

DISPLACED DIADEM

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST TO 3RD LEVEL



**TAVERN
TALES**

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DISPLACED DIADEM IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for three to six characters of 1st to 3rd level, optimized for a party of four 2nd-level characters. A small community of fisherman have not returned from their trip into the swamp, and family and friends have grown concerned. Unfortunately, the fishermen have fallen victim to an angry troll seeking revenge after they accidentally stole a prized relic that was in the troll's possession. Meanwhile, a local group of goblins have come into possession of the relic, ignorant of both the fisherman and the relic's importance to the troll. Can the party unravel this confusing sequence of events and rescue the sole survivor from the troll's wrath, or will they entangle themselves disastrously in a tri-party feud?

BACKGROUND

In the depths of Rumsfen Marsh, a curious relic—a tarnished copper circlet adorned with colorful beads that emitted soft croaks when shaken—lay hidden within a damp cave, its origins and true nature lost to time. To Morgok, a massive troll residing nearby, the discovery of this unremarkable relic represented a source of vast authority over the swamp, though in truth, it held no power at all. He claimed it for himself, believing that it granted him magical influence over the swamp's creatures. The troll was, however, respectful and superstitious of the crown's origins. A relic of such power and connection to nature, he reasoned, must surely be required to recharge its magical energies every so often, upon the very stone on which Morgok first discovered it. Every few weeks, Morgok periodically left the crown resting there accordingly so as not to exhaust its powers.

A group of local fishermen, who made frequent sojourns into the swamp, stumbled upon this cave one day while Morgok was away. Finding the crown and seeing it as nothing more than an odd trinket, they amused themselves with it briefly before discarding it, deeming it worthless. Their casual dismissal of the relic would soon prove dire.

When Morgok discovered the absence of the relic, his rage knew no bounds. He tracked the stench of the fishermen to their stilted house, only to find his precious relic missing. In a blind fury, he slaughtered three of the fishermen, taking the lone survivor hostage to extract the location of his prized possession.

Meanwhile, the discarded crown had found new custodians. A band of goblins, scavengers of the swamp, stumbled upon the tarnished circlet. Pleased by its nature and the authority which it suggested, though oblivious to the danger that it invited, they placed their newfound prize upon the head of their leader. Shortly thereafter, they came upon the fishermen's house. Finding it abandoned in the

aftermath of Morgok's intrusion, they claimed the rickety structure as their new outpost, thrilled at their recent run of good fortune.

The missing fishermen, usually punctual in their returns to town after their Rumsfen excursions, are late. A full day has passed since the date of their promised arrival. Their prolonged absence has caused growing concern among friends and family in the nearby village, who remain oblivious to the grim fate that has befallen the group.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are numerous reasons the party may be interested in investigating the delayed return of the fishermen. A few of these reasons are outlined below:

Concerned Kin. A worried family member of one of the missing fishermen approaches the party for help. They can only offer a modest reward of 10 gp, but make an emotional plea about the family not being able to support itself if their beloved does not return.

Merchant's Worry. A local merchant, dependent on the fish and rare swamp herbs brought by the fishermen, has little patience for delinquency. He hires the party to investigate, offering a sum of 50 gp, hinting that they can keep any unclaimed goods they find on top of their payment.

Village Elder's Request. The local village elder, suspecting foul play at the hands of goblins, seeks out the party. They explain that one of the fishermen had described seeing goblins in the area recently, but that the two groups seemed keen enough to keep out of each other's way and that the fisherman wasn't very concerned. The village elder suspects the worst. For reward, the elder promises supplies and local guidance in exchange for checking on the fishermen's wellbeing.

INTO RUMSFEN

Regardless of the hook urging the party to adventure, any associated NPC from the local village can easily give the party directions to the fishermen's fishing house, where the men stay for up to several days at a time during their regular trips into the marsh. If the party is able to stay on course, it should take them approximately four hours of overland marching plus a short boat ride to reach the house, which is built in the shallows of Rumsfen Lake. A character who makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check to navigate can successfully lead the party to the shore of the lake. This check can be repeated as necessary, though each failed check means the party triggers a random encounter from the following table. GMs may choose to incorporate some of the following encounters regardless of a navigation check to expand the scope of the adventure.

RUMSFEN MARSH ENCOUNTERS

d4 Encounter

- 1 Two **giant frogs** emerge from the underbrush, their eyes fixated on the party. Misled by the size of the adventurers, they attempt to swallow the smallest member whole. They retreat back into the swamp if reduced to half their hit points.
- 2 A lone, distressed deer, ensnared in thick vines, cries pitifully. If the party approaches to help, they disturb a nest of 2d4 **stirges** that swarm to defend their trapped prey. The stirges disengage if half their number is defeated.
- 3 3d4 **giant rats**, driven mad by swamp fever, scurry out from an overturned tree root and attack anything in sight. Their erratic movements and frenzied biting make them unpredictable. They flee if their numbers are reduced by half.
- 4 An injured **owlbear** lies partially concealed in the underbrush, moaning pitifully. If the party approaches, it snaps out of fear and pain. If they can calm it with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check or provide it with at least 5 points of healing, it flees without attacking; otherwise, it fights defensively if the party continues to engage it.

When the party reaches the shore of Rumsfen Lake, they're greeted by the sight of a small, rickety dock, to which two row boats are moored. The fishing house can be seen in the distance several hundred yards away, built on stilts in the waters of the lake to give the fishermen easiest possible access to their catch. The water to the house is shallow—only four feet at its deepest. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check can see signs of movement around the perimeter of the house—these are members of the Grotmuck Gang.

THE GROTMUCK GANG

After the fishermen were vacated from the house by Morgok the troll, a small group of goblins calling themselves the Grotmuck Gang quickly moved in to claim it for themselves. The Gang consists of five **goblins**, plus their leader, Skint, a heavily-scarred goblin with a scratchy voice, wearing a stained yellow vest and the crown that his group recovered from the marsh (the same one the fishermen discarded and the one Morgok is looking for). Skint is a **goblin** with 15 hit points.

The Grotmuck Gang are not particularly aggressive. While they're not very interested in engaging with non-goblinoids, they don't rush to combat. If the party approaches the house by row boat, the Gang is sure to spot them at a distance of about 200 feet, and will fire a couple of warning arrows to deter them. If the party presses forward without an attempt at diplomacy, the goblins go on the attack, continuing to fire arrows at the party until they potentially are able to reach the house, at which point they engage in melee, attempting to swarm party members from above while holding the high ground of the house. Alternatively, the shallow waters allow the party to approach stealthy if they're willing to get their

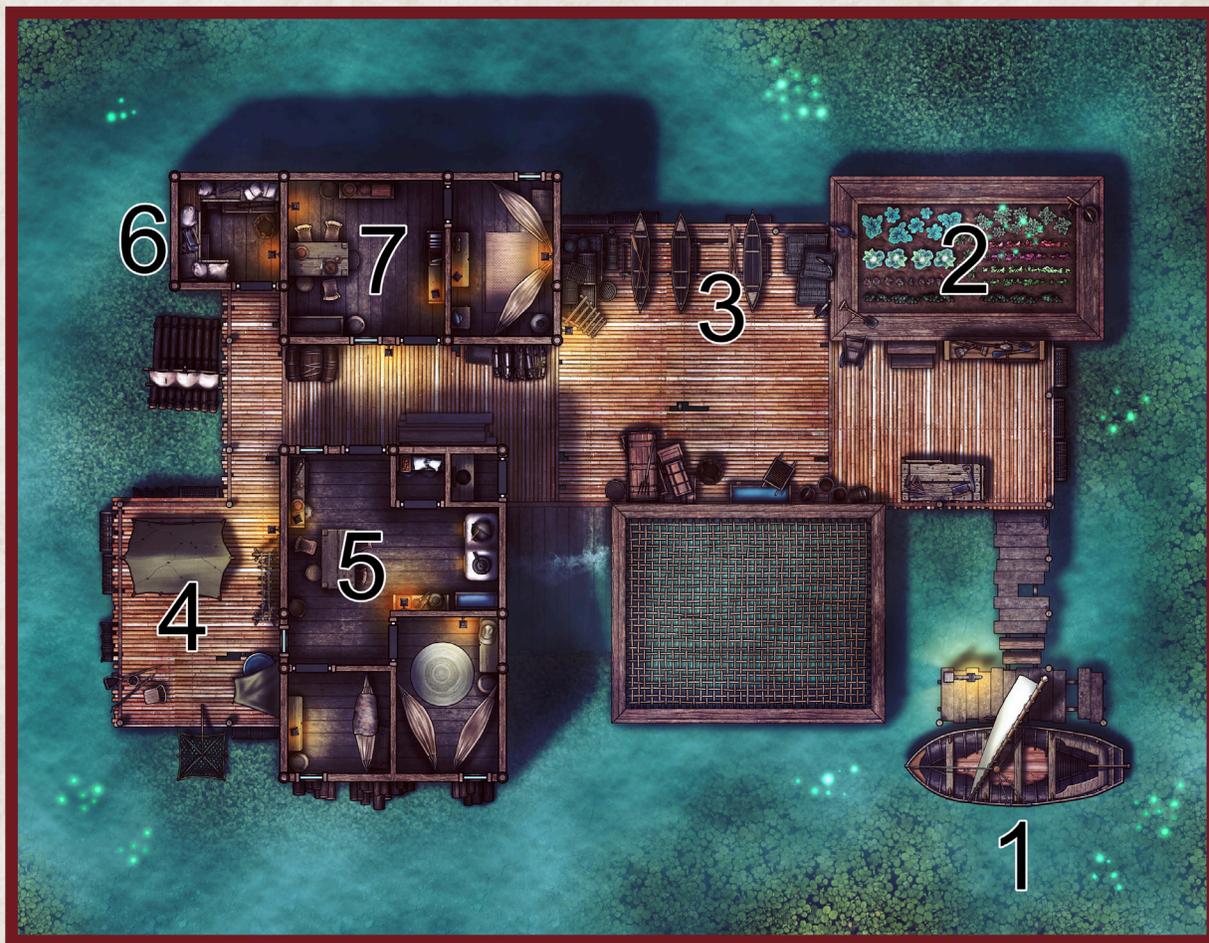
boots wet. Moving through the waters and coming within 10 feet of the house requires a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check, made with advantage due to characters being able to consistently stay below the surface of the water.

Skint, as the leader of the Gang, is also its face. Beginning amicable discussions with the Gang requires an initial successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to lower the Gang's guard. The Gang has two primary motivations which guide Skint in any discussions: the preservation and enrichment of his gang, and the elimination of Morgok the troll, who has moved into their territory as of late and who will kill and eat them if he gets the chance. If the party inquires, Skint is happy to tell the party that his Gang has nothing to do with any missing fishermen; the house was empty when they arrived, except for three bodies, which they tossed into the lake. If the party pushes for further information, he can also explain Morgok the troll as the likely culprit, as well as hint at the Gang's opposed relationship with Morgok. There are several potential outcomes to a negotiation with the Gang. The party may make several attempts at bribes or skill checks throughout discussions. These attempts may be repeated, but a single skill check that fails by 5 or more or a cumulative three failed skill checks will end negotiations. In this case, whatever outcome the two parties had thus far agreed on represents the deal, unless a final failed check would somehow have been so disastrous so as to completely reset discussions. Bribes can be negotiable within reason, but successful Charisma (Persuasion) checks are required to convince the Gang to accept lower than their stated sufficient amount in the section to follow.

The most likely outcomes of discussion are detailed below. 'Necessary Conditions' outline requirements beyond the party's Charisma (Persuasion) check to begin discussions.



THE FISHING HOUSE



DEADLOCK

Necessary Conditions: Successful initial Charisma (Persuasion) check to begin discussions, but talks otherwise fail completely. A minimum bribe of 5 gp is not offered by the party.

Outcome: The goblins insist that the party goes on their merry way. They attack only if the party encroaches upon the house or otherwise takes hostile action.

REVEALED INFORMATION

Necessary Conditions: The party explains their purpose, and makes a successful DC 10 skill check or offers a 10 gp bribe.

Outcome: The goblins can track the troll's scent, and can point the party in the direction that Morgok travelled, explaining that he can't be very far given how recently he was at the house.

SUPERVISED INVESTIGATION

Necessary Conditions: The party explains their purpose, and makes two successful DC 10 skill checks or offers a 15 gp bribe.

Outcome: The goblins are convinced to let the party investigate the house, but that's all they're comfortable with.

If they catch the party trying to take anything, there's going to be a problem.

VIOLENT ALLIANCE

Necessary Conditions: The party offers to deal with Morgok, explains the increased odds of success if the Gang aids them in combat, and makes three successful DC 10 skill checks or offers a 25 gp bribe.

Outcome: The Grotmuck Gang agrees to follow the party's lead in tracking down and slaying Morgok.

PARTING WITH THE CROWN

Necessary Conditions: The party investigated the house and found Boor's journal (see page 5) as well as learned through the osprey (see page 5) via speak with animals or similar magic that Morgok seeks a crown—likely the same one worn by Skint! Four successful DC 10 skill checks or a 50 gp bribe.

Outcome: Skint explains where and when his Gang found the crown, and agrees to part with it so that it can be returned to Morgok.

THE FISHING HOUSE

The party will have to either drive off the Grotmuck Gang or convince them to let the party investigate in order to get access to the house. The structure is made entirely of wood, with walls just under half a foot thick. Windows are open-air, fitted with flimsy shutters that can be opened or closed from any direction. There are clear signs of a struggle throughout—chipped wood, broken furniture, and blood in spatters and streaks. The following areas are keyed to the provided map of the house:

1. SAILBOAT

A small sailboat is moored to an extension of the fishing house's dock. Well-worn but properly maintained, there is nothing of value to be found in the boat.

2. VEGETABLE GARDEN

This small garden hosts rows of vegetables once neatly arranged that have now been trampled by Morgok and partially dug up by the Grotmuck Gang. A character who makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check can identify troll tracks leading out from the garden and into the water, toward the eastern shore of the lake some 150 feet away. A character who looks toward the east shore and makes successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check can spot signs of disturbance amidst the reeds, suggesting that the tracks continue in the same direction.

3. CENTER DOCK

Three rowboats and an assortment of crab traps occupy most of this space. One of the rowboats bears a deep gash in its hull, and a scattering of splinters litters the area. A browned blood stain decorates the middle of the dock.

4. WEST DOCK

A canvas tent, empty and used for shade, as well as a curing rack fill this portion of the dock. A simple raft is tethered nearby. Perched on the dock's railing is a large bird that surveys any nearby creatures intently—an osprey.

The fishing house has been a preferred hang-out spot for the osprey for some time now due to its favorable sunning conditions. A character who casts *Speak with Animals* can learn that in exchange for some food, the osprey is willing to share what it knows about the missing fishermen. It can explain, in simple language, that a troll wandered in yelling about “crown, where crown, give crown” and attacked the fishermen, hauling away a single survivor toward the east shore of the lake.

5. SOUTH CABIN

This cabin is divided into four separate rooms, including a shared kitchen and dining space, two bedrooms fitted with hammocks and dressers, and a small pantry. Furniture

here is overturned and blood spatters the walls. There is a strongbox tucked beneath the hammock in the southwest room, it is locked, and the goblins have not yet gotten around to opening it. It can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools and contains a coin purse that holds 10 gp.

6. STORAGE SHED

Shelves and containers in this shed hold old fishing gear and maintenance equipment. Nothing is of significant value.

7. NORTH CABIN

This cabin appears untouched by the violence that marked the rest of the property. It is divided into a shared living area and a bedroom that hosts two hammocks, a dresser, and an end table. Atop the end table is a leather-bound book—a journal kept by one of the fishermen, named Boor. A character who spends a few minutes flipping through the journal can learn the following information:

- The majority of its entries detail the daily excursions shared by the fishermen. Boor comes off as a light-hearted, untroubled individual.
- Boor seemed to have a particularly strong relationship with another one of the fishermen, named Janus.
- The last entry is dated only a day ago, and details the the group's final excursion—most of the entry is spent explaining that Janus found a rusty iron crown out in the marsh, and the group had fun trying it on and imaging themselves as kings before Janus eventually tossed it away, the group convinced of its worthlessness.

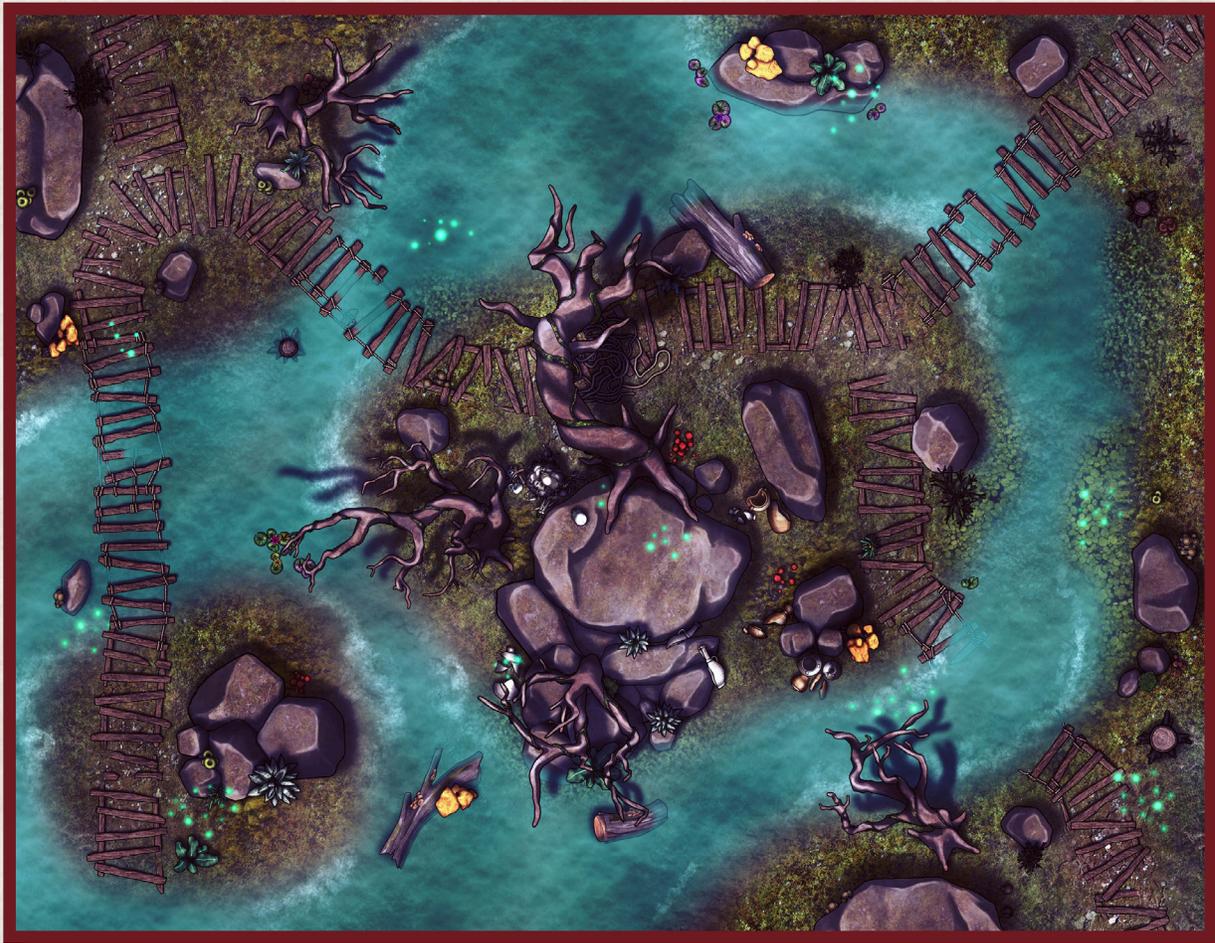
FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

Once the party is finished at the house, they can continue the adventure by heading toward Morgok and the last surviving fisherman. The party may know roughly where Morgok might be located either by learning it from the Grotmuck Gang or having the Gang lead them to Morgok, having spoken to the osprey, or by investigating the tracks in the vegetable garden. Failing all of these methods, a party that surveys the nearby shore of the lake will eventually spot a trail blazed through the reeds to the east. When the party approaches this trail, a character who makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check can identify and successfully follow tracks left by Morgok the troll to the site where he is interrogating the remaining fisherman. This check can be repeated if necessary, though each failure triggers a random encounter from the Rumsfen Marsh Encounters table.

MEETING MORGOK

After a few hours of travel from the fishing house, the party will come across the clearing where Morgok interrogates Janus, the lone surviving fisherman. Read aloud the following:

THE TREE



As you approach the clearing, a grim scene unfolds before you. Suspended from the gnarled branches of a great, dead tree is a frantic, exhausted man, his feet scrambling for purchase on a small, moss-covered rock beneath him. A worn rope, frayed at the edges, tightens around his neck, threatening suffocation. His garments—a bloodied shirt and soiled breeches—speak of an extensive ordeal. Beside him, a hulking troll paces restlessly, the ground muttering under its weight. Every so often, the beast halts its heavy tread to jab at the fisherman with a great, knobby club, barking guttural demands about the whereabouts of a crown. The air is thick with the tension of despair and the looming threat of violence.

Morgok is an old and withered troll. His mind, never sharp even in his prime years, has only become increasingly frenzied and cloudy in his advanced age. He uses **troll** statistics, but he has 50 hit points and can only make two attacks with his multi-attack. Morgok wants one thing above all else: the crown. If Morgok notices the party, he can be temporarily persuaded not to attack with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the party hasn't learned of what Morgok wants at this point and they engage Morgok in conversation, the troll willingly explains that the fisherman

stole the crown, which rightfully belongs to him. Janus is likely to interject, frantically explaining for the countless time that he discarded the crown near the base of this tree, and he cannot for the life of him explain where it might have disappeared to. He pleads for his life.

If the party has the crown in their possession, offering the crown to Morgok along with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion, Deception, or Intimidation) check is sufficient to convince Morgok to let Janus go free. If the party has arrived with the Gang and Skint still possesses the crown without a prior agreement in place to hand it over to Morgok, Skint will require convincing, for his strong preference is to violently dispatch Morgok with the party's help. If the party has left the crown with goblins and arrive at the clearing alone, they can convince Morgok to let them retrieve it for him with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check. They will then, of course, need to actually acquire it from Skint. Failing any of the above methods, or if attempts at discussion fail, Morgok is likely to attack. Furious and with total disregard for his own safety, Morgok fights to the death.

A NOTE ON RESTING

The 'Meeting Morgok' section assumes that the party does not take more than a single short rest throughout the course of the adventure. If the party elects to take a long rest at any point after beginning the adventure but before meeting Morgok, the troll eventually grows tired of Janus being unable to lead him to the crown, and he kills the fishermen out of frustration. The party still finds Morgok at the site of the tree, but Morgok has occupied himself with digging through the nearby foliage in a frantic attempt to locate his lost crown.

AFTERMATH

The resolution of this adventure depends largely on the party's actions and their handling of the delicate balance of power between Morgok, the Grotmuck Gang, and the recovered crown. Should the party successfully negotiate the return of the crown to Morgok, the troll, relieved of his obsession, abandons his terrorizing of the swamp, retreating to a quieter life deeper in the marsh. The Grotmuck Gang, emboldened by their role in the resolution, may become unexpected allies to the village, moderating their mischief in exchange for occasional supplies or protection discussions with the locals. If Janus survives, his return is celebrated by the village, and his firsthand account spreads a wary respect among the villagers for the complexities and dangers of the swamp.

Conversely, if the negotiations fail or the party chooses to confront Morgok and the Grotmuck Gang with violence, the outcome could leave a power vacuum in the marsh. The death of Morgok might embolden other, possibly more dangerous creatures to expand their territories, potentially increasing the hazards of navigating or living near Rumsfen. If the crown remains with the Grotmuck Gang, their misunderstanding of its 'power' could lead to increased skirmishes with other swamp denizens, pulling the adventurers back to resolve rising conflicts.



REFERENCES

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 (“SRD 5.1”) by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

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