THREE ENCOUNTER DUNGEON (3ED)

A Fast & Flexible Format for TTRPG Adventures

## What is the Three Encounter Dungeon?

The Three Encounter Dungeon (3ED) is a streamlined adventure format perfect for one-shots, drop-in sessions, convention play, or bridging gaps between major story arcs. It focuses on telling a complete narrative in three compact but impactful scenes.

Why Use the 3ED Format?

» FAST TO PREP: FINISH IN UNDER AN HOUR

» EASY TO RUN: SIMPLE STRUCTURE TO GUIDE PLAY

» GREAT PACING: BUILT-IN NARRATIVE ARC

» ONE SESSION: DESIGNED TO BE PLAYED IN ONE SESSION (~4HRS)

» MODULAR: DROP INTO ANY CAMPAIGN SETTING

STRUCTURE

THREE ENCOUNTER DUNGEON

① THE HOOK → ② CHALLENGE → ③ THE CLIMAX
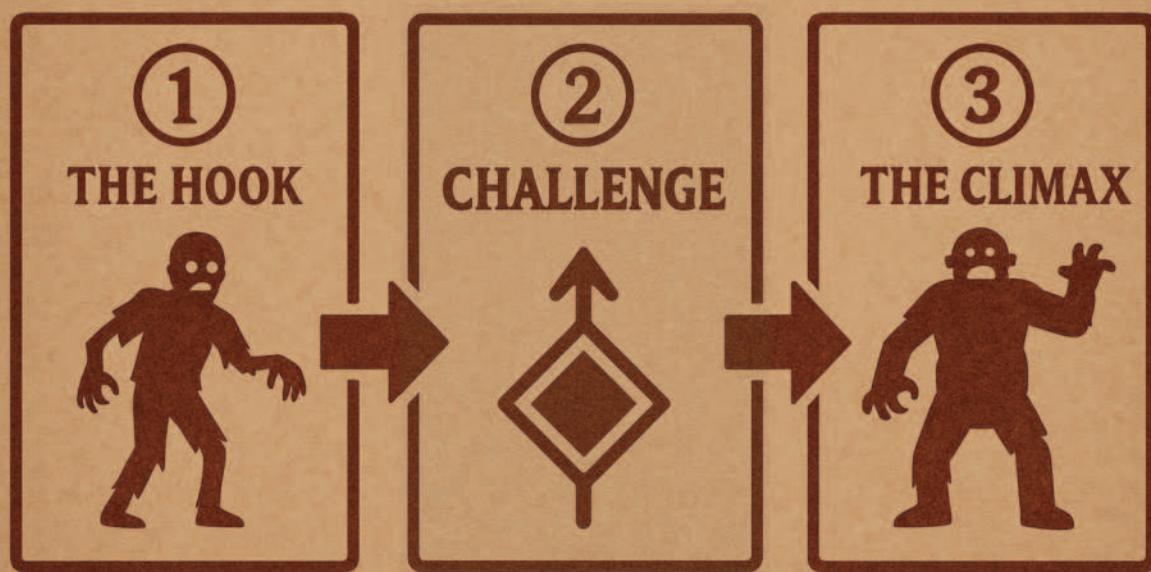
1. THE HOOK

Introduce the setting and immediate threat. Pull players in with danger, urgency, or mystery.

2. CHALLENGE

Present a meaningful complication: puzzle, roleplay, social encounter, or hazard.

3. THE CLIMAX

Deliver the finale. A boss fight, moral dilemma, or dramatic choice that wraps the session.

EXAMPLE FLOW

HOOK: Players visit a town to find all the townsfolk missing and are attacked by icy ghouls roaming the empty streets.
COMBAT

CHALLENGE: The players must search the village for clues to determine what happened to to the townsfolk. They find evidence of a powerful wizard who is enacting his revenge on the town by trapping them in a magic snowglobe prison.
INVESTIGATION

CLIMAX: Players must enter the snowglobe prison and face the icy wintermancer in his lair and defeat him to break the enchantment imprisoning the town.
COMBAT: BOSS FIGHT!

DM Tips for 3ED Success

- Keep your encounters **distinct** (*social, combat, mystery, etc.*)
- Include a *twist or moral angle* for **depth**
- *Mix it up!* Encounters 1, 2, and 3 can be any combination of combat or skills based encounters:

FOR EXAMPLE

HOOK: Players visit a town to find all the townsfolk missing and must search for clues to determine what happened. — **INVESTIGATION**

CHALLENGE: Players must defeat the wintermancer and his ghouls to gain access to the magic snowglobe imprisoning the town. — **COMBAT**

CLIMAX: Players must solve a magical puzzle or perform skill based challenges to deactivate the snowglobe and release the imprisoned townsfolk before they all perish inside. — **PUZZLE**