

Reducing the Risk of Total Party Kill

written by A J | December 23, 2015



The party of brave low level adventurers are exploring a dungeon, the problem is the dungeon is stocked organically and there is nothing to ensure that the encounters are at a level that the party can handle. Maybe they'll run into some first level goblin fodder, or maybe they'll stumble on a pack of gnolls who will hunt them down for fun!

What can you do to reduce the party's risk?

Locals.

Talk with the locals about the dungeon site. They might have details on who lived there, what monsters are where, what has been raiding from there and maybe even details or a map. Collecting rumors can improve survivability considerably.

Be quiet.

Running through a dungeon with no regard for noise can lead to some really great TPKs. Monsters are attracted to sound and very often they will join into an ongoing battle. On the flip side, the party should be moving quietly around and listening when they have an opportunity. They can avoid many monsters if they can get the heads up by listening for them.

Base camp.

Camping out where you can observe the dungeon entrance is a good place to start. Watch for monsters coming and going – kinds, how many, weapons, etc. If there's regular intelligent NPC or monster traffic in and out, watch for pass codes, recognition signs, badges, or other means of authentication. This will help you to be better prepared. This camp can also be a great place to retreat to in the event the party needs to rest in safety to recover.

Scout ahead.

Sending the party halfling to sneak around and gather intelligence is another way to stay alive. If you don't want to risk a character, send in some hirelings instead. They might not all come back out alive, but the ones that do will have first hand knowledge of what to expect. Try being sneaky and stealing treasure or sabotaging enemies, you still get experience, and worst case you are in the same position as attacking outright.

Distract monsters.

Monsters may stop chasing you if you throw food or treasure behind you as you escape. Hungry wolves would much rather eat a mutton chop, then have to

chase you all over. And goblins love shiny loot and will pick up every coin they can find. Pack animals also make good sacrifices for larger monsters as well as giving the party additional carrying capacity.

Search Everything.

I can't say this enough. There can be hidden doors, chests, monster and more lurking just behind that next search check. Having valuable treasure you found or using the secret entrance can make a huge difference in the outcomes of the adventure. When you search, don't forget the ceiling or possible traps.

Secure, then loot.

Don't start hauling unwieldy solid gold statues through areas which you haven't thoroughly explored. Investigate the whole dungeon first and then do a second sweep for loot. Of course keep some items as you go, but don't go hauling a golden statue through the whole dungeon.

What else? Post in the comments below.