

CRYPT OF KHARTHUUN



Approximate Playtime
50 - 80 Minutes

TRACKING SHEETS

Each quest book has its own tracking sheet that can be found on the back cover of the book. While reading from this book, time and progress are tracked on the corresponding tracking sheet for this book.

You make your way north, over the rolling hills and into the highlands. You come to a canyon that cleaves the earth in two. A worn track winds its way down the crevasse to the scree-strewn floor below. Cliff faces looming to either side, you come upon the entrance to the crypt: two large stone doors set into the face of the canyon wall, above which stands the figure of a noble warrior, carved from the living stone. Flanking the door are two statues of noble, lupine beasts.

You pull open one of the doors and enter the catacombs' antechamber. Beyond the slanting pillars of light that stream in through the entryway, the room is dark as night. You light a torch to see by. Eerie shadows dance across dusty cobwebs that cover nearly everything in this shadowed hall.

You can just barely make out some sort of decoration on the walls beneath the masses of cobwebs. You clear the webs away to find a mural beneath. It appears to have withstood the passage of decades. The mural depicts a great hero taming two wolf-like beasts, the spitting image of the statues outside. These two creatures are seen throughout the other murals, following their master faithfully.

Clearing the webs from all the walls of the room, you see a grand narrative play out. The hero in the murals goes on to face numerous trials, standing tall against monsters of ever greater power and ferocity. The penultimate portion of the mural depicts the hero in battle with the mightiest of all monsters, a dragon of unfathomable grandeur. In the final panel, the hero defeats the dragon with what appears to be some kind of magical relic, but part of the mural has crumbled away and you cannot make out quite what the relic is.

Leaving the mural behind, you spy only two passageways that lead away from the antechamber. You hold your torch high. The right passage goes only a few paces before being blocked by a cave in. The passage to the left extends into the darkness beyond your torchlight.

Follow the unblocked passage to the left.

➔ *Read entry 5961.*

Attempt to clear the blocked right passage.

➔ *Read entry 9261.*

1032

You slash at the beast, but the creature ends its leap atop you, slamming you to the ground beneath its undead bulk. You turn your head aside at the last moment, and it savages your shoulder with the fangs it intended to sink into your throat. With a snarl of triumph, the creature follows the momentum of its attack and drags you away from the dais. Then it loops back and takes up a defensive position before the sarcophagus.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 2168.*

1035

You get a long run up and throw yourself into the air. Unfortunately, the wooden flooring continues for almost ten paces, and you land hard somewhere in the middle. The sound from your impact echoes through the tunnel, but nothing happens. Perhaps it wasn't a trap after all?

You collect yourself and continue on. But you don't make it more than a couple steps before you hear a distinct metallic clicking, and suddenly the floor swings open beneath you, dropping you into darkness.

➔ *Read entry 6279.*

1086

You cannot get your feet underneath you, so you take a different approach. You loosen your grip on the creature in an effort to throw it off balance, meeting no resistance. The damnable beast gouges you with its teeth as you roll away to get a better position. You whirl and dive onto its back, locking your arms around its neck from behind.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Mark two progress.*

If fourteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 1941.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7729.*

1124

You know not how long you were out of your senses, but when you wake, you are chilled to the bone. The cold of the chamber has seeped through you. You fear you may never know warmth again. You pull yourself shakily to your feet, leaning heavily on the pillar behind you. You make your way, slowly, to the dais, rounding the sarcophagus. Behind it, in a broken and bloody heap, the remains of the second hound lies still and silent, the blue fire in its eyes snuffed out for good.

➔ *Read entry 9991.*

1132

You lift your guttering torch high and look about you for your foe. Your heart stops in your chest as you turn to face the beast only inches from your face, maw open in a pouncing leap. You have no time to think. You simply react on pure instinct, stepping to the side and swinging with your torch, striking the hound hard in the skull. The flames of your torch lick the beast's mane, and it lights as though it were doused in lamp oil. The creature's eyes go wide, the flickering blue flames glowing within them flaring brightly. It lands hard behind you, its attack completely stymied. It scrambles away from you, thrashing on the ground to smother the flames.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

If fourteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 1941.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8293.*

1154

You get your legs beneath you and twist your body to use it as a fulcrum. You pull with all your might, and the weight of the beast pulls back. Your fingers ache from the vice-like grip you keep on the beast. There is a sickening sound of popping joints and a thick exhalation of foul breath. Then the creature goes limp.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

You push the beast's body off of you and stand, brushing yourself off. The flames in the creature's eyes fade and die. You take a moment to catch your breath before approaching the dais.

➔ *Read entry 9991.*

1236

You take your flame rune and hold your hands before you, one over the other. You pull your palms slowly apart, the energy of the spell resisting your pull. As you do, blazing tendrils of flame swirl into your hands from the cold musty air of the tomb chamber, coalescing around the shard into a glowing ball of fire.

One of the hounds begins to growl as it stalks toward you. It drops its head low, the hackles of its thick mane raising.

If you have awareness (skill) or reasoning (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 9713.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7951.*

1337

You grab hold of the beast at your feet, knotting your fists in its thick mane. With a grunt and a mighty surge of effort, you haul the wolf-beast bodily off the ground and swing it round behind you, slamming it into the pillar at your back. There is a bone-crunching thud, followed closely by the sound of stone grinding on stone. You loosen your hold on the creature and it slumps to the ground in a daze. You turn to face the oncoming creature, but the crash and clatter of heavy stones falling from the ceiling overwhelms your senses as the column tumbles to the ground.

➔ *Mark four progress.*

➔ *Read entry 3291.*

1350

The nightmarish hound melts into the darkness that lies at the edges of the chamber, out of reach of your torchlight. It darts from shadow to shadow.

Chase the hound into the darkness.

➔ *Read entry 5788.*

Fire at the beast with your bow.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2041.*

Conjure a bolt of lightning.

Requires runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8100.*

1381

You cup one hand around your other fist and bring your arms down hard on the hound's head. Stepping aside, the beast's momentum carries it past you to collide with the column at your back. You hear the other beast behind you, stalking closer.

If you have both athletics (skill) and brawling (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 1337.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3840.*

1510

By your estimation, the remains have been decaying for some few years. You search the body, clearing away the blanket of dust-choked cobwebs and rifling through the pockets of the tattered tunic and leather pouches that nearly crumble at your touch.

In one of the pouches, you find a fistful of gold coins. In another, you find a sealed ceramic vial that sloshes distressingly when you give it a shake. Perhaps most telling, you find a red bandanna tied about what was once a thickly muscled bicep. You recall that such bandanas were worn by a guild of thieves.

➔ *You gain 25 gold.*

➔ *You gain one strength potion (item F).*

➔ *Mark story point V8.*

➔ *Read entry 1532.*

1515

You may have been a bit overzealous in your attempt to rid the world of these foul creatures. You neglected to consider the burning webs on the ceiling above you. Flaming gobs of webs drift down from the ceiling onto your head and clothing, threatening to set you alight as well. You throw yourself against the wall to beat out the flames before they spread further.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6674.*

1532

You raise your torch to get a better look at your surroundings. The walls are made of smooth stone slabs, expertly crafted with virtually no grooves between them to use as handholds or footholds for climbing. Above you is only shadow. Your torchlight doesn't reach the corridor you fell from. You see no other way to escape the pit.

Attempt to climb the walls.

➔ *Read entry 6491.*

Examine the craftsmanship of the stonework.

Requires awareness (skill) or craftsmanship (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3803.*

Beckon vines and roots to breach the walls.

Requires runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3808.*

1544

On reflex, you draw a runebound shard with each hand. In one hand, you hold your blasting rune—powerful enough to obliterate the thing, but that might bring down the entire tomb around you. The shard in your other hand is hot to the touch: fire it is.

You raise the shard, the rune upon it glowing like a kindled ember. You suck in a deep breath, cinders and sparks erupting from the flame rune and filling your lungs. You purse your lips and blow, a bright cloud of smoke and flame billowing from your lungs and engulfing the spider.

If you have awareness (skill) or endurance (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 7144.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4977.*

1564

You grit your teeth and grip the handle of your weapon in a white-knuckled hand. Filled with determination, you raise your head and push through the crushing weight of the beast's otherworldly assault.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

Pressing yourself forward, weapon in hand, you gain momentum with each stride. Before the creature can finish its nightmarish call, you have crossed the chamber. You bring your weapon up high only to swing it down like a falling meteor. Only at the last moment does the creature realize its oncoming doom. Its howl is cut off abruptly as your weapon connects with the creature's skull. The blow sends the beast skidding across the floor with a yelp.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

1568

You pull a flask from a belt pouch and hurl it past the spiders against the stone wall at the rear of the alcove. The sticky substance splatters to the walls and floor of the niche and immediately ignites, setting the interred gnome and the swarm ablaze. The rush of flames exploding from the alcove catches your face and arms as you step away.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Mark story point W6.*

➔ *Read entry 3778.*

1592

The smaller spiders skitter quickly up the spiral stairs to the safety of the tunnels above. You return to the alcove where you saw the body of the gnome. You tear away the thick cocoon of silk that engulfs the body and find remains that are no more than a few years old by your estimate. Around her arm she wears a crimson bandana, marking her as a member of a thieves' guild. You search her pockets but find only coins and a broken potion flask.

➔ *You gain 45 gold.*

➔ *Read entry 1765.*

1678

You retrieve a small clay pot from a padded belt pouch. You hurl the pot at the beasts' feet. One of them leaps away and moves around to flank you, but the other charges forward. The pot cracks on the stone floor, and the substance within explodes violently as it is exposed to the air. The hound is thrown through the air with what would be a pained yelp from any other creature, but this sound is wholly unnatural.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

The other hound bounds toward you from the side and lunges at you, cracked teeth bared in a hellish snarl.

If you have agility (skill) or reasoning (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 5410.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7900.*

1704

The weight of the creature bears you to the ground. Landing atop you, the beast begins ripping at your chest and belly with its long, cracked claws.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

You are able to get your hands up to block its foul fangs snapping at your face. Its breath is cold enough to produce a cloud of mist as it snarls and barks at you. It snaps its teeth again and again, trying to close its jaws on your throat, but you hold its deadly maw at bay and receive only a faceful of blood-flecked spittle instead.

You roll your weight to one side, suddenly letting go of the beast's head. The force it was exerting against you drives its snout into the hard stone floor. It snarls, and you swear you can hear pure hatred in it. With the momentary distraction, you are able to roll out from underneath the beast and gain your feet. You swing your leg at it with a desperate kick to drive it away and put some distance between you and your foe.

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

1765

You tear through the remaining veils of spider webs. Your skin crawls at the touch, but you have had more than enough to do with these verminous creatures and wish only to move on. The thick curtain is torn aside and before you stretches a tunnel of worked stone. Your torchlight falls upon a massive doorway blocking your way forward.

The stone door is carved with stylized images, worn with time but still discernible. At the center of the door, a warrior of noble bearing appears to lie at rest. He is adorned in splendid armor and clutches a magnificent sword. Flanking the figure is a pair of hounds. They are noble animals, and their carven eyes are set with sapphires.

➔ *Time passes.*

If at least one of you has history (skill) or story point U3 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 4911.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3660.*

1798

You keep your panic in check and sweep your torch across the webs in front of you. They flash and burn to little more than smoke in an instant. One of the spiders becomes caught in a blaze of burning webs. Its hisses turn to hellish shrieking as its chitin cracks and its insides boil in the heat. It drops to the ground with a heavy crunch, its legs spasmodically curling in on itself.

➔ *Read entry 5584.*

1941

All that follows is silence. You find that the beast is unmoving. No icy breath fills its frostbitten lungs. No malevolent light burns in its eyes.

You approach the dais and the ornate sarcophagus that rests atop it. The stone burial device is covered with ornate bas-relief carvings.

➔ *Read entry 9991.*

1995

You loose your arrow, leading the beast a few feet, but without warning the undead wolf stops, lets the arrow fly past, and bolts directly toward you, sprinting across the open ground. You nock another arrow and fire just as the creature bounds into the air. The arrow clips the beast along the side of the belly, slashing a deep furrow in its side, but not slowing its charge.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

The weight of the hound drives you against a column. The beast begins to savage you with fang and claw, rending red furrows in your flesh. You manage to slam your fist into the fresh wound created by your arrow and the beast snarls in pain. You hit it again, and the hound breaks off its attack, retreating once again.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7763.*

2005

The terrible cacophony of loss and despair erupts from the creature's distended maw. You cover your ears and scream, doing anything you can to prevent yourself from hearing that soul-rending sound again. But so awful it is that even through cupped hands you can hear it. Utter despair overwhelms you.

➔ *You each lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

2041

You trail the beast with a hail of arrows launched wherever you can see it as it runs. You hear the arrows crack upon the floor and walls somewhere in the darkness but not the hound's cries of agony.

If you have awareness (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 5539.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3855.*

2168

The hound inhales again. As it does, the rime of frost covering the sarcophagus grows visibly thicker. Before it raises its head, it looks at you with its burning eyes, the malevolence made all the more palpable by the knowledge that this foul thing has bested you. The stone braziers to either side of the sarcophagus erupt into azure flames that suck the warmth from the room in an instant.

The hound releases a devastating howl that shakes the very walls of the burial chamber. Motion draws your attention, and you see the fallen beast stir. Light flickers in its eyes, and it pulls itself to its feet, a nightmare of broken bone and rent flesh. It raises its head, its broken jaw gaping wide, to join the howl.

The sound they make is too terrifying to remember. You flee from the chamber and from the crypt back toward Dragonholt, wanting nothing more to do with this foul place.

➔ *This quest is complete. Read entry 3630 in the "Dragonholt Village" book.*

2371

Just as you are about to roll away from the beast's attack, its pack-mate darts in and clamps its jaws onto your leg. The pouncing hound slams into you, its weight slamming you against the column at your back. You try to wrestle it off of you, but it throws its weight into you again, crushing you into the pillar. The stone column gives way, its fragile balance too greatly disrupted to carry the weight of the ceiling above.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 3291.*

2403

Your hands fly to the lip of the stone slab that serves as a ceiling to the crumbling alcove. You pull down with all of your might and the stone slab breaks away from the rest of the construction, falling into the niche and crushing the body and the swarm of fist-sized spiders. A shower of bricks, stone, and dirt sprays forth from the exposed hole in the wall, pelting you with debris.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Mark story point W6.*

➔ *Read entry 3778.*

2538

Before the beast can let loose its baleful howl, you raise your own voice in song. A song of ancient days before darkness entered the world. A song of love, and hope, and light everlasting. You pour your soul into the song, knowing that your life might depend on it.

If you have devotion (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 7314.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4149.*

2625

You cannot risk using the blasting rune. Instead you retrieve another stone, this one sharp, jagged, and thrumming with barely contained power. You grip the sharp crystal in your palm and raise your other hand toward the flailing creature. A blinding bolt explodes within the tunnel, ripping through the corridor, followed instantaneously by a deafening crack of thunder that shakes the walls and ceiling.

The coruscating bolt of lightning strikes the giant spider, halting its frantic thrashing for but a moment before the light blinks out, the thunder echoes down the hall, and the creature collapses, ichor boiling inside its shell, its legs curling spasmodically around its abdomen. It's not until the wave of adrenaline wears off that you realize your entire arm is numb and your heart is beating erratically.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

Slowly, your vision readjusts to the darkness. You find a glowing ember in the darkness that you take for your flame rune and pocket it after it has had a chance to cool.

If story point W6 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 1765.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1592.*

2888

The creature shrieks and flails, swiping at the weapon protruding from its body with frantic, spasmodic motions. It connects with the spear haft, snapping the hardened wood like a twig and leaving the head and much of the spear lodged firmly in the beast's body. Foul-smelling ichor gushes from the wound, splashing to the ground, threatening to turn your stomach. The spider thrashes about drunkenly, its motions growing more sluggish and erratic. Eventually, it scuttles into a corner, curling its legs around its abdomen, and with a final choking hiss, it dies.

If story point W6 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 1765.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1592.*

2984

The hound smashes into the pillar that was at your back with bone crunching force. It lands hard on the floor, knocked senseless by the impact. The hound scrambles shakily to its feet, but you kick it hard in the head, sending it into the column once more. With the sound of stone grinding on stone, the column shifts with the impact.

You catch sight of the other hound bounding toward you from the far side of the pillar. It appears dead set on rescuing its dazed pack-mate. You give the hound at your feet another hard kick, slamming its skull into the pillar again. The stone column gives way, its fragile balance too greatly disrupted to carry the weight of the ceiling above.

➔ *Mark four progress.*

➔ *Read entry 3291.*

3180

The massive spider drives you back until you are pinned against a wall. It rears up on its hind legs and stabs a long, sharp limb at you. You raise your spear up high to turn aside the blow at the last second. But such a creature can bring to bear so many attacks at once, and another scything forelimb stabs deep into the muscle of your thigh.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

You slam the spearpoint into the creature's clicking mouth parts, causing it to hiss and retract its penetrating leg. A tidal wave of pain washes out from your wounded leg as you raise the spear, step forward, and with all your might, thrust the spear deep into the creature's underbelly.

➔ *Read entry 2888.*

3291

No longer supported by the collapsed column, heavy stone slabs in the ceiling shake loose and tumble to the floor, showering the ground around you with deadly debris. You raise your arms to ward off the blows, but several of the falling stones strike you and the hounds.

➔ *You each lose two stamina unless you have agility (skill).*

If eight or more progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 7952.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6898.*

3333

You reach the bottom of the tightly turning stairs. A long, wide corridor stretches out before you. Thick nets of white webbing fill the corners of the hall, rounding the edges until it looks more tunnel than constructed corridor. Alcoves, hardly large enough to fit the dessicated remains of long-dead souls, are set three high into the walls. The webs drape the burial niches like dusty white veils.

You hold your torch high and move cautiously through the hall, cutting your way through thick sheets of web. As you pass through the curtains left by your blade, you spy hundreds of red jewels reflecting the light of your torch. The jewels begin spilling out of the burial alcoves, and you realize they are no precious stones, but the eyes of too many foul, skittering creatures.

At the last second, you think to look above you, and you catch sight of two spiders, each the size of wagon wheels, descending toward you from the ceiling, sliding gracefully along impossibly thin strands of web.

Cut them down with your weapon.

➔ *Read entry 5717.*

Set the web ablaze with your torch.

➔ *Read entry 1798.*

Scorch the hall with runic fire.

Requires arcana (skill).

➔ *Read entry 9144.*

3419

The first of you is nearly halfway across the planking, the rest of you following behind, spacing yourselves out to avoid bunching up in any one spot. If the floor is going to drop out from under you, at least the pit won't swallow you all. Or so you hope.

When the last of you has made it onto the planking and the first is nearly across, your combined weight proves too much. You hear a distinct metallic clicking and suddenly the floor swings open beneath you, dropping you into darkness.

➔ *Read entry 6279.*

3453

The hound collapses to the side, and your blow connects hard with the stone floor, sending a painful shock through your arms. The other hound regains its feet and turns, returning to the fray. You grip your weapon tightly, raising it off the ground and sending the beast crashing headlong into its pack-mate with a mighty backswing.

The two tumble together, a sharp yelp of pain erupting from the heap. One scrambles to right itself while the other, whose legs had been mangled, lies utterly motionless, the cold fire in its eyes fading to embers before snuffing out entirely.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

3531

Taking a few quick steps back from the beasts, you nock an arrow and loose it at the beast in the lead. It pounces quickly to the side before surging forward toward you. Your arrow streaks past the beast to crack firmly through the skull of its injured pack-mate. The wretched creature's eyes flare with cold fire, and it collapses to the ground. The light in its undead eyes fades until they are little more than blue-white embers.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

With a howl that carries equal parts rage and despair, the remaining creature hurls itself at you like a battering ram, throwing its full weight into you in an effort to knock you off your feet.

If you have brawling (skill) or dueling (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 8687.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1704.*

3608

You try to build the momentum to charge the beast, but your steps falter, and you collapse to your knees, unable to muster the will to continue. Your weapon drops from your hand, and you cup your hands over your ears. Utter despair overwhelms you.

➔ *You each lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

3637

The enormous spider spears another forelimb at you, catching your leg in the thigh. You grab the beast's leg and try to pull it free, but the bristle-like hairs that grow from the chitinous hide hold it firm like a barbed spearhead.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

Try as you might, you cannot move. The spider lifts its other forelimb, readying to drive it through your chest.

If you have military (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 9558.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9034.*

3660

Laying your hands upon the doors, you recoil sharply. You fear that you may have left flesh frozen to the door, so sharp and cold was the pain of contact. You look down at your hands and see that they are still intact. Gritting your teeth with resolve, you put your covered shoulder against the door. You can feel the cold through your clothing, but you can withstand a few moments of it before the frostbite sets in.

As the doors grind open, a creeping chill emanates from beyond its stone frame. Peering into the chamber's gloomy darkness, you can't be sure if it's your imagination or the flickering light from your torch, but something seems to dart from shadow to shadow just at the edge of your sight. The room itself is huge, its ceiling lost to darkness. Pillars flank the center of the room, forming a processional toward a distant dais upon which rests a stone sarcophagus flanked by shallow stone braziers.

You step across the threshold and feel a chilling presence crawl across your skin as an icy grip seizes your heart. The breath is ripped from your lungs in a gasp of freezing mist.

➔ *You each lose one stamina.*

As you gasp for breath, you hear the sound of clawed feet on the hard stone floor. The steps come slowly, deliberately, stalking you in the shadows. From the gloom near the dais, two nightmarish figures emerge. They possess the basic form of enormous hounds or wolves, but never has the comparison with such noble beasts been applied more foully. Rotting, frost-bitten flesh hangs in shreds about the bones of the creatures before you. Their milky eyes seem illuminated by some deathly glow.

In unison, the creatures raise their heads and howl. The stagnant breath of their shriveled lungs erupts from their maws in a cloud of icy mist. A shiver of dread runs down your spine as the otherworldly sound washes over you. Your mind reels as you are overcome with utter terror. You tremble as the howl ends and hope you will never hear such a cry again.

➔ *You each disable one of your skills.*

➔ *Read entry 8811.*

3685

You have crossed the majority of the wooden flooring and begin to think you've overthought the situation. Could this really be an elaborate trapdoor? It could easily be a replacement floor after a sinkhole sent the flagstones plummeting into the dark earth. Just as you're contemplating how foolish you must look, you hear a distinct metallic clicking. In a blind panic, you throw yourself to the stone floor ahead just in time as the floor swings open revealing a deep dark pit.

➔ *You each lose two stamina.*

You get to your feet and brush yourself off, feeling lucky to have avoided what must be certain death. Warily turning your back on the pit, your heart still racing, you continue onward. After some time you reach the top of a stone staircase, spiraling downward into darkness. The corridor has reached its end. Nowhere to go but down. Holding your torch high, you begin your descent.

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 3333.*

3778

From two collapsed alcoves at the far end of the corridor slides a long limb covered in thick, jagged chitin. Thick as a sapling and long as a spear, a second leg extends from the alcove, then another, that curls out toward the ceiling. The three limbs reach outward, pulling behind them an armored carapace the size of a wild boar, five more eerily long legs trailing behind, pushing the bulk forward.

Eight rheumy eyes stare blindly in the darkened corridor, but it wrings its pedipalps, giving you no doubt that this beast is a hungry predator. An otherworldly sound swells from the massive beast, sending a shiver down your spine and turning your bowels to water.

Engage the monster in melee.

➔ *Read entry 5563.*

Put an arrow between its eight eyes.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 5477.*

Burn the wretched creature to ash.

Requires arcana (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1544.*

3803

You closely examine the craftsmanship of the walls and floor. The stonework is phenomenal, purely genius. The stone slabs are not only ground to a smooth finish, but they are secured in such a way as to leave barely a gap between them. That is, except for a narrow gap near the floor. The gap is of uniform width and a hand's breadth long. You produce a dagger from your belt and insert it into the slot. The blade contacts something metal within, and when you apply more pressure, you hear a distinct metallic turning, and the adjacent wall slab swings open slightly, revealing a secret tunnel leading into the darkness and away from the pit.

➔ *Read entry 5209.*

3808

You retrieve your growth rune from your belt pouch and hold it in your palm. It hums with living energy, and you can sense the roots and vines of the plants behind the walls. You call out to them, and they answer. A sound of digging can be heard from beyond the walls, and then several of the wall slabs shift. Roots begin to poke through the growing gaps between the stone slabs, sheepishly at first, then with more vigor. Soon, the vines have displaced several slabs that fall to the floor of the pit. With so many helpful handholds and footholds, climbing from the pit is an easy task.

Warily turning your back on the pit, you continue onward. After some time you reach the top of a stone staircase, spiraling downward into darkness. The corridor has reached its end. Nowhere to go but down. Holding your torch forward, you begin your descent.

➔ *Read entry 3333.*

3814

You think nothing of the sudden change in flooring. "Perhaps the floor gave way to a sinkhole and was later replaced," you think to yourself as you continue onward through the darkness. However, after walking a few paces, you hear a distinct metallic clicking, and suddenly the floor swings open beneath you, dropping you hard into a deep dark pit.

➔ *Read entry 6279.*

3831

The spider spears another forelimb at you, narrowly missing your leg. The sensation of the bristle-like hairs against your leg makes your skin crawl. You move to jump away, but your foot has tangled in a thick net of silk webbing. Unable to get your foot under you, but already moving away, you tumble to the ground. The spider raises its forelimbs high, preparing to stab them down through your chest.

If you have military (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 9558.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9034.*

3840

Loath to turn your attention from the stalking wolf at your back, you fail to notice the one at your feet shake its head and regain its footing. It darts forward and locks its jaws onto the meat of your calf. White-hot pain cascades over you, and it is all you can do to keep your feet as you slam your fists down on its back, trying with all your might to knock it loose from its death grip.

The beast surges, trying to yank you to the ground, but instead, you fall hard against the pillar. The breath is knocked from your lungs with the impact, and as you hang there, wheezing and dazed, the only sound you hear is the sound of stone grinding on stone. You topple backward as the column at your back slips away and falls to the ground.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 3291.*

3853

You clear rubble and collapsed stone until your back and muscles ache, but still there is no end in sight. You conclude that the entire tunnel has collapsed and return to the antechamber to follow the unblocked passage instead.

➔ *Read entry 5961.*

3855

You manage only to waste your time and arrows. The hound is toying with you, only letting you see it when it knows it can avoid your shots behind columns or in the enveloping darkness. You grow ever more furious as this nightmare creature seems to be intentionally wearing you out. Your arms and shoulders ache when you reach and find your quiver emptied.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 8293.*

3889

You focus the arcane energy and bend the laws that bind the magic within the shard. You raise your hand, and the hound slams hard into an invisible shockwave of force. You spin behind the column, runeshard in hand, and slam your palm into the column, causing it to explode toward the hound. Even with your expert control, channeling the power of the rune has left the bones in your arm fractured in several places.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Mark four progress.*

➔ *Read entry 3291.*

4123

The hound snaps at your ankles, and you swat at it with your weapon. It bounds away, ever staying out of reach, circling you, wearing you down. It lunges again and again. You strike at it, but at the last second it changes direction and takes hold of your arm between its bloody fangs. It plants its feet and throws you to the ground with a hard shake. You lash out with your other hand and land a blow hard against its lupine head. It yelps and loosens its grip on your arm. As you hit the ground, the beast turns and darts back out of reach.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 7763.*

4149

The terrible cacophony of loss and despair erupts from the creature's distended maw. Your mind again reels at the sound, and the words of your song stick in your throat. The song dies on your lips, and you collapse to your knees, unable to muster the will to continue. Your weapon drops from your hand, and you cup your hands over your ears. Utter despair overwhelms you.

➔ *You each lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

4155

With nothing left to protect yourself but the blasting rune, you unleash its power, trying with all your skill to focus the blast in the hopes that the entire mountain doesn't come down on top of you. An immense burst of force explodes from the rune, kicking up a cloud of dust and driving the giant spider into a corner, where its chitinous shell is fractured in a hundred places. The blast sends you skidding across the floor until your back and head slam into a wall, leaving you breathless and rattled.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

When the dust settles, you gain your feet shakily. You can see the glowing-coal radiance of your discarded flame rune amongst the fallen debris. As you retrieve it, you find see the crushed remains of the giant spider, streams of ichor running in rivulets across the floor.

If story point W6 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 1765.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1592.*

4357

You hold your ground for but a moment, letting the hound believe that you intend to stay right where you are. Then at the last possible second, you drop to the ground, hoping to dodge out from under the beast's leap. It sails past you, snapping at your face with its foul jaws.

If you have agility (skill) or reasoning (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 2984.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 2371.*

4393

You raise your weapon and rush the wounded hound, hoping it will be easier to catch. Despite its injury, it is still unnaturally swift. It circles you, bounding forward to nip at your legs when it can and darting back out of reach.

If you have dueling (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 5457.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4123.*

4416

Exhausted from your trials in the damnable crypt, you heft your weapon. The first beast leaps at you, but you turn its charge aside with a hard blow from your weapon. The lamed beast staggers in to snap at your legs, and you plant a kick into its shoulder, sending it stumbling drunkenly backward. You have just enough time to raise your weapon and bring it crashing down onto its spine.

If you have athletics (skill) or military (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 9504.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3453.*

4483

With a mighty leap, the creature hurls itself at you, seeking to finish this with one final attack. You raise your weapon before you, matching the beast at the apex of its leap. You feel your weapon catch the creature while you are both still in the air, and when you finally reach the ground, the beast falls limp, dead, to the ground.

➤ *Mark three progress.*

You nudge the creature with a foot. After ensuring it is dead, you make your way to the dais and the sarcophagus upon it.

➤ *Read entry 9991.*

4520

You loose another arrow, catching the beast's flank! It yelps and breaks off its charge, slinking into the shadows. You turn on the other, seeing it rushing toward you. It lunges! You don't have time to nock another arrow, but you drop backward and low beneath its lunge. You catch its maw with the back of your bow and use the creature's momentum to send it sailing past you.

➤ *Mark three progress.*

➤ *Read entry 9236.*

4623

When the flames clear, the two spiders are no more than charred chitin on the floor of the hall, their ichor boiling out into a steaming puddle on the ground. Burning webs float down from the ceiling around you, but they are slow moving and easy enough to avoid.

➤ *Read entry 6674.*

4773

The trapdoor beneath you shudders and suddenly swings open! You shriek as you tumble downward. You collapse to your knees, your heart in your throat. You wait for the hungry shadows to swallow you, but... nothing. Your sabotage has saved you. The trapdoor has opened only a hand's breadth. Not enough to drop you, but enough for your torch to fall through the crack. You watch it as it plummets into the darkness. It falls at length until you can barely see its light at the bottom of the pit, resting beside the decaying corpse of the trap's previous victim.

You crawl on hands and knees across the remainder of the trapdoor. Upon reaching the stone floor on the other side, you sprawl out on your back, willing your heart and breath back to a normal rhythm.

➤ *You lose two stamina.*

➤ *Time passes.*

Warily turning your back on the pit, your heart still racing, you continue onward. After some time you reach the top of a stone staircase, spiraling downward into darkness. The corridor has reached its end, nowhere to go but down. Holding your torch forward, you begin your descent.

➤ *Read entry 3333.*

4798

Acting almost entirely on instinct, you unleash a catastrophic burst of force from the rune. You had no time to exert control over the forces you unleashed, and as the leaping hound is thrown back by the blast, you too are hurled hard through the column behind you. The sound of cracking and grinding stone fills the chamber as the ceiling above the toppled pillar beings to give way.

➤ *You lose four stamina.*

➤ *Mark three progress.*

➤ *Read entry 3291.*

4858

By your estimation, the remains have been decaying for as long as the dwarf you found in the collapsed corridor above. You search the body, clearing away the blanket of dust-choked cobwebs and rifling through the pockets of the tattered tunic and leather pouches that nearly crumble at your touch.

In one of the pouches, you find a fistful of gold coins. In another, you find a sealed ceramic vial that sloshes distressingly when you give it a shake. Perhaps most telling, you find a familiar red bandanna tied about what was once a thickly muscled bicep. You recall that such bandannas were worn by a guild of thieves.

➤ *You gain 25 gold.*

➤ *You gain one strength potion (item F).*

➤ *Mark story point V8.*

➤ *Read entry 1532.*

4911

You recognize the figure depicted on the door as Kharthuun himself. This must be the end of his saga. Here, he lies at rest, his trials finally come to an end. The hounds of Kharthuun dutifully watch over their master, even after his death. Beyond this door must lie the burial chamber of the great hero himself!

➤ *Read entry 3660.*

4977

The spider flails blindly, its eyes awash with flame. The walls shake, and moldy bones tumble from their alcoves as the creature smashes wildly about the corridor. A section of stones from the ceiling comes loose and crashes to the floor. You raise your arms just in time to shield your head from the debris, but a number of heavy stones drive you to the ground. You drop the runeshard, and it clatters across the floor.

➤ *You lose four stamina.*

Your fiery breath ends with an abrupt cough, smoke trailing from your nostrils. The spider rears up to bring two scything forelimbs down upon you.

If you have runes (skill)...

➤ *Read entry 2625.*

Otherwise...

➤ *Read entry 4155.*

5209

You follow the secret passage as it winds deeper underground. The tunnel is shorter and narrower than the hall you fell from, and the crushing weight of the earth above you seems to press in from all sides.

Eventually you come to a stone door. You push it open and find yourself on the landing of a staircase that spirals even deeper into the ground. As you observe the stairs by torchlight, the door to the secret passage closes behind you. You are awestruck by the artistry of the hidden door, for once it has closed, it looks like nothing more than a wall.

Nowhere else to go, you descend the spiral stairs.

- *Time passes.*
- *Read entry 3333.*

5266

Your arrow strikes true. There is an audible crack as it punches through the chitin between two of its loathsome eyes. The beast slows, but does not fall. It closes the distance and rears up on its hind legs, raising its forelimbs in warning.

Too close now for arrows, you roll to the left as it stabs in with a scything foreleg. The creature presses the attack, nearly catching you time and again, but you stay just out of reach.

You find yourself backed against a web-choked alcove. Your hand closes on the haft of an ancient spear, slipped from the bony grasp of some long-dead hero. You raise the spear high to turn aside the spider's next attack.

- If you have dueling (skill) or willpower (skill)...*
- *Read entry 7767.*

- Otherwise...*
- *Read entry 3180.*

5380

You notice the beast is favoring one side as it moves. With a confident smirk, you loose an arrow. The beast moves to dodge, turning to its injured side just as you anticipated. The arrow, aimed a few feet to that side, strikes true, directly into the frozen, festering meat of its shoulder. The hound yowls and retreats behind the sarcophagus for cover.

- *Mark three progress.*
- *Read entry 7763.*

5410

In an instant, you pull a handful of silvery powder from a pouch and throw it into the hound's face. The beast's weight knocks you to the ground, but it does not bite you. Instead it scampers away, no doubt startled and confused by your glimmerdust. It slinks into the shadows, seeking refuge while it shakes off the strange powder.

- *You lose two stamina.*
- *Read entry 9236.*

5457

You prey upon the creature's instincts, striking when it lunges and daunting it with artful flourishes. You confound the beast, goading it into a lunge. It plants its feet and leaps into the air, its mouth wet with blood. You bring a booted foot up fast and hard and catch the creature square in the head. A sharp pain flares up your leg as your foot collides with the creature's frozen mass. It goes stumbling into the shadowed tomb, and you limp in place for a moment, preparing yourself for their return.

- *Mark three progress.*
- *Read entry 7763.*

5477

The creature skitters forward, far too fast for something so large. You draw back and loose an arrow. It caroms off the hard shell covering its head but slashes across two of its bulbous, filmy eyes in the process. The beast lets out a pained shriek, but its momentum carries it forward.

Practically before your first arrow had hit its mark, you had already nocked a second. You loose one last time before the beast is upon you.

- If you have agility (skill) or athletics (skill)...*
- *Read entry 5266.*

- Otherwise...*
- *Read entry 6628.*

5539

You nock an arrow and draw back, waiting for the beast to show itself. For long moments you swear that the hound has disappeared, vanished back into the nether realm from whence it came. You draw back another arrow and hold it ready to fire for an extended moment of silence. Just as your arm is beginning to ache, you catch sight of the creature. You loose the arrow and hear the hound yelp in pain and surprise. The beast bounds or perhaps falls into the shadows beyond your torchlight.

- *Mark two progress.*

- If fourteen progress has been marked...*
- *Read entry 1941.*

- Otherwise...*
- *Read entry 8293.*

5563

The creature skitters forward, far too fast for something so large. Not to be outdone by some nightmarish fiend, you rush into the fray. The enormous spider stabs at you with a spear-like foreleg. You deflect the attack with your weapon and make a strike of your own that turns against the creature's armored exterior.

- If have agility (skill) or dueling (skill)...*
- *Read entry 3831.*

- Otherwise...*
- *Read entry 3637.*

5584

The other spider cuts its trailing web and drops directly onto your shoulders. You can feel its too-many legs all gripping your flesh, sending a surge of dizzying panic to wash over you. Before you can react, it sinks its venomous fangs into your shoulder. You scream and knock the foul thing against the wall, but your arm is already going numb.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

There is a crack of thick chitin, and the spider loosens its hold on you. It catches itself on a web and skitters behind you.

If you have willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 7315.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8456.*

5717

The spiders raise their front legs in challenge as they slither atop you. You slash up at one, batting it to the side, its trailing web snapping with the blow. It lands heavily on the floor, but with a blur of sickening, staccato motion, its too-many legs flail as it rights itself. You strike it again, crushing it and leaving it with chitinous legs twitching.

➔ *Read entry 5584.*

5788

You charge into the shadows after the beast. It is darker here than you expected, as though the shadows themselves are devouring any light that trespasses into their domain. You can hear the clatter and scrape of broken talons on the stone floor, but you cannot lay eyes on the beast.

If you have awareness (skill) or reasoning (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 1132.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9674.*

5961

You follow the passage away from the antechamber. The light from outside is quickly drowned out by the oppressive darkness of the catacombs. You continue on by torchlight. Some kind of subterranean vines grow between the stones of the walls and ceiling, hanging down in places like monstrous tendrils.

➔ *Time passes.*

After a sharp turn, you notice that the floor is no longer stone slabs, but thick oak planks. The wood is sturdy and tarred. Although it shows its age, it has not fallen to rot or other damage. You test the flooring with a foot. The planks seem solid enough, but they clearly cover a hollow in the actual stone.

If at least one of you has reasoning (skill) or thievery (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 6209.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3814.*

6168

The hound unleashes a mournful peal, and you meet it with a roaring battle cry of your own. Despite your obstinate gesture, the creature's howl chills you to the very soul, and you must marshal your courage and discipline to keep from falling into a well of despair.

If you have military (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 1564.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3608.*

6209

You travel no further, for the floor in front of you is no mere replacement for cracked stones, but a devious pit trap. You suspect that it is weight sensitive, and only after you are fully upon it will it reveal its true nature and deposit you into some unthinkable abyss.

Attempt to leap over the trapdoor.

➔ *Read entry 1035.*

Minimize the weight on the trapdoor as you cross.

Requires reasoning (skill) or stealth (skill).

➔ *Read entry 9789.*

Examine the craftsmanship of the mechanism.

Requires craftsmanship (skill) or thievery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8675.*

6269

The spider brood are not as swift or agile as their larger kind. You easily swat the creatures as they rush toward you, crushing them against the walls and floor. A chorus of hissing shrieks are cut short one by one to the sound of repeated sickening crunches.

➔ *Read entry 3778.*

6279

You plummet through the darkness and, with a shock of surprise as much as impact, collide with the floor below. The bone-crunching landing knocks the wind from your lungs. You are certain you have broken at least a couple ribs.

➔ *You each lose four stamina.*

At the bottom of the pit, you collect yourself and assess the situation. The pit is the same width as the corridor above and nearly ten paces long. You see that you are not the only victim of the trap. A mouldering pile of bones wrapped in dessicated flesh lie on the floor of the pit. By the size of the bones and the tusks on the thick skull, this was an orc. The bones in the wretched orc's legs are shattered beyond anything he could have done to heal himself, trapped down here as he was.

If story point C6 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 4858.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1510.*

6299

You recover your wits, though even the memory of the unearthly cacophony is enough to send a shiver down your spine. Seeing the creatures loping forward, you steel yourself for the oncoming threat. You plant your feet and draw your weapon.

If you have military (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 8554.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9830.*

6491

You attempt to climb the walls, but the stonework is too fine. You cannot find purchase between the stones. You ponder using rope and the remains of the orc's body to fashion an impromptu grappling hook, but you know the tunnel is too high above you to reach with a thrown object. You take up a steel pick from the orc's pack and begin slamming it into the groove between the stone slabs hoping to loosen them or create suitable handholds. It is not long before you begin to regret your situation.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Two time passes.*

After some time, you have managed to chip away at one of the slabs. After a particularly hefty swing, the pick becomes lodged between two stones. You heave and the pick finally comes loose, bringing one of the stone slabs toppling down with it. You leap back, dropping the pick to land with a metallic clatter on the floor.

Behind where the slab stood is a void, a secret tunnel leading into the darkness. You hesitate, your adventurer's instincts urging caution, but at least it's a way out of this blasted pit.

➔ *Read entry 5209.*

6628

Your second shot ricochets off the creature's carapace. With a snap of cracking chitin, the third disappears into its abdomen. Surely this will fester and kill it in time, but for now it does nothing to slow the creature's approach.

Too close now for arrows, you roll to the left as it stabs in with a scything foreleg. The creature presses the attack, stabbing downward with another forelimb that catches you in the meat of the shoulder and forces you to your knees.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

As you look up into the creature's milky, dead eyes, you can feel your hand resting on something solid. Something that could save you. Your hand closes on the haft of an ancient spear, slipped onto the floor from the bony grasp of some long-dead hero. The spider rears back to plunge its venom-dripping fangs into your chest.

If you have dueling (skill) or endurance (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 7767.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3180.*

6653

You bring your song to a close as you roll onto your back with the creature's leap. You bring a leg up to catch the snarling beast in the belly, take it by the frozen mane, and use its own momentum to send it sailing past you. It lets out a surprised yelp as it collides hard against a pillar behind you. It scrambles to its feet and growls menacingly.

➔ *Read entry 9236.*

6674

You hear a cacophony of chittering and clicking from beside you. You turn to see that one of the alcoves contains the corpse of a gnome wrapped in spider's silk that is much more recent than the other remains. Even more horrifying is the swarm of countless spider young that have made it their home. They hiss and shriek at you, watching you with a thousand glowing eyes.

Crush as many of the wretched creatures as you can.

➔ *Read entry 9137.*

Drop the alcove's ceiling upon the horrid swarm.

Requires craftsmanship (skill) or reasoning (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2403.*

Smash a flask of Lorimor fire in the alcove.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1568.*

6747

You draw back your bow, taking aim at the injured creature. You loose, but the beast is unnaturally deft and dodges. You nock a second arrow and draw back, this time making sure to lead the beast a good deal, hoping to trick it into diving into the path of your shot.

If you have awareness (skill) or empathy (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 5380.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1995.*

6765

The trapdoor beneath you shudders as if attempting to open against a restraining force, but your sabotage holds. Knowing you only have a moment, you dart across the wooden planking. You safely reach the flagstones on the far side. As you feel the solid floor beneath your feet, you hear the sound of something metallic snapping and pinging off the stone wall. The floor behind you drops away into an abyss of blackness.

Warily turning your back on the pit, your heart still racing, you continue onward. After some time you reach the top of a stone staircase, spiraling downward into darkness. The corridor has reached its end, nowhere to go but down. Holding your torch high, you begin your descent.

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 3333.*

6898

As the dust settles, you see that both of the hounds are staggering to their feet, thoroughly bludgeoned and badly injured. One of the beasts struggles to right itself, as its hind legs have both been smashed nearly beyond use. The other stands between you and its pack-mate, growling menacingly. It charges at you, its pitiful twin following after as quickly as it can.

Bring your weapon to bear against the beasts.

➔ *Read entry 4416.*

End the crippled hound's suffering with an arrow.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 3531.*

Splash acid on the charging creatures.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 9569.*

7144

The spider flails blindly, its eyes awash with flame. The walls shake, and moldy bones tumble from their alcoves as the creature smashes wildly about the corridor. One massive limb catches you in the stomach and knocks the air from your lungs. You drop the runeshard, and it clatters across the floor.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

Your fiery breath ends with an abrupt cough, smoke trailing from your nostrils. The spider rears up to bring two scything forelimbs down upon you.

If you have runes (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 2625.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4155.*

7314

The undead horror's intake of breath is cut short by your song. It lowers its head, the icy blue flames of its eyes burning with cold rage. You feel your spirit swell with courage and the knowledge of light's inevitable victory over the creatures of darkness.

➔ *You each recover two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

7315

You turn on the creature and try to smash it beneath your boot. You bring your foot down several times, but the nightmarish thing is obscenely fast. Finally, you force it into a corner, and it begins scaling the wall in retreat. When it reaches shoulder height, you raise your weapon and smash it into the spider with all your might. You feel the crunching of chitin before your stomach turns at the wet feeling that follows.

➔ *Read entry 6674.*

7481

The beast's weight slams into you, breaking the effect that had you spellbound. You wrap your arms around its neck, trying to drive its snapping maw away from your throat. You roll, trying to get a better position, perhaps to get your feet under you.

If you have athletics (skill) or brawling (skill) and eleven or more progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 1154.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1086.*

7729

Before you can get a hold of its throat, the creature struggles and locks down on your arm with its fearsome maw. An audible cracking sound echoes through the chamber, and pain wracks your body. You think the creature has crushed the bone of your arm. Your grip slackens, and you fall to the floor.

➔ *You lose six stamina.*

The beast lopes to the dais and climbs atop the sarcophagus. The flickering blue flames of the creature's eyes burn unending.

➔ *Read entry 2168.*

7763

The hounds stalk through the shadows, always watching. You lose sight of one as it slinks behind the sarcophagus that rests upon the dais. For just a moment you turn your attention to the other. From the corner of your eye, you see the red-mawed hound leap the sarcophagus and launch itself straight at you. At that exact moment you hear frozen claws scraping the stone floor as the other takes off at a sprint to hit you from the other side. You barely have time to dodge out of the way of the first creature, dropping left into a roll. You come out of the roll at a full run, trailing the beasts behind you.

The first hound snaps at your leg, but you round a stone pillar, trying to put the column between you and your attacker. You hear a growl and turn to find yourself backed against the column by the second hound. It leaps at you, jaws ready to crush your bones.

Dodge the beast's lunge.

➔ *Read entry 4357.*

Knock the hound away.

Requires athletics (skill) or brawling (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1381.*

Blast the creature with a rune.

Requires arcana (skill) or runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8247.*

7767

You heave with all your might, driving the spear upward from beneath the creature. It shrieks in agony, and thick, putrescent ichor burbles out of the wound and onto the floor.

➔ *Read entry 2888.*

7828

You raise your weapon to block the creature's diving charge, but at the last second it turns its head and clamps its powerful jaws down on your forearm. You are forced to the ground under the massive hound's weight as it savages your arm. You twist and turn, trying to wrestle your way free, but it holds on with dogged determination.

You slam your hand against its canine face and press your thumb into its eye socket. The beast howls in pain, the cold blue light of its eye fading and dying as you withdraw your hand. The creature lets loose your arm and staggers drunkenly away from you, its plaintive cries turning to savage, furious snarls.

- ➔ *You lose four stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 9236.*

7900

At the last moment, you raise your forearm between yourself and the creature's bloody maw, and fangs sink into your flesh. The beast shakes its head violently and begins dragging you deeper into the tomb. You kick and flail at the foul wolf-thing, desperate to escape its grasp. It stops and begins to shake its head again, your arm twisting painfully.

You hear a cracking sound and at first fear that the beast has broken your arm. Then you realize what has actually happened, and a cold rush of panic washes over you. You frantically try to untie your belt pouch, but it is too late. You scream as you feel the searing pain of acid eating through your tunic and into your flesh. The shards of glass from the broken vial that held the acid tumble from the disintegrating pouch. The smell of liquefying flesh and cloth is acrid, burning your eyes and choking you as a heavy cloud of sickly yellow mist forms around you.

The creature that savages you chokes, hacks, and lets loose its grip on your arm. It backs away, shaking its head and thrashing.

- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 9236.*

7951

You cast your hands forward, and the ball of fire moves forward after as if pulled by invisible strings. The fiery orb arcs through the air at the snarling hound. The beast leaps to the side, and the fireball explodes on the ground where the beast had been standing, scorching the hound's fur and sending it yelping into the darkness.

- ➔ *Mark two progress.*

You hear a deep-throated growl behind you and realize that your target was merely a distraction. The other lupine beast has circled around behind you and launches itself into the air, maw opened unnaturally wide.

The hound grabs you by the leg and jerks its head back, dropping you to the floor. You kick at the creature as it drags you toward the darkness. Your foot smashes into the beast's skull. You feel the world stop moving beneath you, and the beast staggers backward, shaking its head. Quickly regaining its sense, the hound lopes into the shadows as you pull yourself to your feet.

- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 7763.*

7952

As the dust settles, you push yourself to your feet and look around frantically for your foe. Crushed beneath a pile of stone debris, you see the motionless form of one felled lupine creature. Dragging itself from beneath a large slab of fallen stone, the other fixes its hateful gaze upon you.

The beast pads over to the dais, seeming to fortify itself in its proximity to the stone sarcophagus. The hound raises its head, its frozen jaws cracking and popping as its maw distends disquietingly far. As the beast's exposed ribcage expands, lungs beneath filling with frosty air, the chill air of the burial chamber seems to swirl and blow toward the creature. Another unearthly howl builds within its chest.

Bellow a warcry and strike down the beast.

- ➔ *Read entry 6168.*

Raise your voice in song to counter the howl.

- Requires performance (skill).*
- ➔ *Read entry 2538.*

Cover your ears and brace yourself.

- ➔ *Read entry 2005.*

8063

In the moment you have before the beast's jaws crush your skull, you grasp a runeshard in your pocket. The uncontrolled explosion that issues forth sends both you and the hound hurtling through the air. Your back strikes a column, and you slump to the floor. The hound smashes into the back wall and falls behind the sarcophagus and out of sight.

- ➔ *You lose four stamina.*
- ➔ *Mark four progress.*

If fourteen progress has been marked...

- ➔ *Read entry 1124.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 9432.*

8100

You palm your lightning rune and focus on the sounds in the darkness, waiting for the beast to show itself. In an instant, you catch sight of the hound as it bounds from behind a stone column, and you release the fury stored within the runeshard. An arcing bolt of lightning cracks through the chill air, illuminating the entire room and leaving you blinded in the darkness that follows. You take deep breaths to steady your irregular heartbeat and flex your hand and arm, willing sense back to your dulled nerves.

- ➔ *You lose one stamina.*
- ➔ *Mark three progress.*

If fourteen progress has been marked...

- ➔ *Read entry 1941.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 8293.*

8247

You take up the first runeshard you can reach in the moment before the beast lands atop you. With a mighty upward swing of your arm you channel the power of the rune into your swing. The explosive force of the blasting rune sends the beast hurtling into the ceiling but leaves your arm aching and your fingers numb.

➔ *You lose one stamina.*

The other hound circles the column, rotten lips pulled back in a corpse's snarl. Controlling the rune for a second blast could be devastating, both for you and the structure of the room. The creature lunges, and you have no time to retrieve another runeshard.

If you have both arcana (skill) and runes (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 3889.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4798.*

8293

The hound rallies and sprints to the sarcophagus, leaping upon it to glare down upon you with hate-filled eyes. The blue flames in your foe's eyes burn brightly. Something about the effect is hypnotizing. You find yourself slow to react as the beast suddenly charges you!

Receive the creature's charge.

Requires military (skill) or willpower (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8396.*

Blast the hound with runic magic.

Requires arcana (skill) or runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8063.*

Wrestle the beast to the ground.

➔ *Read entry 7481.*

8396

Weapon in hand, you stand your ground in the face of this vile beast with the full knowledge that this is either the end of the beast or of you. With a war cry to match the bestial roar of the pouncing monster, you prepare to kill or be killed.

If eleven or more progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 4483.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1032.*

8456

You shriek and flee deeper into the passage in fear that the horrid creature will bite you once more. You stumble into a web that tangles around your face and head. In your panic to remove the sickening nest from your person, you shake loose several smaller spiders from the ceiling that bite your hands and neck before you can brush them away.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6674.*

8554

At the last second, one of the beasts lunges at you, cracked yellow fangs caked with frozen blood and saliva. You swing hard with your weapon, throwing your shoulder into the attack. Enormous though it is, you are able to turn the lunging wolf-thing aside and send it, disoriented, to the ground past you.

Unfortunately, the other used your momentary distraction to gain the advantage on you. It darts in while you deal with its pack-mate, locking its jaws around your leg. You let out a grunt of pain and turn to face your new attacker. You bring your weapon down on its spine. There is a cracking as of a frozen bough snapping, and the creature yelps as it scampers away, separating itself from you and its companion.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Mark three progress.*

➔ *Read entry 9236.*

8668

You loose another arrow, catching the beast's flank! It yelps and breaks off its charge. With a glare of all-too-human rage, it slinks into the shadows. You turn on the other too late! It lunges and locks its jaw around the forearm you raise to protect yourself. With a powerful yank, the beast throws you to the floor. You scramble for anything to protect yourself. You grab an arrow from your quiver and stab it into the beast's neck. A gurgling snarl erupts from its throat as it looses its hold on you and darts away.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 9236.*

8675

You take your time examining the floor and the edges of the wooden paneling along the walls. You discover metal hinges hidden in grooves along the bottom of the wall, just as you expected. The wooden flooring is a massive trapdoor triggered when enough weight is leveraged against the center of the pit the door must cover.

You produce a number of tools from your pack and set to work disabling the mechanism. You jam the hinges in their locked state and disconnect the pressure trigger that pulls the locking pin. With that done, you're sure the way is safe.

➔ *Two time passes.*

You gingerly place your weight on the trapdoor, and it holds. But of course it would, you've completely and utterly bested the creator of this foul device. Your stride picks up and you confidently march across the trapdoor victorious. However, after a few paces, you hear a distinct metallic clicking.

If you have devotion (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 6765.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4773.*

8687

You catch the beast's charge full on but turn your torso, drop your bracing leg, and take hold of the creature's mangy, frozen fur. You use its momentum to send it careening off across the tomb chamber. It smashes hard into an unlit stone brazier, knocking it to the floor and spilling centuries-old ash and soot across the floor. The creature gets to its feet, furious and snarling.

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

8811

As the beasts cease their howling, they lower their heads and look at you with their dead, frozen eyes. The howl echoes eerily in the chamber as they begin loping toward you, their rotting tongues hungrily licking their bloody maws.

Brace yourself and receive the charge.

➔ *Read entry 6299.*

Shoot them down before they reach you.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 9945.*

Blast the beasts with dragon's breath.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1678.*

Inspire courage with bardic song.

Requires performance (skill) and there are two or more heroes.

➔ *Read entry 9215.*

8835

You swing wildly, trying to keep the foul creatures at bay, but to no avail. Several of the fiendish spawn land on your chest and shoulders, their countless legs skittering over your body. You shout and flail, desperate to get them off of you, but by the time you do so, a multitude of venomous fangs have plunged into your flesh.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 3778.*

9034

The giant spider stabs at you again. You feebly raise your weapon to turn aside the blow, but the force of it slams you to the ground. You lose your grip on your weapon and it skips across the floor out of reach. The creature seizes its advantage and sinks its massive fangs into your chest.

➔ *You lose eight stamina.*

Liquid fire rolls through your veins, and terror follows closely after. In your desperation you flail about, slamming your fists into the beast's multi-eyed head, trying vainly to pull its fangs from you and pawing at the ground for anything that can save you. Your hand closes on the haft of an ancient spear, slipped from the bony grasp of some long-dead hero.

You feel the strength leeching from your limbs, but with one last, desperate surge of motion, you drive the spear deep into the spider's underside, just below its head.

➔ *Read entry 2888.*

9137

Choking back a wash of bile in your throat, you swing your weapon into the alcove and sweep it from side to side, smashing as many of the fist-sized spiders as you can. They hiss and shriek, crawling out of the alcove and slithering over the walls and onto webs so that they might reach you.

If you have agility (skill) or willpower (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 6269.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8835.*

9144

You pull a warm stone from a hidden pocket and press it between your palms. You blow on the stone as though stoking the embers of a guttering flame, a cloud of sparks and cinders wafting from between your fingers. You pull your hands apart, a flame bursting to life between them. You will the fire forward, weaving a trail of fire that licks the walls and ceiling of the corridor, burning the approaching spiders, their webs, and the moldering bones in the alcoves.

If you have awareness (skill) or survival (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 4623.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1515.*

9215

Seeing your companions waver, you steel your heart and raise your voice in song! You sing a tale of mighty heroes in dark places, winning triumph through courage, wit, and strength of arms. You remind your comrades that they fight for glory against wicked creatures of the underworld. You remind them that they are all that stands between the good people of Dragonholt and these fell creatures.

➔ *You each recover two stamina.*

The hounds seem confused by your song. They turn to face you, cocking their heads sideways, trying to make sense of it. You've drawn their attention. They both begin to pad toward you, their rotted lips pulled back from their cracked, yellow fangs in a snarl. They lunge at you, focused on their prey, but your companion dives forward and shoulders one of the beasts to the side.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

The other beast, its jaws wide and front claws outstretched snarls as it leaps through the air to pounce on you!

If you have brawling (skill) or survival (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 6653.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7828.*

9236

The hounds begin to circle you, just beyond the edge of your torchlight, their eyes glowing with icy blue flames. One of the beasts stalks you with the faintest of limps, and you see exposed bone of a hind leg where a patch of flesh has fallen away. Strangely, they do not move in to attack, only to circle and watch.

Engage one of the beasts.

➔ *Read entry 4393.*

Fire an arrow at the injured hound.

Requires archery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 6747.*

Throw a ball of fire.

Requires arcana (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1236.*

9261

You spend some time clearing the rubble. It's hard work and not very safe. The floor is cracked from the collapse, and the uneven ground is difficult to move over while dragging heavy slabs of stone. As you heft a number of larger pieces into the antechamber, you notice that some of the stones have been blackened by incredible heat, their surfaces utterly scorched.

➔ *You each lose one stamina. You each lose two additional stamina unless you have endurance (skill).*

➔ *Two time passes.*

Under one of the slabs, you find the remains of some poor dwarf. The body has been here for no more than a few years at your best guess. You suspect she was a tomb raider caught in a partial collapse of the ceiling. You search her person and satchel. She wore a red bandana tied around her upper arm—the mark of membership to a particular local thieves' guild—but now it hangs loose around the exposed bones of her decaying form. You discover the cause of the collapse. The dwarf carried with her a number of dwarven firebombs. You see the remnants of some that previously exploded here as well as blast patterns and scorch marks surrounded by the decayed husks of spiders as large as her head. As you rifle through her decrepit pack, you find a number of coins, a vial of red liquid, and a few firebombs that are still intact.

➔ *You gain 30 gold.*

➔ *You gain one healing potion.*

➔ *Mark story point C6.*

➔ *Read entry 3853.*

9432

Before you completely recover from the blast, the hound leaps the sarcophagus and stands tall on the dais. The flickering blue flames of the creature's eyes seem to burn with unending fury.

➔ *Read entry 2168.*

9504

The strike lands with the sound of crunching bones. The blue fire in the beast's eyes fades until little more than icy blue embers, then snuffs out entirely. The beast lies motionless on the ground. The other hound regains its feet and returns to the fray. You whirl and land a glancing blow across its muzzle. It shakes off the blow, but in so doing gives you just enough time to put some distance between yourself and the beast.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 1350.*

9558

In desperation you take hold of your weapon and with a mighty swing you slash at the spider's massive limb. There is an inhuman scream, and the looming spider staggers back, its leg shorn from its body. Sickly ichor drips from the wound and broken chips of chitin are scattered about the floor beneath it. You climb shakily to your feet, bolstered by the creature's injury. Pressing the advantage, you hack this way and that with your weapon, hewing another verminous leg, then another. The creature spins awkwardly, its bulbous thorax slamming hard into you, throwing you against the wall and sending your weapon skidding across the floor.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

Spying an ancient spear in a nearby alcove, you take it up as you stand. You whirl on the spider, bringing your new weapon to bear. You drive the creature back with your ferocity. It lunges forward, its fangs glistening with venom, seeming desperate to end the fight. You counter its lunge with a diving thrust of your own, burying the spearpoint up under the creature's head. Once the spear head is past the cracked exoskeleton, it sinks nearly the full length into the liquid organs of the beast.

➔ *Read entry 2888.*

9569

You pull a glass vial from your pack and uncork it. An acrid, dusty vapor wafts from the open mouth. You wait until the undead creatures are nearly upon you, then cast your hand out, splashing the yellow liquid in an arc in front of you. The lead creature throws itself to the side, deftly avoiding your attack, but the injured beast is too slow to react. The noxious liquid catches it full in the face, instantly sizzling fur, flesh, and bone alike. The wretched creature's eyes flare with cold fire, and it collapses to the ground. The light in its undead eyes fades until they are little more than blue-white embers.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

With a howl that carries equal parts rage and despair, the remaining creature hurls itself at you like a battering ram, throwing its full weight into you in an effort to knock you off your feet.

If you have brawling (skill) or dueling (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 8687.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1704.*

9674

You chase the sound of scraping claws and catch glimpses of the beast as it lopes from shadow to shadow. You lose sight of the beast and quicken your steps, hoping to catch up to it in the shadows. You feel a hot lance of pain shoot through you as the beast erupts from a pool of shadows behind one of the pillars to sink its rotting fangs into your hip. Leaving you bloody and savaged, the hound bounds away into the center of the room.

- ➔ *You lose two stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 8293.*

9713

With a sharp intake of breath, you realize the beast is only acting as a distraction. You pivot and throw the fireball just as the second creature lunges toward you. The force of the fiery assault tosses the hound away and into the darkness, flickering flames smoldering in its frozen, mouldering fur.

- ➔ *Mark three progress.*
- ➔ *Read entry 7763.*

9789

You minimize the pressure of your weight on the planks by pressing yourself against the wall, hoping that, if the floor is a trapdoor, you will be putting your weight on its hinges. It is slow going and nerve wracking, but you make your way across, inch by inch.

- If there are three or more heroes..*
- ➔ *Read entry 3419.*

- Otherwise...*
- ➔ *Read entry 3685.*

9830

You cannot shake the sound of that unearthly howl from your mind. It has stricken you to your very soul. One of the hounds lunges at you with vicious fangs, and even in the face of certain death you cannot stir yourself to action. It is all you can do to keep the beast from sinking its teeth into your throat. You feebly fend off the creature as it bears you to the ground. The other hound prowls the shadows nearby, watching you intently.

You work your forearm up between yourself and the creature's bloody maw, and it sinks its fangs into the flesh. The creature shakes its head violently and begins dragging you deeper into the tomb. You finally come to your senses, the pain pulling you out of the stupor. You begin kicking and flailing at the nightmare hound, attempting to free yourself from its grasp. Your boot lands a blow against its skull and it stumbles, its jaws slackening. You pull your arm free and scramble away.

- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Mark one progress.*
- ➔ *Read entry 9236.*

9945

You loose an arrow, but the beasts separate and dart in opposite directions. Your arrow clatters off the stone floor where they had been. You track the motion of one, then the other as they sprint into flanking positions on either side of you. You nock an arrow and focus your attention on one of the beasts first.

- If you have athletics (skill) or brawling (skill)...*
- ➔ *Read entry 4520.*

- Otherwise...*
- ➔ *Read entry 8668.*

9991

The artistry and craftsmanship of the stonework is exceptional and seems to have survived centuries. The sarcophagus atop the dais thrums with power, and you sense something inside is the source of the unnatural cold that permeates the chamber.

The burial vessel is locked with four stone seals. You remove them each in turn, and as the fourth is lifted from the sarcophagus, a deep winter's chill begins to seep from under the stone cover. The lid is unfathomably heavy, and removing it is only possible in slow, agonizing increments.

Eventually you are able to pry the sarcophagus open. A breath of wintry cold air wafts out of the casket, chill mist pouring onto the ground. The blue coals in the braziers kindle to life with flames that seem to pull the heat from the chamber.

Inside rests the remains of an ancient warrior covered in a burial gown that has all but turned to dust. The skeleton is clutching a jagged shard of crystal inscribed with a runic symbol. The interior of the sarcophagus is rimed with hoarfrost. You reach to take up the runebound shard but recoil as touching the crystal burns your skin with cold. You retrieve a sheep skin from your pack to scoop up the prize without harming yourself.

As you lift the runeshard from the sarcophagus, you can feel its power even through the sheep skin. The icy flames in the braziers die down as the shard seems to absorb their light, and the room's unnatural chill begins to fade. By the time you reach the doors, you can hear the dripping and running of tiny streams of water, the frost covering the chamber having melted in mere moments.

- ➔ *You gain the frost rune (item I).*
- ➔ *Mark story point S6.*
- ➔ *This quest is complete. Read entry 7752 in the "Dragonholt Village" book.*