short-Term Crisis
1	Local mundane delivery services are on strike because they're tired of being harassed by dogs. Local dog owners are in an uproar and are refusing to budge.
2	The local mundane delivery services are charging high up-front fees due to nearby bandits or similar foes waylaying deliveries and killing couriers.
3	One or all of the local mundane delivery services will only fulfill a delivery order if the party escorts one of their other couriers safely to the next town.
4	One or more monsters have begun attacking couriers for unknown reasons. The issue needs to be dealt with before deliveries can resume.
5	Creatures enchanted with the <i>animal messenger</i> spell aren't reaching their destination. It's unclear why.
6	Spellcasters are charging double for their message services. Perhaps some task can be performed for them instead?
7	The <b>DC</b> for finding kindhearted travelers is increased by <b>5</b> . Recent events have made travelers warier and unlikely to take risks.
8	Some strange phenomenon is causing couriers to become lost as they travel away from the town, adding two days to all delivery times.
9	The local government has levied high taxes on all delivery services (magical and mundane). Some other crisis or problem is causing the coin-strapped settlement to impose these costs.
10	The local government and/or population is caught up in some conspiracy or fervor. It's impossible to hire a message service or find a kindhearted traveler until tensions are soothed.



**Persistent Crises:** These local or regional effects have significant impact on the lines of communication. When you deem appropriate (such as after major disasters, world-shaking events, or at the end of major narrative 'acts'), roll on this table **1d4 times** to see how the changing world is having an effect on the means of communication.

D10	Long-Term Crisis
1	The DC for finding spell services in any village, town, or city is increased by 5.
2	The DC for finding kindhearted travelers in settlements and on the road is increased by 5.
3	The local (or regional) for-profit delivery service is shut down or refuses service.
4	The local (or regional) government delivery service is shut down or refuses service.
5	The price for all mundane delivery services is tripled; spell service costs are doubled.
6	The speed of all mundane delivery services is halved.
7	All mundane delivery services roll a d20 for each day of travel, failing on a 1.
8	Kindhearted travelers roll 3 d20's for each day of travel to determine failure instead of one.
9	Spells like <i>animal messenger</i> roll a d20 per day of travel, failing on a 1. The <i>sending</i> spell has a 10% chance of failure (or 15% from another plane).
10	Roll twice on this table, ignoring and rerolling this same result.

## Sending Stones

Sending Stones are an accomplishment for any adventurer seeking to keep in contact with friends and family, but these items are not without errors or drawbacks. Here are a few suggestions for tense situations involving an adventurer that has a sending stone back home with a loved one.

D6	Sending Stone Problem
1	The loved one with the matching stone misplaces it for 1d4+2 days. The player character has no idea why they aren't answering.
2	The matching sending stone is stolen. There's little the player character can do other than speak to the thief through the stone and try to convince them to return it.
3	The sending stone malfunctions for 2d6+2 days, causing the voice of either sender to be a different language that the recipient may or may not be able to understand.
4	Unknown to the owners, this set of stones is cursed. Both owners occasionally receive false messages or screams.
5	An enemy or rival of the player character or the loved one has a means of spying on the loved one's home or their sending stone specifically. They're overhearing all of the conversations using the stones.
6	Randomly, or after the adventurer is struck by a spell, the sending stone begins to attune to another, incorrect stone somewhere in the world. They must have a capable magic-user fix the stone to get it working correctly again.





## Financial Crisis

All families experience sudden expenses. Every so often, the adventurer will learn of a sudden expense that the family incurred—anything from storm damage to the home to a sudden fine imposed by the local government.

An easy way to roll up a financial crisis is to take the family's current **lifestyle expenses** and calculate the crisis as follows:

### Per-Day Lifestyle Cost x 6d6 x 10

If your player makes a habit of sending money back home and/or if one or more loved ones work professions that provide a stable income, you might determine that some financial crises are simply paid for with the money that the family has on hand—they can be added flavor to the next message the player character receives about how things are going at home. Occasionally, though, they can be roleplaying opportunities for players to suddenly need to find ways to earn coin to send home—and fast. Such triggers can open them up to difficult moral choices or open up opportunities for side-quests.





## Credits

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