

This post will be brutally, inexcusably long, so here's the TL;DR early for you.

The TL;DR:

- I'm an experienced and passionate DM who is looking for a bunch of players for three (or four) different 5E D&D games to be played online.
- The first is a creative, unusual full homebrew campaign with tons of story and RP as well as intense tactical challenges, intended for levels 11 to beyond 20. I'm working on this now, and it won't be happening for some time yet, but I want very special players for this game so I'm willing to look for a long while. This is my big, "main" campaign that I want to run for a long time and put a lot of effort into.
- The second is a very basic, simple *Lost Mine of Phandelver* run-through for low-level characters with less emphasis on RP, but with the encounters "reloaded" (customized) to be more challenging and interesting. This one I want to start very soon, and I will be much less selective about players for it. Players (and possibly even characters) from this game COULD end up going into the later homebrew campaign.
- The third is a SOLO (one player) campaign, mostly based around the new *Out of the Abyss* adventure/setting, but with some homebrew stuff mixed in, very story and RP heavy, highly character focused, but with a fair amount of combat as well. For this one I'm looking for a very good roleplayer who is able to invest a lot in their character and the story. I want to start this one fairly soon, but not as immediately as the Phandelver game above.
- The possible fourth is a run of *Out of the Abyss* for a full group, most likely not starting until the Phandelver game is finished or well under way, and maybe not at all for the near future, but who knows?
- All of these games will have a lot of house rules, more powerful and/or versatile characters than normal, more tactically challenging battles than normal, and expectations of at least a modicum of effort put into playing in-character. Voice chat will be mandatory, including willingness to narrate and speak as your character using VOIP, rather than typing.

- Also, you need to be a decent human being. My virtual table will be a reasonably safe, respectful, and inclusive space where people of any race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity will be welcome and will not be forced to listen to bigots spouting off hateful or ignorant speech that demeans them.

Whew! That was the TL;DR? Seriously? How long is the actual post gonna be...?

And Now, The (Very) Non-TL;DR:

So, here's the deal. Basically, I'm a pretty awesome DM. I have a lot of experience, and I'm good at crafting narrative and designing deep and complex characters, and role-playing lots of different characters with flair, and designing and running interesting and challenging tactical encounters, and making everyone laugh, and respecting my players' time, effort, motivations, and agency. What I'm not good at is brevity, or crafting sentences which are not of the run-on variety. I sometimes call myself *Your Award-Winning DM*, jokingly, because I'm not trying to be arrogant about it and it's kind of silly when you think about it. But actually, it's not really a joke, because I have won "Best DM" awards for DMing at conventions.

So if you're a good D&D player, you're gonna wanna get in on some of this action. Rare opportunity, and all that. I'm finally looking to jump into DMing online for the first time, using Fantasy Grounds. I have the Ultimate License, so no one will have to buy or pay anything to play. I also have the official, licensed Fantasy Grounds equivalent of the 5E PHB, so making completely fleshed-out characters with full automation and reference material within the program will be very easy. I might need a bit of time to learn all the tricks and techniques of online DMing via software, and that's largely the point of the immediate-term **Phandelver Reloaded** game detailed below. But I'm gonna run some good games, now that I've decided to do it, and I want some good players to make the games great.

What makes a good player? Well, I've played with a lot of people over the years who have been super into powergaming and stats and kicking ass in combat, but they don't give much of a damn about story and character background and personality and roleplaying and all that jazz. I've also played with a lot of people over the years who are hella rad at designing rich, well-crafted characters with great stories and descriptions

and they love to roleplay and they think of their in-game decisions in terms of what their character should do rather than based on OOC metagame knowledge, but they don't give much of a damn about the mechanics of the game or doing well in tactical challenges or enjoying combat and all that other jazz. To me, the ideal player straddles that line and doesn't fall fully into either camp.

I'm the kind of player who loves both sides of D&D, the narrative as well as the tactical, the story and the mechanics, the fluff and the crunch, the character-as-actual-simulated-person and the character-as-tabletop-combat-unit. I like to fully engage with both of those aspects of the game, and I look for DMs (in a perfect world) who will make both of those sides of the game sufficiently deep to feel satisfying and worthwhile to engage with. So as a DM, I always hope for players who are like me, and want to both seriously roleplay, and seriously roll-play. They don't necessarily have to be super "good at" either of these things, they just need to be interested in and serious about both.

I look for players who are well-acquainted with all of their character's abilities, how they work, how to use them effectively in various scenarios, and how to improve their capabilities to handle even more harrowing challenges. But I also want those same players to be equally well-acquainted with the reasons WHY their character does what they do, how they became the person that they are, how they would likely feel and think about situations and other characters they encounter in the game, and, in essence, just WHO their character IS, beyond the stats and lists of abilities.

So that's pretty much an introduction to who I am as a DM, and the kind of players I'm ideally seeking. On to the campaign specifics!

Behind Door Number One:

This is my "big" campaign, I've been working on stuff for it for awhile now, and want to work on it for awhile yet. I'm not in a hurry to start this one, I want to make sure it's ready and that I have just the right group of five players to make it awesome. This campaign is 100% homebrew, and could perhaps be light-heartedly described as ***"Orange Is the New Black meets Spartacus: Blood and Sand meets Call of Cthulhu meets Planescape: Torment, all in an otherworldly setting full of exotic and bizarre creatures and unique characters from around the multiverse."*** Or as I call it in working shorthand in my notes, the **Lovecraftian Extraplanar Gladiator Prison Campaign**. More about the premise, story, and setting I will not say now, for I don't want to ruin the surprise! But it's gonna be cray.

This game will start at 11th level, and go well past 20th, using customized epic-level advancement rules. There are a lot of house rules I've developed for this campaign, and in general, the PCs will be more powerful and will be able to use their abilities much more often with much less time spent resting than in the vanilla 5E rules. But the challenge level will be very high, and this campaign will be essentially like playing D&D "on Hard". Demanding tactical combats will be a regular feature of the game. (That being said, solving problems or achieving goals via means other than violence will be fully supported and encouraged!)

I want serious roleplayers for this campaign, and there will be a lot of character development and in-character interaction required. I aim for about a 50/50 split of RP and combat, but it could skew even heavier toward RP some of the time. In the beginning of the campaign, I'm going to run two individual sessions with each player. The first one, we'll just be fleshing out your character backstory in a lot of depth together, and roleplaying out some small scenes from your character's past. In the second one, I will run a custom solo adventure for your character at level 10, which will bring you to the point where the main campaign for the whole group will start, and everyone will gain enough XP to begin at level 11 together.

As I mentioned before, I'm not going to be starting this game anytime soon. Probably at least a couple of months away, if not longer, depending on what happens with other games and how my player recruitment goes. I will take as long as necessary to put together a solid group of players whom I believe will seriously engage with and enjoy both the deep roleplaying focus and the intense tactical challenges of the campaign.

For an example of the kind of crazy stuff I come up with when I homebrew a campaign, you can look at this old Obsidian Portal page for a campaign I wrote a few years back for 4E, called *Black Seas of Infinity*. <https://blackseas.obsidianportal.com/> is the introduction page, and <https://blackseas.obsidianportal.com/wikis/main-page> has a bunch of sections of backstory and house rules and stuff.

Here's the current working document for the **house rules** I'll be using for this upcoming game:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Fw3xyKIJ_A3h_bGyhGNDqkw-sJbnxM5X0Sij2KA2lbk/edit?usp=sharing

Any of those are subject to change, but at the moment, that's what I want to try out. If I cut anything, it's most likely to be the complicated resting rules with the Vigor Checks. But I think I want to give it a try for a bit, anyway.

This campaign will be for exactly five players. There are narrative reasons for this, and everything I've designed so far is based around there being five PCs.

Behind Door Number Two:

This is going to be my introductory game, as I get accustomed to DMing online and learning to effectively use the software, and getting more used to 5E rules, and so on. I might end up running two separate games of this, just to test out a larger number of players to see if I might want any of them to join my *numero uno campaigno* (one of those words is NOT Spanish) above.

This one I'm calling **Phandelver Reloaded**, as I'm going to be customizing the basic *Lost Mine of Phandelver* module to make it a bit more deep and interesting, and tactically harder and more complex. (Oh, but maybe I should call it **Phandelver Reloaded** instead, because then it's a mine-related pun! Ah, but people won't get it and they'll think I just can't spell.) For this starter campaign, I won't be expecting or requiring as much roleplay focus or character development as I will for the other games. I suspect this will end up being more along the lines of 70% combat/exploring and 30% roleplaying, rather than the 50/50 I want for my long-term game. I'll be less picky about who I invite to play in this game, and more relaxed and casual about the whole thing. But I'll still try to DM it as fun as I can for the players.

I want to start this one quite quickly, if possible. Within the next two or three weeks, ideally. If not sooner! I won't need to run solo sessions with each player for background building for this one. This game will also use the same set of house rules linked to above for the previous campaign, and will basically function as a playtest of those house rules. Characters will start at anywhere between level 2 and level 4, rather than the recommended level 1 for the adventure, and the challenges will be scaled up appropriately. I'll probably drag it out to about level 9 by the end of the mini-campaign, but we'll see how it goes.

I mentioned that the starting level will be between 2 and 4, and that is because I will be awarding XP before the game even begins to the entire group based on character-defining, storytelling, or roleplaying efforts contributed by individual members of the group. Each player will be able to earn, for the whole group, between 100 XP and 500 XP, depending on how much work they put into crafting a character, rather than merely a stat sheet. Full details about this, called the **SEX** system, can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/17dxnB_qZJbgliV6Z1co_0XFctG4g3tBZnW3m9RFQvB4/edit?usp=sharing

Note that numbers 1-4 in the list of five things will be mandatory, at least at the minimum level of participation, for this campaign. If everyone does the absolute minimum, the party will start at level 2, but if people do more, the starting level could easily be 3 or 4.

I will run this game for as few as three and as many as six players. As I mentioned earlier, I am somewhat inclined to run two separate instances of this mini-campaign for different groups, so if I get enough suitable applicants, I will probably do so.

Behind Door Number Three:

I'm really intrigued and excited by the possibilities of this game, as I feel there are a lot of advantages that a solo campaign between just one player and the DM can have over standard group-based games. One of the biggest of these is simply the fact that the story can be about one actual protagonist, like the bulk of our myths, novels, and movies tend to be. I enjoy a narrative that is centered on a single hero, where everything revolves around that all-important character. You can't really do this in a group game, because it generally sucks for the people who are playing the mere sidekicks to the one main character.

Another advantage is the sheer depth of roleplay that can come about in this scenario, as instead of having to divide attention and character development opportunities between several people, all of it can go right to one person. So that single player will be able to freely explore and interact with whatever elements of the setting and NPCs they wish to, for as long as they wish to, without having to worry about hogging the DM's time or making the other players wait around in boredom.

I've run solo games in the past, usually with people who were good personal friends, but it's been quite awhile since I've engaged in this kind of DMing. I'm looking forward to trying it again, and really delving deep into someone else's character and co-creating a story that goes beyond the "plot" of the "adventure" but becomes about who the character is and what matters to them and why they matter to the world around them. I really hope that I can find the right player for this, because if I do, I know we can have a really satisfying, and ideally long-running, D&D campaign together.

I'd been thinking about this for awhile, wanting to give a solo game a shot in addition to my main campaign, and then I started reading the preview material for *Out of the Abyss*, and it looked fuckballs awesome. So full of crazy Chris Perkins wackiness, mixed with

the general badassery of the Underdark setting, and chock full of Demon Lords, to boot. I thought, based on some of the really weird and silly characters that would be featured in the adventure, that it reminded me of *Alice in Wonderland* in a way. And then I read that Chris Perkins specifically meant for it to be inspired by and a tribute to *Alice in Wonderland*, which made me feel smart! (I like feeling smart, so this was a particularly good day.)

So then I thought, "This is perfect for a solo campaign! The only thing missing from this cast of characters is an Alice." So that's what I want to run, a sort of dark, trippy, sexy, laced with considerably more interpersonal emotional entanglements and gloriously prodigious ultra-violence, version of *Alice in Wonderland*. In the Underdark. With a strong central female protagonist who is a complex and richly-developed character, surrounded by a veritable playground of bizarre situations, strange environments, and colorful characters to interact with and leave her mark on, and in turn be marked by.

This game will, of course, be for only a single player, and the character will start somewhere between level 3 and 5, I haven't quite decided yet. It will use all of the same house rules as the previous two campaigns. There will be significant investment of time in the beginning to fleshing out the background, personality, and important relationships of the character before the adventure proper begins, and probably several mini-sessions of roleplay as prologue stuff. I'd really only like to go through all that effort with someone if they're going to be serious about the game and have the time to put into it, and be reliable to continue with it. I definitely don't want to try running a solo campaign like this for more than one person at once, so I'll only be choosing the one player who seems like the very best fit.

How It's Gonna Be:

I am really only interested in playing D&D with people who are open-minded and respectful of their fellow human beings, especially those who are different from them. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any kind of hate speech or overtly expressed prejudice, even those that are intended as "just a joke" will not be tolerated. To quote my dear, departed friend Cate, "*I can't tolerate intolerance!*"

I'm not a fanatic, I'm not gonna go full Social Justice Warrior here. There won't be any trigger warnings, policing of microaggressions, or telling people to check their privilege. It's a D&D game, not an activist group. I don't want to get into arguments about social issues during our play sessions. But I'm simply not going to stand for potentially harmful language and jokes. If you're the kind of person who thinks that poking fun at

someone's race or gender is the height of comedy, then you're not the kind of person I want to play with.

I'm pretty foul-mouthed, and I'm fine with everyone else using as much colorful fuckin' language as they wish. But certain words ain't gonna fly at my virtual table, and those are the derogatory ones that specifically refer to a certain race or gender, or sexual orientation, or imply that femininity is a bad thing worthy of ridicule. You know the words I'm talking about. Just keep that shit out your mouth, and we'll be cool. Also, as much as I wish this didn't need to be said, rape isn't funny. It's not an acceptable topic for jokes at any time. I'm very serious about this.

I know that the preceding three paragraphs make me sound uptight and oversensitive, but I'm really not. I'm a very laid-back guy and extremely hard to personally offend. But I've known countless people over the years who have been made to feel very uncomfortable, unsafe, or unwanted at gaming tables because of the shit that people were allowed to just casually spout off, unchallenged. I don't want my virtual table to be that sort of environment, I want anyone and everyone to feel welcome and respected there. Hence the unfortunate need for some degree of regulation of speech. (Believe me, I hate rules for rules' sake!) I don't care what your personal, private opinions are, just keep it out of our game sessions and we're good.

I expect players to show up to scheduled game sessions unless they let me know they're not gonna be able to make it. If more than one person is going to have to miss a session, I'm inclined to cancel it, hopefully to reschedule. I'd really like for people who agree to join these games to be pretty sure they'll be able to make it nearly all the time. I understand that things come up, of course, but before you ask to join, please be realistic with yourself about your life's demands and whether or not you'll really be able to commit to a weekly game schedule.

Voice chat will be used all the time, and will be mandatory for every player. I don't want people typing their actions, or their character's words. I want you saying it with your actual voice, like human beings around a real table would do. If you somehow "don't have a mic" or are "just really shy", then this isn't the gaming group for you. We'll either use the community TeamSpeak server set up for Fantasy Grounds users, or Skype, or I'll get a Mumble server set up if necessary. You won't have to pay any money for anything, you just need to be willing to download the relevant software and actually talk into a microphone.

As far as days and times, I'm completely open to whatever the players want. I'm in the Pacific timezone in the US, but that doesn't matter, as I sleep whenever and am often up at all hours. I have extremely few scheduling conflicts myself, so we can set up the

day and time of our sessions according to the needs of the group. It's all completely flexible. Hopefully we will find a time that works for all of the members of the group. We'll figure that out once I have some specific people that I want to invite to play.

How To Get In On This:

If you're interested in one or more of the games I described, go ahead and send me a private message. Let me know which campaign(s) you might like to play in, or want more information about. I'm happy to answer any questions for you. I'll want to know a few basic pieces of information from you when you send your message, if you're asking to join:

- A first name that I can call you when speaking with or about you out-of-character. It can be a nickname, or even an alias, if you don't want to share your "real" name. My name is Josiah. (*OR IS IT?*) (It is.)
- Your age. I'd like players to be at least 18, but saying that is a bit useless, because if someone is under 18 and really wants to play, they can just lie. If you're a year or two younger, and you're honest about it, I'll consider you fairly. But the games may feature some adult themes and situations at times, so I'm looking for mature players. I've played with and DMed for players of all ages, from retirees to children, so I have no preference. A mixed group is often nice, though. I'm 38, and have been playing D&D since I was 8 years old.
- Your preferred and available times to play. Let me know what days are best for you, how often you can play, and how long you can realistically play at a time. Remember to include time zone when you list specific times.
- Your experience level with D&D, and/or RPGs in general. What kind of a gamer are you? What do you like most about playing D&D? What makes the game the most fun for you?
- Why are you interested in joining this campaign?

In addition, I'd like to know about what kind of character you're interested in playing. To that end, I'm asking that anyone who wants to join one of these games send me three brief (three sentences or so) character concepts that they'd enjoy playing. Surely you're creative enough to come up with three different character ideas, and write a very short description of them. Not necessarily game-term specifics, but a more general idea of the theme and style of the character, a bit about WHO they are, as a character. Maybe

a basic overview in one sentence of what they do, another sentence about what their background is, and a third about how they think or act. Something like that. You don't have to write a whole lot, or follow a certain format, just be creative and tell me about your character concept. Here are three examples of characters I've created in the past:

- *Bitterbrew is a horrifically-scarred and mentally-deficient Dwarf dock worker, street brawler, begrudging member of the Altdorf dockland gang called The Fish, and bloody great fool. Born to a prestigious and honorable Dwarfen noble house in Karaz-a-Karak, his life has been characterized by a steady stream of colossal and catastrophic failures, terrible enough to get him shorn of beard and stripped of name, and banished from the society of his people forever. He is dull of mind and blunt of speech, uglier than seven miles of bad road, most often sloppy drunk, entirely devoid of social graces, and he nurses a deep, burning anger inside that frequently explodes outwardly in bouts of poorly-controlled rage.*
- *Ki'sho is a quiet, intense, and contemplative Githzerai cenobite who has spent his life in books and meditation, mastering the scholarly art and science of arcane magic and learning to embody the teachings of the philosopher Zerthimon. After decades of peaceful study in the monastic city of Zerthadlun, he was cast adrift in the Elemental Chaos following a disastrous losing battle against a Githyanki warband that left both his revered mentor and his beloved partner dead. He is now truly a lost soul in more ways than one, wracked with guilt for his fatal failure, and desperately seeking a way to find wholeness and purpose in this new and unknown life on the Material Plane.*
- *Jakartin Cynne is a consummate deceiver, a trained and experienced hustler, and a well-practiced liar and performer, using his devilishly handsome Half-Elven features, his too-clever tongue, and his assortment of magical tricks to penetrate the defenses of anyone who stands between him and his goals. The unwanted illegitimate child of an arrogant Elven aristocrat and a profligate human scoundrel, he spent his life traveling with and learning from a wandering carnival of roguish nomads, and studying the secrets of Fey magic under his oathsworn patron, a High Lady of the Archfey. He faces life's dangers with a wild laugh and a dangerous grin, and can never pass up the chance to play a con on a rich noble or pursue the affections of a pretty face.*

Those are just examples, so you have an idea of what I mean by "character concept". You don't need to write nearly as much as this (my sentences are stupid long), or worry about writing it in some "fancy" way. This isn't a writing test, I don't care how plain your words are. It's just a way for me to see whether or not you're planning to play a

character that I'm interested in weaving a story around. I ask for three so that I can pick the one that I like the most, or select a group of characters that I think will be interesting and fun together, and I'll know that you're playing something you already like the idea of.

And that's really about it, I suppose. I expect to receive a fair number of responses to this, especially since I'm cross-posting it on a number of relevant forums. I don't mind waiting as long as it takes to assemble players that I'm excited about DMing for, and I certainly won't be just taking the first several people who contact me. So don't worry about getting me a message quickly. Go ahead and take your time, put some thought into it, as this isn't a first-come, first-served sort of deal. I look forward to hearing from some fun, creative, and eager players!

(I do apologize for the length of this post. I know it's egregious. But I guess I figure if I've spent and will spend countless hours preparing stuff for these games, you can stand to spend 20 minutes reading a painfully long forum post. But still, I do know it's a bit ridiculous. Sorry.)