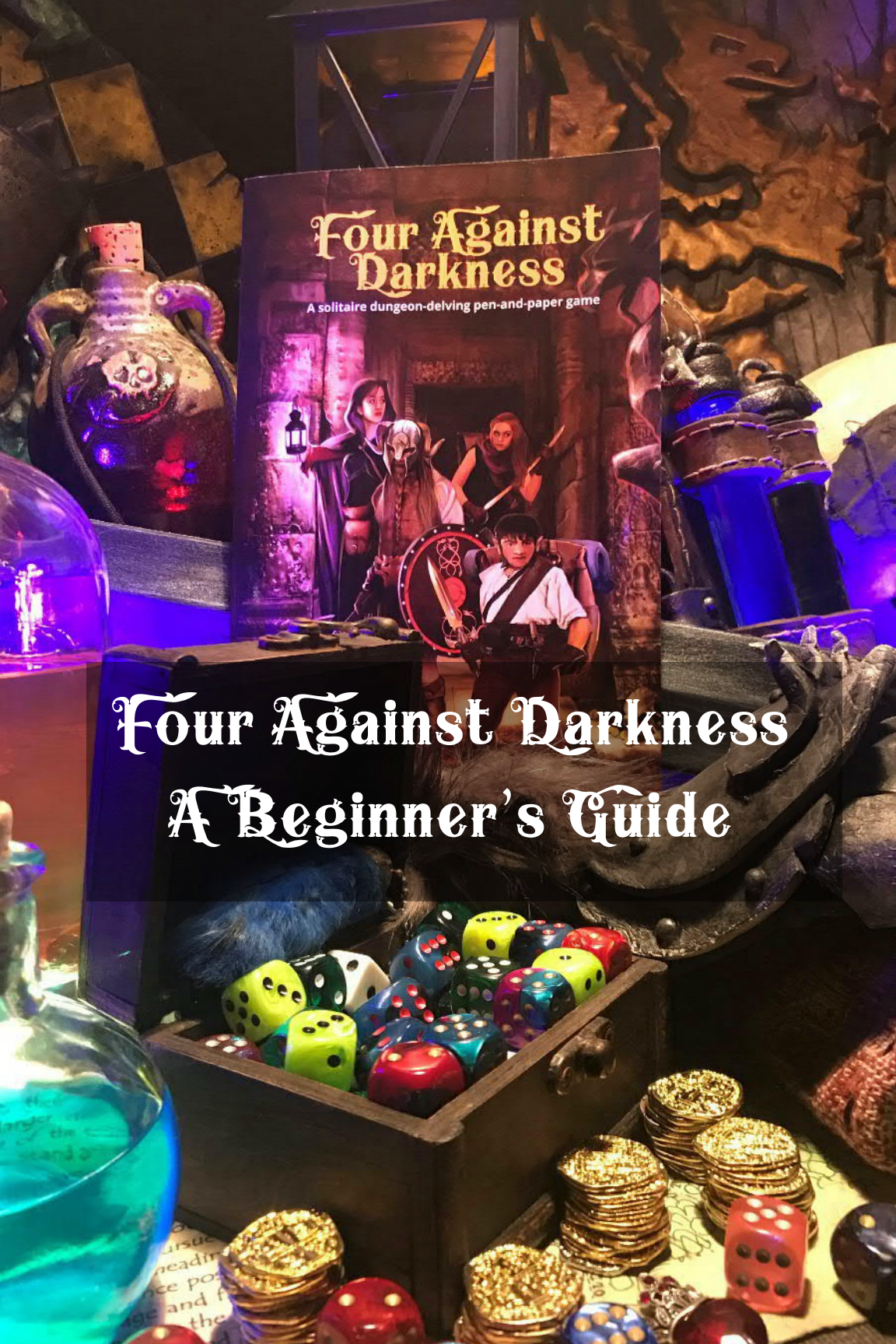


# Four Against Darkness

A solitaire dungeon-delving pen-and-paper game

## Four Against Darkness A Beginner's Guide



# Four Against Darkness

## A Beginner's Guide, v.2.2

### What is Four Against Darkness?

*Four Against Darkness* is a solitaire dungeon-delving/fantasy adventuring game.

### Who is the Publisher?

4AD is published by Ganesha Games, a company mainly known for their miniature games such as *Song of Blades and Heroes*, *Mutants and Death Ray Guns*, and the solo-coop game *Sellswords & Spellslingers*. Ganesha Games has been in business since 2007. Ganesha has won an Origins Award for the Napoleonic skirmish game *Song of Drums and Shakos*, and was also nominated with *Song of Blades and Heroes* and with Osprey's *A Fistful of Kung Fu*, written by Andrea Sfiligoi. Ganesha Games is just two guys (Andrea and Damon) running a game company from Italy (Andrea) and Malaysia (Damon, who originally hails from Reno, Nevada). Ganesha Games has run several successful Kickstarters for the production of miniatures and related rulebooks.

### Tell me how to play

No miniatures or fancy equipment are needed. All you need is the core book, pencil and eraser, two six sided dice, and grid paper, and you can start playing.

You choose four character types from the classic classes (warrior, wizard, rogue, halfling, dwarf, barbarian, cleric, elf), equip them, and start adventuring in dungeons created by dice rolls and by your choices. 4AD is a nostalgic throwback to the early days of roleplaying, so, while it is NOT a retroclone, it includes a few rules that are homages to that era (treating elves, dwarves and halflings as classes is a nod to that era).

When you enter a room, you generate its content on a series of random tables. You meet monsters, wait for their reaction or fight them, hopefully defeat them (or decide that discretion is the better part of valor!), manage your resources (healing, spells, life points, equipment),

grab treasure, dodge traps, find clues, and even accept quests from the monsters you meet. Your characters can level up and become better at what they do... IF THEY SURVIVE.

## **How is the combat system?**

Like everything else in the game, the combat system revolves around rolling a target number on a single d6. Dice can explode, that is, if you roll a 6, you roll again, and add the result, so it is technically possible, even if unlikely, to roll ANY number. Player characters go first, unless they were surprised, and then it's the monster's turn to attack. Monsters never roll dice in 4AD: you, the player, roll dice to defend from their attacks, trying to beat a target number and modifying the roll according to your armor and shield, if any, or any special bonuses you might have.

## **Do I need miniatures?**

No. 4AD is NOT a miniature game. You may use miniatures to remember your characters' marching order if you wish, but that's it.

## **So is this just another rpg?**

4AD is NOT a full roleplaying game, although people who like old school rpgs will probably like it. You may run it as a simple cooperative, GM-less game if you want, just have each player control a separate character. However, since many have asked it, in the current version of the rules we added a couple of pages of suggestions to turn 4AD into a RPG.

It is not exactly a game-book or a choose-your-own-adventure book. There is no prose to read or numbered sections to go to, even if we do that in some of the supplements.

The book is 90 pages with plenty of black and white illustrations, plus a flowchart that summarizes the various phases of dungeon generation.

## **This is just random tables, there is no player agency!**

There are more choices than it is initially apparent in a game of *Four Against Darkness*. At its core, it is a resource management game with elements of press-your-luck. Will you waste your precious Life points

fighting against monsters that are too strong for your party, or will you flee to fight another day? Will you invest 500 gold pieces in resurrecting your dead warrior, or it's just simpler to enlist a new party member?

There is also a mechanic that lets you collect Clues and let you discover secrets— basically, they let you insert small story tidbits into the game, such as discovering you are the last in a line of dragonslayers, or finding the map to an ancient Dwarven treasure.

In addition, the adventures play more like gamebooks, in that you choose from a list of options, or generate semi-random encounters. In a way, the adventures have more story elements than the basic game.

## **Should I get the paperback or the PDFs?**

Hard to say, it really a matter of portability/ease of play vs aesthetics. While nothing beats a paperback book for collecting, the PDFs will let you print only the relevant tables and keep all the books on a tablet. The core book PDF is bookmarked, so you can quickly jump across sections, and comes with pocketbooks of the main tables, so you can print out the pocketbooks (if you have good eyesight) and play just with the pocketbooks, referencing the full book only when needed.

## **Where Should I buy the Books/PDFs?**

Our main PDF vendor is [Drivethrurpg/Wargamevault](#).

Another good source for PDFs only is our gumroad store [www.gumroad.com/ganeshagames](http://www.gumroad.com/ganeshagames) This is good because gumroad lets us make slightly more money than other vendors (they take an 8,5% cut instead of a 40/45% cut like the major sellers). We are planning to move our core site to gumroad in the near future.

Our main store for printed books is [www.lulu.com/songofblades](http://www.lulu.com/songofblades) on Lulu.com. All the 4AD books are on the first two pages of our Lulu catalog. Lulu ships from many different countries and shipping costs are always reasonable. They also have FREE SHIPPING codes now and then, so always check the home page of their US site to see the free shipping code and use it at checkout.

Most of our books are also on Amazon through Createspace, the print-on-demand branch of Amazon. If you have Amazon Prime, buying from

Amazon comes with free shipping. One plea though: Amazon takes a big cut of the money, and in addition we pay 30% taxes (as Ganesha Games is a foreign entity, the US Government keeps 30% of our profit on every sale). So please leave a review and share your purchase link on social media: at least you will help to sell more books and make up for the loss with a higher numbers.

## **How Many Books Are in the Series?**

At the moment of writing, the line includes the following:

### **CORE BOOKS**

Four Against Darkness (the only essential book, character levels 1 to 5)

Four Against the Abyss (expert characters of levels 5 to 9)

Fiendish Foes (a mini booklet of just 8 pages of more powerful monsters for character levels 3 to 5)

### **Adventure Modules**

Dark Waters

Caves of the Kobold Slave-Masters

Treasure Hunters of Charlemagne

The Three Rings

The Knight of Destiny

Buried Secrets

Caverns of Chaos

Man-Eater!

**Coming Attractions (to be published in 2018/early 2019, titles subject to change)**

Four Against the Netherworlds (exploration of infernal planes)

Prisoner of the Ape-Men (barbarian adventure)

Rooftop Run (rogue adventure)

The Ordeal (wizard adventure)

Monarch of All It Surveys

Four Against The Titans (Greek Mythology version)

Note: *Buried Secrets*, *Prisoner of the Ape-Men*, *Rooftop Run*, *The Ordeal*, and *Monarch of All It Surveys* are all part of a campaign called *The Gathering of the Four*. The first four books are all adventures for a single character. In the fifth book, the four characters that you played in the previous books form a party and fight against a common enemy. You may still play each of these books independently.

## **Will you expand the game into other genres?**

Yes! I am writing a yet-untitled survival horror version (for a single character) where the player explores a modern-day town infested by nightmare creatures of all kinds hoping to close the gates of hell from where the monsters are coming. We are also discussing a “fantasy cavemen” stand alone version (with new classes like Hunter, Gatherer, Shaman, and Firemaster, and prehistoric versions of all the fantasy tropes and creatures) and a post-apocalyptic version. But these books will take time to develop, and we want to do them right.

## **Will you ever do a “proper” boxed boardgame, with cards, character sheets, dungeon tiles etc?**

It’s being considered, but we think the main appeal of the game is its portability, and a boxed set would lose that element. I am afraid that, as a full-on boxed dungeon crawler, it would not shine in comparison to other efforts. However, at Ganesha Games we are open to suggestions, and are considering it. Maybe something that could be done in 2019.

## **I run a game store, can I order these books direct from you?**

Sure! Just drop an email to [andreasfiligoi@gmail.com](mailto:andreasfiligoi@gmail.com). There is no minimum order and you may reorder as soon as you run out of copies.

## **Are your books sold in any brick-and-mortar stores?**

Yes. Check out the following:

Mjolnir games (Rome, Italy)

GamesPlus (Chicago, USA)

Battlefield Berlin (Berlin, Germany)

Fan Boy Three (Manchester, UK)

Common Ground Games (Dallas, TX)

More stores will be added, follow Ganesha Games on Facebook to keep up to date. Better yet, if your friendly local store doesn't carry our books, ask them to and put them in touch with us!

## **Is there somewhere where I can post questions?**

Victor, one of the authors, keeps a continuously updated thread on BoardgameGeek. Andrea, the author, illustrator and publisher, can be reached at [andreasfiligoi@gmail.com](mailto:andreasfiligoi@gmail.com), haunts both the Songofblades Yahoo group, the Song of Blades and Heroes Facebook group (that is the OFFICIAL Facebook group for all Ganesha Games products) and the Solo Boardgamers Facebook group. Any of these groups is OK! And of course there is the Four Against Darkness Adventurer's Guild facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/350474872132324/>) that has over 1000 subscribers and plenty of activity every day.

## **I have written a cool module for 4AD, will you publish it?**

Send your idea proposal to [andreasfiligoi@gmail.com](mailto:andreasfiligoi@gmail.com) and we will discuss it. We pay 50% royalties after expenses, basically splitting the profit 50/50 between author and publisher (which is also illustrator and layout man). No, it won't make you rich, nobody gets rich in this business.

## **I have written a supplement for 4AD, can I publish it?**

We love to see what fans make with our games, so feel free to post anything as long as it is not a copy and paste work. If you are going to sell it, you need our permission first. If it's good, we might just ask you to publish it with Ganesha Games. **If it's fan-made material, we still would like to see it before you publish it**, because with a little work we may turn it into a professional book that can be sold (and share the royalties with you).

## **Why aren't all books available on Amazon?**

4AD books end up on Amazon through Amazon's print-on-demand branch, Createspace. Unfortunately, Createspace does only "perfect bound" paperbacks. This means that books under 32 pages cannot be printed there. The only source where all of the books are available is our Lulu shop on [www.lulu.com/songofblades](http://www.lulu.com/songofblades)

## **Is the game available in other languages?**

We are negotiating for a German version and there is some interest for a Brazilian Portuguese version. The books will eventually be translated into Italian (the author's native language).

## **What's in the books**

These are short descriptions of the content of all the books in the *Four Against Darkness* line.

**Caves of the Kobold Slave-Masters** - Elvyn, an elderly, much-loved adventurer has disappeared, and an escaped goblin slave confirms that he's been captured by kobold slavers. Now the town council has offered you a nice sum of money to enter the caves and bring him back. Dare you enter the kobold caves and return before nightfall? *Caves of the Kobold Slave-Masters* is a 3-session solo adventure for *Four Against Darkness*. 21 pages.

**Fiendish Foes** - *Fiendish Foes* is an 8-page micro-supplement for *Four Against Darkness*. Is your party 3rd level or above? Are you tired of encountering always the same creatures? Then -- use the additional



random tables in Fiendish Foes. Just be warned -- the monsters here are deadlier than what you are used to. You'll need your wits and a bit of luck to avoid a total party kill. This book contains game statistics for classic dungeon monsters like blood-sucking birds and jelly-cubes.

**Four Against The Abyss** - A major rules expansion for when your characters have hit level 5, and covers development from level 5 to level 9. It introduces many new things into the core game, including expert skills, hirelings, and linking your adventures together to form a campaign. It introduces the d8 instead of the standard d6 for combat and saving throws.

**Buried Secrets** - This is an adventure designed for a single Cleric, so if you want to do a solo game tuned to a single character, this is it! It is the first module in a 5-module campaign called *The Gathering of the Four* (4 modules will be for single character classes, the 5th will see you play the 4 solo characters together as a 4AD party) Only this first module is available so far. Buried Secrets requires the use of a standard deck of poker cards to generate encounters. The second volume, Prisoner of the Man-Apes, will feature a barbarian. The other two solo volumes will feature a rogue and a wizard.

**Dark Waters** - This module introduces over 20 new monsters and a new playable class, the Swashbuckler. One shipment of the Orfeld company has been waylaid in transit across the Sea of Storms. Kardalokan corsairs have captured the cargo ship and stolen the valuables, including a prized golden statue of Tezany, the Shark God. Lord Orfeld needs four brave adventurers to bring back the statue. But is this be a run-of-the-mill recovery mission, or is some mysterious power at work? *Dark Waters* is a solo adventure for Four Against Darkness, consisting of one planned dungeon and a random dungeon. 30 pages.

**The Three Rings** - This is a more advanced adventure for characters between levels 3 and 4. While exploring a forest, the party stumbles upon a young nobleman. His three seal rings have been stolen by a band of six orc reavers. Catching up with the orcs and retrieving the rings sounds like child's play, but who knows what evil lurks in the forests of Kardalok?

**Knight of Destiny** - This is a historically-themed adventure set in the time of King Arthur, for a single character, a Paladin. It also includes

rules for playing Paladins in your normal 4AD games. There is NO MAPPING in this book.

**Treasure Hunters of Charlemagne** - This is for the moment the only adventure that requires both *Four Against the Darkness* and *Four Against The Abyss*. It's a campaign set in the Europe of Charlemagne. You play over a simple map of Europe. The book includes alternative character classes adapted to the historical period.

**Caverns of Chaos** - This is the first of our series of *themed dungeons* – basically, it's a book with 6 new missions and random tables for chaos monsters and their treasure. You play using the standard rules for room generation found in 4AD, but you “stock” the rooms by rolling on the tables found in Caverns of Chaos. If this sells well, we will produce many other themed dungeons, like a necropolis filled with undead, or an orcish stone fortress.

**Man-Eater!** – This is the first adventure designed for multiplayer use. 1 to 4 players can play it (either a single player runs 4 characters, or up to 4 players share the characters). You get a map (and [a full color hex map can be downloaded from our Gumroad store](#) if you plan to use miniatures with it). The adventure is a mix of random and keyed encounters (hexes with a number on them, when you reach that hex, you read the corresponding paragraph).

## FAQ Section

*How does the game scale when your characters level up? Since Minions/Bosses are fixed with respect to level/attacks, what is the challenge level for say a party of all Level 3 characters?*

We did a small supplement (Fiendish Foes) to scale up the difficulty (and the treasure) a bit between 4AD and 4AA. If you play without it, your games will experience an "that's a bit easier" feel around level 3 and 4, but will become standard difficulty again as you start using *Four Against the Abyss*. Anyway, the game is not really about balance (it is not possible to offer thoroughly balanced combats, D&D has been trying this for ages and it is a source of unending discussion -- there are simply too many random factors involved) but about choosing well your fights.

*Can you use this on an Iphone?*

Yes but remember that the files are zipped. So you either need an unzip app on your phone, or you have to unzip it on a computer and then email the PDF to yourself and open it in iBooks. Please consider that the books are filled with tables and these may be too small to read on a phone screen.

*I know you can rotate a room. Can you reflect it as well?*

Rules-as-written: no. But most of the rooms are symmetrical, and it's your game anyway, so why not?

*What does "d3" indicate as far as die rolls? For instance, result #5 on the Minions table indicates we encounter "d3 Trolls."*

d3 is rolling a 6-sided die and dividing the result by 2. Typically a one and two = 1, a three and four = 2 and a five and six = 3.

*Can you do more than one damage per attack to a boss? If, for example, you roll 6+4 against a lvl5 boss, do you do 1 or 2 damage to it? I couldn't find whether it works the same as for minions.*

Any amount of damage is possible, for example with large bonuses or on exploded 6s. Both against bosses and other foes. The only difference is that each hit will kill a minion. So for example if you roll a total of 12 vs level 3 minions you would kill 4 minions. A total of 12 vs a level 4 boss would inflict 3 hits on that boss.

*I ran into a trap. Does it reset itself on every visit to the room or does it only go off once?*

Traps do not reset.

*If my party is attacked in a corridor, can the front and back character switch places in lieu of an attack?*

No.

*Am I correct in assuming that when I roll for a room and it contains a monster, there are three options : 1. Fight, 2. roll for reactions 3. not enter the room and backtrack instead?*

yes, you either attack first (UNLESS the monster has a rule that says it surprises you, in that case the monster goes first) or run away or wait for the monster's reactions.

*Version 2.2. This is a free, living document: it will be updated as soon as we have additional information. Cover image courtesy of Ron Danuser.*