

THE 20 BASIC ADVENTURE SEEDS

1. ACCIDENTAL MURDER

Directly or indirectly killed someone

1. Crime of passion (argument or fight turns fatal)
2. Monkey's paw (deal with the devil to raise the victim)
3. Good samaritan (killed the person trying to break up the argument)
4. Mistaken victim (meant to kill X, but killed Y)
5. No loose ends (crime witness knows too much to live)
6. I know what you did last summer (alive/undead, seeks vengeance)

2. BACKDOOR MAN OR OTHER WOMAN

Adultery cause and effects

1. Moment of weakness (intoxicated or other momentary lapse of reason)
2. Blackmail (wouldn't want your spouse to find out)
3. Position of power (employer, law enforcement, sexual harassment)
4. Lover vs. Spouse (competition for lover's favor/ear)
5. Enraged cuckold (make a scene, P.I. tail, murder)
6. It's your baby! (someone's pregnant, shows up with a child, or drops the baby on the doorstep)

3. FEDEx®

Deliver it.

1. Unexpected cargo (creature, information, person)
2. Uncooperative (sender, package, or recipient)
3. Undeliverable (Recipient or destination is missing or no longer exists)
4. Keep it secret, keep it safe (don't let anyone know about this)
5. Time constraint (must deliver before, after, or during X)
6. Mail theft (track down and take someone else's package before it's delivered)

4. THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS

Hunt and survive the prized beast

1. Most dangerous game (people hunting)
2. Hunter becomes the hunted (New apex predator and you're the prey)
3. White whale (bestial nemesis)
4. Homefield advantage (advantageous terrain)
5. Nemean lion (impervious to normal weapons)
6. Alive and unharmed (bargain, trick, or trap beast)

5. HAMLET

Revenge for wrongs done

1. Disproportionate retribution (spit on me, I murder your whole family)
2. Hanging's too good for him (revenge not justice)
3. Vigilante (revenge against an entire idea or group of people)
4. Monte cristo (incrementally break down a person's entire life)
5. Man with nothing to lose (violent revenge rampage)
6. Cycle of revenge (two sides locked in a blood feud)

6. HEART OF THE JUNGLE

Unearth the secrets of a new place for fame, fortune, and power

1. Hostile environment (disease, exposure, natives, supplies, wildlife)
2. Fountain of youth (A wonder people cannot be trusted to handle)
3. Shangri-la (A place and people unaffected by the outside world)
4. Escape route cutoff (From exploration to survival)
5. The God King (Outsider worshipped as supernatural by natives)
6. Roused a slumbered evil (Actions awaken a sleeping terror)

7. THE HUNT

Person or item must be hidden or retrieved

1. Gone to ground (geographically bound, safe house bouncing, and avoiding detection)
2. One step behind (just missed them and have to play catch up)
3. Point of no return (geographic finish line: border, departing vessel, wilderness)
4. Stern chase (prolonged chase with many close calls, escapes, and delays)
5. Wanted meter (longer the pursuit the more aggressive the response)
6. The Wild hunt (paranormal quarry/hunter)

8. INTO THE BREACH

Assault a fortified enemy position

1. Bad intel (glaring omission or wrong info about the enemy)
2. Collateral damage (people/things you must avoid while fighting)
3. Hold the line (defend strategic point from impending attack)
4. Pointe du Hoc (capture/sabotage a key defensive position to allow ally assault)
5. Shielded enemy (enemy has a collateral shield: destroying a fortified dam will flood farms)
6. Hostile territory (sneak back from behind enemy lines)

9. IT'S A TOURNAMENT ARC!

Structured series of competitive engagements with a prize or punishment

1. Accreditation exam (skills test for gaining certification)
2. Cheating (cheats to win or takes a dive for gambling)
3. Gauntlet (series of diverse events such as a decathlon, may include mental challenges)
4. Powerful prize (villain needs the prize for his plot, keep him from winning)
5. Targeted participant (someone is out to get a participant, protect them)
6. Type (drinking, endurance, strength contest; chariot, marathon, sprint race; scavenger hunt; combat duel)

10. JOURNEY TO THE WEST

Overarching reason for the party to travel with a focus on smaller plots along the way

1. Adventure locale (each new location has a problem to solve)
2. Odyssey (misadventures of returning home)
3. The Hunt (complement each other well)
4. Kino's journey (one strange difference with each place or people)
5. Monster of the week (Same location threatened by something new, AKA hellmouth)
6. One by one (explore each PC's backstory and complete their personal goals)

11. LA RÉSISTANCE

Take on the man or secret police eliminating dissent

1. Exiled government (rightful leaders ousted or otherwise abroad)
2. Privateering (government endorsed piracy and banditry)
3. Revolt (area identifies itself as separate and independent to ruler)
4. Saboteur (civilians sabotage occupying forces)
5. Swamp fox (guerilla warfare against a superior enemy)
6. The Terror (rebels win and indiscriminately purge "enemies" of the new state)

12. THE LOVE MARTYR

Person is willing to throw away everything for love

1. From the shadows (stalker does any and all to remove troubles from the life of ignorant/unrequited love)
2. I love bad boys (person uses their position to shield lover, even if it puts them in a tight spot)
3. Love potion #9 (unintended consequences of truly, madly, deeply love)
4. Love psycho (rather lover die than find love with another)
5. Manipulated (person is unable/unwilling to see how their beaux uses them)
6. Morality pet (moral compass kidnappes/killed and person reverts to badassery for revenge)

13. MY KINGDOM FOR A HORSE

Weighty sacrifice for family need/pride

1. Appeasement strategy (paying raiders not to attack)
2. Betrothed to evil (marries family to evil for protection)
3. Deal with the devil (bargain a piece of self for limited power)
4. Keeping up appearances (give up everything to protect public appearance)
5. Sacrifice good name (sacrifice pride to provide for family)
6. Price of pride (sacrifice common sense to appease pride)

14. NORTH BY NORTHWEST

Mistaken identity or unwitting fall guy

1. Ditch the murder weapon (distressed person drops macguffin into bystander's possession)
2. Framed (bystander intentionally framed to throw pursuers off the trail)
3. Mistaken for a spy (look-alike hunted by a wronged party)
4. Red herring (reversal where the PCs are duped into chasing the wrong target)
5. Wrong briefcase (accidently swap two similar objects)
6. Wrongly accused (bystander found "red handed" standing over the corpse)

15. PANDORA'S BOX

Tinkered with something they shouldn't and opened a can of worms

1. Solution worse than problem (side effect of solution ot different problem)
2. Douse a grease fire (obvious solution only makes things worse)
3. Catch'em all (round up all the freed evil)
4. Through the looking-glass (problem must be fixed from the other side)
5. Great sacrifice (powerful macguffin or weighty sacrifice needed to resolve)
6. Return to innocence (Free something that has been sealed away such as magic)

16. THE PERFECT STORM

Survive a natural disaster

1. Ozymandius (artificial disaster or weapon)
2. Clean up (deal with the devastation left in disaster's wake)
3. Batten down the hatches (prepare for the oncoming disaster)
4. Different problem (the disaster is a different type or background to a separate plot: murder mystery)
5. Unexpected source (cause by something unexpected)
6. Weird disaster (magic, time shift, zombie apocalypse)

17. THE QUEST

Classic macguffin, retrieve the dingus to solve the problem

1. Uncooperative (dangerous to possess, has its own will)
2. Some assembly required (need to find all the dingus pieces)
3. Owned (rightful owner, thief, oathbound protectors)
4. Location unknown (treasure hunt)
5. Stiff competition (capable competing groups also trying to get it)
6. Lost package (dingus conveyance was wrecked/vanished while in transit)

18. RICHES TO RAGS

Fall from elevated position, seeks to reclaim status

1. Disgraced (true impropriety, politicking, or cover for something/someone else)
2. Genteel poverty (land and title, but no money to go with it)
3. Identity theft (impersonator assumes the person's standing)
4. Black sheep (person left the family by choice or was disowned)
5. Fall from favor (court politics or a power hierarchy shift)
6. Power-hungry steward (forcibly holds and runs the family estate in all but name)

19. SEVEN SAMURAI

Stop what's accosting the locals

1. Prince John (evil landlord overtaxing the people)
2. Expel the natives (conquered people, hill people, monstrous humanoids)
3. Frontier justice (bandits, deserters, ronin)
4. War's toll (billeted and bored soldiers, border reivers, feuding lords, rebels)
5. Tame the land (dryads, haunting, monsters, predators)
6. Peaceful resolution (can't solve violently, such as pull a weapon on a rightful lord of the realm)

20. STAR-CROSSED LOVERS

Lovers kept from embrace

1. Distance (removed by adventure, outlaw, sea, war, work)
2. Feuding families (Montagues and Capulets)
3. Off-the-market (betrothed, celibate, cloistered, eunuch, wedded)
4. Paranormal romance (Eurydice & Orpheus, ghosts, monsters, planes, time)
5. Social stigma (familial relation, religion, gender, race, sexual orientation, species, etc.)
6. Marry above your station (socioeconomic station limiters)



Julius Kronberg's "Romeo and Juliet on the Balcony" 1886