Welcome to our FINAL segment! Here we'll be discussing final boss battles and wrapping up your home brew campaign. This is the final stage of your home brew and the absolute climax of the story.

When creating your final boss battle there are a lot of optional elements to include but there are some elements you definitely have to include. The first crucial aspect you need address is the challenge level of the encounter. This is the FINAL BOSS battle, it had better be a real challenge for your group. When you're working out the challenge rating for the encounter, make sure it's on the top end of hard or low end of deadly. You'll have to run it carefully to ensure your group doesn't completely perish, but completely draining their resources and making them fear for their survival is exactly what you want out of a final boss battle. It's 1000% okay to have a few players fall unconscious even multiple times, by try not to outright kill a character unless you feel that player would appreciate that cinematic story telling. Your players' characters have worked very hard to reach the end game so to deny them the opportunity to be a part of the conclusion, use downtime days, enjoy the epic loot and get their characters to higher levels is pretty cruel. It is true that a character dying during the final battle can add a great deal to the story and drive home the resurrection of the remaining party members when they realize the weight and consequences of the journey, but make sure you're gaming with a group of people that would be able to handle this kind of impact. At the very least, if a character does die, allow the party the opportunity and resources to resurrect the fallen companion. If possible, seriously challenge the party but ensure they all ultimately survive. Why is so bad to kill a character in the final battle when it's okay if they die anywhere else in the campaign? When a character dies part way through a campaign yes, all of their progress is lost, however they have the ability to start a new character and make progress back. When a character dies in the final boss battle...that's kind of it. There's no more story so there's no point in them rolling up a new character because the story is over. You're taking a lot more away from the player when their character dies at the end of the story.

I do strongly suggest you allow the characters in one way or another have an opportunity to rest and regain access to all of their resources before facing the final boss. This not only help you to not accidentally destroy an already exhausted party, but it allows them to live to their full potential of heroes. In an epic boss battle, the players will want their characters to perform their coolest abilities, deal their most amounts of damage and cast the really awesome spells they've learned, so let them! This is the party's moment of glory to really shine as heroes! As much as you're allowing your party to be the most formidable opponent, by letting them rest beforehand, you are very subtly and cryptically saying "have a rest....you're going to need your strength....".

Once you've worked out the CR of the boss based on the Party's XP Threshold and have paired the perfect boss to the party, I want you to throw all those XP numbers out the window! Your party should definitely be getting XP for the boss they defeat, but they should be getting a lot more than the monster is actually worth according to its CR. XP is not only awarded for defeating enemies in combat but for roll playing, creative thinking their way around an encounter and progressing the story line. A final boss battle will encompass all of these aspects so the party should be awarded for each aspect. This could even mean enough XP to bring an entire party up one or two whole levels and it may be easier to tell the party to level their characters to a certain level, rather than giving a number of XP earned. This is especially helpful if you will be carrying those characters into later campaigns with a level prerequisite.

Along with that massive amount of experience, you'll want to follow it with a decent amount of downtime and renown. Between campaigns is a great time for players to use their downtime creatively and get their character souped up for the next campaign so make sure to award them with ample downtime days to accomplish at least some of those goals. It also just makes sense story-wise that the

characters would have time to do this. Of course when a campaign is finished and the boss and /or main threat is defeated, there's a certain amount of attention that goes along with it so award them with two points of renown for each Faction they associate with.

This final point goes without saying: give the party ample amounts of really cool loot! An abundance of gold is necessary not only because it's wicked awesome to be rich, but it is necessary for many downtime activities the players may wish to partake in between adventures. Although gold is cool, players are really going to be looking for magic items. Starting on page 150 of your DMG you have a plethora of magic items you can make available to your players of varying power levels and in Xanathar's Guide to Everything starting on page 136 you have even more options to choose from, although these ones are typically less useful than the ones listed in the DMG and are more just for fun or flavour. You also have the option of creating your own unique magic items, perhaps that match each of the characters' classes and abilities. On page 142 and 143 of the DMG, there are several tables to consult which will help you flesh out creating your own magic items. Loot given out at the end of a battle need not always have a gold value or serve a specific purpose. You could have several pieces of loot that represent a keepsake of the journey. For example, part of the loot from a battle with a Lich could be the robe the Lich wore. It has no magical properties, it's just a cloak, but the character could hang it as a trophy in their home base, wear and carry it as a reminder of what true evil looks like or they could craft the cloak into another object entirely like using the fabric as grips on their favourite blade.

Along with the absolutely imperative final boss aspects, there are a lot of other interesting twists you can throw in. The first fun option you can throw in is a trope that appears in a lot of RPGs in general. Somewhere through the campaign you can introduce an item or even a series of items the party will need to use to ultimately either defeat or reach the final boss. The Legend of Zelda games are a classic example of this. In almost every one of those games, you need to use and item you recently received to progress in the story. Adding these items in not only helps to tie story pieces together, but it encourages players to think creative and break their usual string of actions to defeat a challenge. These could be actual weapons to use against the boss, a new spell learned or a scroll to open a passage way or unique but otherwise seemingly mundane piece of gear needed to reach a location.

A neat way to keep the players surprised and on their toes is to have the "Faux Boss" or "Wizard of Oz" effect, as I like to call it. This is where the party thinks they are facing the final boss, only to realize after they defeat it that the real final boss still lays in wait. Just like how the Wizard of Oz used the hologram to hide his true location and form. You could also have the "Faux Boss" and the real boss be the same creature but it could experience some sort of resurgence or revival. After the party successfully defeats the boss and they are now busy looting the treasure, they turn to see the corpse of the boss rebuilding itself or rising in a purplish cloud of undeath. If you're planning on using these multiple boss aspects, be sure to carefully balance the encounter. You don't want to face them with two deadly encounters back to back as that would surely mean death for the entire party. Try to balance the encounter by having one boss be easy while the true boss is hard or deadly, or keep both bosses equal at the low end of a hard level encounter. You may have to be on your A game to alter the encounter on a whim if the challenge level doesn't match the group quite as closely.

The final, and personally my favourite, optional aspect of a final boss battle is to bring back old NPC friends the party has met throughout the adventure to join in the battle. This is a really great role playing moment for your players where they can feel a swell of inspiration and heroism as they head into combat with friends at their side, and it ties the whole story of the adventure together. As the players look at the line of NPC friends beside them, they can see the impact their adventure had on the

world. They can remember all the places they visited, the people they help and the challenges they faced. This is also a good opportunity to have character in the story die for flavour, but not run the risk of upsetting a player by killing their character. You'll be amazed by how strongly players can feel toward NPCs especially when they come to fight at their side like this. In one campaign, I ran the final boss battle with many NPCs coming to the aid of the party. One of the party members had fallen for an NPC way back in the beginning of the campaign. He would refer to her as his "girlfriend" and buy her gifts when they visited major cities. When she arrived at the final battle to fight by his side, he protected her with his life which meant he was maybe not doing the most optimal actions in combat and even taking hits for her by strategically placing himself in front of her in combat. Personally, I **love** when players get this attached to characters in the story so I encourage it and include it as much as possible. The only hiccup when adding NPC reinforcements is it will mess with your encounter difficulty a little bit. There are a few things you can do to remedy this and they are quite easily done. The first option is to just increase the encounter difficulty if the NPCs are going to be an active part of the combat. Or you could simply add in a few extra bad goonies that can fight the NPCs so they keep each other preoccupied while the party and the final boss battle it out. Another option you can consider is to secretly have the NPCs deal no damage to the boss. You can roll dice and write notes but just don't subtract anything from the boss's HP. If you're taking this approach, you can also have the boss not attack the NPCs and focus its attacks against the actual party.

Now that your party has triumphed over the final boss of the campaign, it's time to wrap up the story. Wrapping up your home brew campaign will follow the same kind of trends as wrapping up a published adventure except the cliffhanger for further adventures will be up to you. Use information you know about the published adventures to lead you home brew into them if that's what you're planning for the next campaign. For example, if you plan on running the Curse of Strahd after your home brew, you can have the party head into a thick fog while traveling home and the next thing they know, they find themselves in Barovia. If you're planning on running Out of the Abyss, you could have the ground open beneath the party's feet and they find themselves in the Underdark. In each of the published adventures, there is an option for starting that adventure at a higher level so that portion you'll want to pay particular attention to if you're using the same party.

If you're stringing your home brew into another home brew adventure, that connection is totally up to you based on the current and coming story.

Just like a published adventure, when you wrap up a home brew make sure to give your players an opportunity to use downtime days. Giving your players a home base near the end of the game gives them a place to end their adventure and to spend their downtime days.

As with anything you do when brewing, KEEP EVERYTHING at the end of the adventure. You never know when you may want to revisit that information. Not only can it be useful to reference if needed, but it's also like a portfolio as a DM. You can look back on all the maps and notes and reminisce and be proud of all the work you put into it.

That concludes our entire series of workshops! I want to thank everyone sincerely for taking the time to read these segments. I have intentionally made this last session a bit shorter than the previous ones so we can take this time now to talk about anything else I did not cover in the workshops that you wish to have guidance on. I'll record our further discussions tonight and include them in the PDF

QUESTION: Do any of the books have support for building story and concept for home brews?

ANSWER: Yes, in your DMG, there is an entire chapter dedicated for creating. The easiest way to go about this is to look up specific pieces you need assistance with in the Index at the back of the book. If you look under "creating" in the Index, you'll find there are a massive amount of page references dedicated to creating anything for your homebrew from story to dungeons to NPC attitudes. The easiest way to go about this is to look up specific topics in the Index as you need them and piece it all together. When it comes to the story, using "bad clichés" and overused tropes is definitely not a bad thing. Those aspects are used in many stories for a reason: they work. Don't be afraid to use other stories you know as a template and borrow ideas, especially for your first homebrew.

Q: How do I create magic weapons and ensure they are not too overpowered?
A: When crafting your own magic items, use the tables in your DMG beginning on page 145 as a guide for what level the party should be when receiving which items. The power level of the items increases with each letter (Table A being the weakest items and Table I being the most powerful) so you can assign character level to the tables. For example character from level 1-3 can receive items on tables A and B only. Once they reach level 3-5 they can have items on tables A through E. Once you've assigned the level restrictions, you can design your own items, compare their power level to the items described in the DMG and place your brewed items on the tables based on their power level. Now you have level restrictions for the characters on your brewed items and you can ensure they don't end up with overpowered items too early in the game.

Q: How would I go about creating my own spells?
A: That is certainly a dicey issue. As much as you can worry about your magic items you create being too overpowered, spells are much worse because they have far more open for personal interpretation than a weapon would be. D&D players are especially good at finding loopholes and will try to optimize everything they do. This is not an intentional attack on you, but it does make your DM experience more difficult. If you want to create your own spell, I firmly believe you should be copy-pasting bits from preexisting spells in the PHB and build from there. Make sure to consider every possible negative outcome or interpretation of the spell before giving your players access to it.

Q: Wandering monsters ensure the party doesn't stay too long in one location and traps ensure the party won't go barreling through dungeons without thinking. What other tools can I use to keep the party on track with the story? (I am specifically running a horror/thriller campaign and want to make it suspenseful for my players)
A: Wandering monsters and traps are most definitely an invaluable tool to keep your players present in their situation. But it's just common place in D&D for your players to get distracted and stall on the story...especially when they get derailed on a 15 minute string on Monty Python references! In this situation I just call over my group in a commanding voice and say "Okay, you have completed that task. What are you doing now? What is next?" and if they continue to derail beyond that, I would give them once last "what are you doing now?" before choosing a path for them. It's understandable that people get excited playing D&D with their friends but you have to be able to rein them back in to keep everything moving. Specifically for your horror/thriller campaign, you can use something like the mists in Curse of Strahd. When the party lingers too long, have them roll a constitution check and anyone who fails feels too uneasy and "creeped out" to stay in the current location so the party must move on. If they still linger, feel free to start implementing the Madness table in your DMG on page 259.

Q: I want to introduce and NPC in my campaign and I currently have it planned for the party to rescue

him from a group of bandits but I want something less basic. How do I create more interesting and in depth scenarios?

A: A lot of those scenarios are just going to have to come from your inspiration and ability to tell stories. That being said, you can certainly refer to your DMG to spark that creativity. If you turn to page 89 of the DMG, you'll see all kinds of information on creating NPCs which could help flesh out a scenario in the story. For example on page 94 there is a table for villain schemes which you can insert into the mundane bandit group to make the scenario more interesting. What could look like a simple rescue from bandits could in fact uncover a plot to overthrow the government. This story could develop over a series of weeks where the party slowly gathers more and more clues and pieces together exactly what the NPC's role in all of this is. Aside from you DMG, watch movies, read books, listen to music and view fantasy artwork to get yourself inspired to write stories.

Q: I have created a particularly complacent and unfeeling NPC for my adventure. How can I make him care enough to want to join the arty and partake in the adventure but not change his demeanor.

A: For a character like that, I would sculpt his past based on the bonds, flaws and ideals used for character creating and give him a particularly passionate of exciting past that he has almost given up entirely on but there's still a small piece of him that believes in those values which drives him to adventure with the party. This way you can flesh him out as a character, giving him more depth, and also give and otherwise apathetic character a reason to adventure. For any instance that you're involving a character in the story for an extended period of time, I suggest fleshing out bonds, flaws and ideals for them.

Q: How do I know how much to prepare for a session? I don't want to be under prepared but I don't want to do a bunch of prep work I don't need to either.

A: Honestly, this will mainly boil down to experience. After running so many sessions you'll get a good feel for how much content you'll need each week for your group's pace. That being said, D&D parties are extremely unpredictable and can blow through something you expected to take an hour or spend the entire session in one area you thought would be a 5 minute trip. It's on you as the DM to be flexible enough to keep pace with the group. But don't worry, if you need to scramble through books to look information up or need to take a 10 minute break to collect your thoughts, your players will understand. If they don't, tell them to get stuff because you're the DM and have a lot on your plate so they must be patient. The biggest favour your can do yourself is to always have a consistent gaming time (for example, always gaming for 3 hours each week). Knowing your session will always be the same length of time each week will accelerate your ability to assess how much prep you'll need for a session. If you game for 1 hour this week and 7 hours that week then 2.5 hours another week, it can be very hard to properly assess the prep needed.

Aspects of a Final Boss Battle

Compulsory:

- Difficult Challenge (*Hard* or possibly *Deadly* on encounter danger chart but try not to outright kill anyone!)

- Allow the party to rest before hand

- LOTS of XP awarded to the party (more than the monster's XP value)

- Award Renown and ample Downtime Days

- Epic amounts of loot (magic items, gold, mundane objects with story)

Optional:

- Unique items that are key to the party's success

- "Faux Boss", resurgence or rebirth of the final boss (be sure the encounter is still balanced if you're including multiple phases!)

- Old friends and NPCs come to join forces