





Monstrous Menagerie II

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See the Level Up System Reference Document for a full list of Open Gaming Content.



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Introduction

Monstrous Menagerie 2 is a bestiary for Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition. It's one of those sequels that can stand on its own. In order to use it, you don't need Monstrous Menagerie, or indeed anything else from the Level Up line: any required rules are reprinted in this book.

While *Monstrous Menagerie* included a lot of new takes on traditional monsters, Monstrous Menagerie 2 includes hundreds of brand-new monsters, twists on old ones, and new rules concepts to expand the possibilities of gameplay.

Hordes

In Monstrous Menagerie 2, we're introducing a new monster role: the horde monster. Just as a single elite monster can challenge a party of heroes, horde monsters are specially designed to work well in large groups that outnumber the adventurers. Horde monsters are the evil emperor's palace guards, the armies besieging the city walls, and the pack of wolves howling in pursuit of the heroes. They're easy to run for the Narrator and easy to kill for the adventurers. But unlike many traditional monstrous minions, they're not to be taken lightly.

A horde monster has no special game rules that encourage heroes to hold back. There's no rule that says a hero is entitled to drop a horde monster in one hit—although you might, if you connect with a solid enough blow! Horde monsters' hit points are calibrated so that they fall before a hero's best attacks or spells but can survive a weaker attack or an unlucky damage roll.

Furthermore, a horde monster hits hard. While hordes are simple and fast to run—a horde monster never makes more than one attack—they don't deal minimal, easily ignored damage. In fact, along with its weapon damage and ability modifier, a horde monster gets a damage *bonus* to make sure that it remains a threat to adventurers of any level. Heroes might be able to plow through hordes of foes, but they can't afford to ignore them.

The complete rules for horde monsters can be found in Appendix A.

Heroes

Is your party about to face off against a recurring villain? Or have they be friended a monster or beast and want it to adventure alongside them?

We've developed rules for heroic monsters—monsters that gain levels and improve their capabilities just as player characters do. Whether it's a foe, an ally, or even a monstrous player character, a heroic monster's statistics stay apace with those of the party members, and they can even earn unique or customizable features as they gain monster levels. A rival wizard can gain new spells, a captured kobold can become a full-fledged party member, and a red dragon hatchling can grow, breathing ever fiercer flame and becoming a danger to foes and party members alike.

The complete rules for heroic monsters can be found in Appendix B.

Content Warnings

Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition has always been committed to safety tools to make sure everyone has the best experience possible while playing the game. To that end, we've added content warnings—banners that appear at the top of certain monster entries, like the bodybag (body horror), heartless hag (mind control), or greenwood child (children in danger). These warnings let a Narrator avoid certain monsters that they know won't be fun for their group.

Content warnings are just one part of a suite of safety tools offered by *Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition*, and they're not necessary for every gaming group. Many players are perfectly happy to smite

any foe, no matter how villainous—and some Narrators might even use content warnings to seek out certain types of monsters (leaning heavily into body horror for a horror-themed adventure, for instance). The use of content warnings is up to you and your group!

False Rumors

By solidly connecting monsters to the game world, a Narrator can make each encounter feel significant and urgent. One major tool for doing so is a monster's Legends and Lore entry, which lets players make a skill check to determine what their characters know about a monster—or what they think they know. In Monstrous Menagerie 2, we've added false rumors to the Legends and Lore entries: potentially dangerous misinformation that characters learn on a failed skill check. An encounter with murderous crimson sporecaps will go very differently if the party mistakes the sporecaps for a more friendly species of mushroom folk!

Epic Villains

Now that Level Up: Advanced 5th Edition has been out for several years, many gaming groups have had the chance to reach high levels of play. To support these epic heroes, Monstrous Menagerie 2 includes lots of high-tier monsters, including quite a number of unique, elite villains suitable for climactic endgames. With the monsters in this book, characters can pit themselves against archdevils, lich lords, dragon kings, and even gods.

If you want to run an entire campaign centered on a specific villain, we've included new monsters that support such epic quests throughout multiple tiers of play. Even at level 1, your heroes can confront the minions of the campaign's ultimate adversary.

Here are just a few of the world-threatening campaigns you could run with Monstrous Menagerie 2:

Empire of the Dragons

Humanoid encroachments on draconic domains cause Mohsilith the Diamond Willed, the self-proclaimed emperor of the dragons, to awaken and declare war on the surface realm.

This bestiary can be used with 5E or Level Up. If you're using 5E, you'll want to be aware of a few rules changes

using 5E, you'll want to be aware of a few rules changes we've introduced. These changes will be discussed in greater detail further on in this introduction.

Alignment: Few monsters have an alignment. Those that do (mostly celestials, fiends, and some undead) have their alignment listed among their traits.

Bloodied Monsters: Monsters are considered bloodied when they've been reduced to half their hit points or fewer. There are no rules associated with being bloodied, but other game elements might interact with it. For instance, some monsters have abilities they can use only while bloodied.

Expertise Dice: Some monsters have expertise dice listed next to skills, saving throws, or other d20 rolls. An expertise die is rolled and added to the d20 roll it modifies. For instance, a Stealth bonus of +5 (+1d4) means that 1d4 + 5 is added to the monster's d20 roll when it makes a Stealth check.

New Conditions: *Level Up* introduces confused, rattled, slowed, fatigue, and strife, which are described fully in Appendix C: Conditions.

Gazes: Some monsters' actions include the Gaze keyword in their name. These actions can be taken only if both the monster and the target can see each other. Full rules for gaze attacks are found later in this introduction.

Ongoing Damage: Some attacks, like being set on fire, deal ongoing damage. This damage occurs at the end of each of the affected creature's turns, and it continues until ended by a condition specified by the attack.

Math Changes: We've slightly changed the way a few monster statistics are calculated behind the scenes. For instance, some monsters gain different Armor Class benefits from armors, and grapple escape DCs are calculated using a slightly different formula. None of these changes require any tweaking; just use the monsters as they are written.

The tier 0 party meets a troublemaking fey dragon wyrmling—and has the chance to capture and train a fey dragon hatchling. At later levels, the party battles moonbloom hydras and placates the dual natures of a polychromatic dragon (tier 1), fights a young purple dragon (tier 2), faces legions of kobold dragon warriors riding minor dragons (tier 3), and finally confronts Mohsilith and his retinue of great wyrm dragons and Diamond Guard warriors (tier 4).

Library of Whispers

Arcane secrets are stolen, and the secret keepers are found dead with their mouths fused shut.

At tier 0, the party must make a deal with a whisper snake and face the enmity of a heroic necromancer (a potential recurring foe). Further adventures bring the heroes in conflict with a mindmelter ooze and a whisper (tier 2), a runic stone guardian and a deathless legion guarding a mysterious artifact (tier 2), and a stitchweaver and a dream creature known as the Sleepless (tier 3). At tier 4, the party must confront (or ally with) the archangel Lexiel and finally battle the archlich the Mouthless One and its demilich bone minions.

Something's Rotten in Heaven

Every cult worth its salt wants to restore some forgotten god or other to the heights of power—and finally, one of them succeeds.

The tier 0 party meets a heroic cleric that's destined to become a recurring foe, and gains a puffball symbiont companion. They go on to battle cave trawlers and an arcanocordyceps infestation (tier 1), crimson sporecaps and bell jars (tier 2), and a decay knight leading blight giants and blood ogres (tier 3). At tier 4, the party must save the world from the reborn fungus god Rhiz'Quethar the Consumed and its rhizus army.

Monster Entries

You can use the monster information in this book to inspire your game preparation or worldbuilding ahead of time. You can also use it on the fly. Just flip open the book: each monster entry contains everything you need to generate a unique encounter, with suggested encounter groups, treasure, monster behaviors, and even names.

A monster entry has the following parts: description, legends and lore, sample encounters, monster signs, monster behavior, optional monster-specific tables, optional sample names, and stat blocks.

Description

This is an essay describing the monster's place in the world. It may contain ecological information and story hooks. Like every other part of a monster entry, this description is for inspiration only: you are free to use another setting's lore or invent your own.

Legends and Lore

What does an adventurer know about a monster? The Legends and Lore section describes the information a character might recall about a monster with a successful skill check. The higher the check, the more in-world information—natural history, weaknesses, and so on—the character recalls.

Even if a character learns nothing else about a monster, a DC 10 check is usually sufficient to recognize it by sight. At the Narrator's discretion, recognizing a monster might not require a roll (for common creatures) or might be difficult or impossible (for rare or unknown monsters).

Sometimes, a particularly bad roll—a 5 or less—might reveal false gossip or dangerous misinformation.

Sample Encounters and Treasure

Most monster entries include sample encounters, usually featuring multiple variations and varying difficulty levels. Similarly, we've included sample treasure hoards along with each sample encounter. These treasures are a convenience for when you don't have the time to randomly generate or hand-curate a treasure hoard. It's important to note

Changes from Monstrous Menagerie I

We've made a couple of quality-of-life upgrades to the stat blocks in this book.

False Rumors. The Legends & Lore section of each monster entry now includes a false rumor which is handed out on a roll of 5 or less.

Initiative. In Level Up, the Narrator can call for any skill check or ability check as an initiative roll. We've listed three common ones—Dexterity, Wisdom (Perception), and Wisdom (Insight), and provided average values for each to reduce die rolls.

Saving Throws. The Saving Throw entry on each stat block now shows all six saving throws, not just the ones benefiting from a proficiency bonus.

that not every encounter comes with treasure. In fact, most don't. For most campaigns, the party finds only one to three treasures over the course of one character level. The other encounters come with nothing at all or with ordinary equipment and a handful of incidental coins. Don't make the mistake of giving out the sample treasure for each encounter!

Monster Signs

Often, an encounter occurs with no warning: a group of characters stumbles into a group of monsters. Sometimes, though, characters come upon a sign of impending danger. Perhaps they see a footprint or hear an ominous, distant wail. Clues like this allow characters to make interesting exploration decisions and make the world feel lived-in.

As a rule of thumb, assume that half of all encounters are preceded by the discovery of a sign (or its potential discovery: some signs may be missed by those who don't make a successful Perception or other skill check).

A group may try to identify a monster by the signs it leaves behind, for instance by examining a footprint. As a rule of thumb, doing so requires a

Survival or Investigation check (minimum DC 15), with some monsters being impossible to identify (for instance, a distant pillar of smoke offers no clues about the creature that set its flame).

Monster Behavior

One of the most important elements of any encounter is this: what are the monsters up to? A roll on the monster behavior tables determines whether a monster or group is hiding in ambush, looking for help, preoccupied with a prisoner, or any of thousands of other individual behaviors.

Sample Names

We've provided sample name lists for most intelligent monsters.

Stat Block

Besides descriptions, lore, and other world information, each entry contains stat blocks. A stat block describes a particular creature's capabilities, attacks, combat spells, and other statistics needed to run it as either a social or combat encounter.

Challenge and XP

Each monster's stat block includes its Challenge Rating (CR). This is an important number for determining whether a monster provides a suitable combat challenge for a group. The higher the Challenge Rating, the tougher the monster.

Each monster's Challenge Rating is accompanied by a number of experience points (XP). Experience points are one way to reward players for completing an encounter. In some games, when characters have triumphed in a combat or noncombat encounter against a monster, they are awarded the listed experience points. If you are not using experience point-based leveling, you can ignore this number.

Legendary Monsters

Legendary monsters are powerful apex creatures. They often rule the lands around them for miles. A legendary monster is a formidable opponent that can successfully wage battle against an entire adventuring party.

A legendary monster has up to three legendary actions, which it can use when it's not its turn. Many legendary monsters also have legendary resistances, which are abilities that allow them to succeed at a saving throw that they would otherwise fail. Using Legendary Resistance often comes with a cost. Unless otherwise noted, the effects of expending Legendary Resistance end when the creature takes a long rest.

Legendary monsters are intended to be used as solo opponents or as powerful bosses surrounded by minions. Just like a normal monster, a legendary monster is an appropriate combat challenge for two to four characters with character levels that match its Challenge Rating. However, its additional actions and defenses provide a more interesting battle, suitable for the climax of a story.

Elite Monsters

An elite monster is a tough and dangerous example of its species or type. Often, an elite monster represents a specific, named individual.

An elite monster is only suitable for gaming groups that desire an unusually difficult combat challenge. Fighting an elite monster is as tough as fighting two ordinary monsters of its Challenge Rating.

An elite monster is a hard combat challenge for four characters with character levels that match its Challenge Rating.

For magical effects and spells that rely on a creature's Challenge Rating, such as *true polymorph*, treat an elite monster as if its Challenge Rating was doubled.

A creature can be both elite and legendary. Such a monster gains the extra complexity of a legendary monster and the doubled combat power of an elite monster.

Size

A monster can be Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, Huge, Gargantuan, or Titanic. A Small or Medium monster is around the same size as most characters and takes up a 5 by 5 foot space in combat. A Tiny creature takes up a 2 1/2-foot-square space. A Large creature takes up a 10-foot-square space, and a Huge creature takes up a 15-foot-square space. A Gargantuan creature takes up a 20-foot-square space. A Titanic creature takes up at least a 25-foot-square space but can be larger.