

TERROR ON THE PRAIRIE



Approximate Playtime
50 - 80 Minutes

1007

You ride east, following the road through the rocky plains until an offshoot takes you northeast into a wooded gulch. Wispy tendrils of black, oily smoke snake up through the trees ahead. You approach cautiously, unsure of what you might find there. But your apprehension at coming face to face with a dragon is dwarfed by the hope of finding survivors.

What's left of a merchant caravan sits smoldering off the bank of a small stream. The trees part around the water and road, creating a natural clearing where the dragon must have attacked the caravan.

Almost all of the wood has been reduced to ash, and the copper nails that once held it together have been melted and fused with the earth. Steel bands from shipping containers and reinforced trunks have been scattered around the landscape, as have the bones, weapons, and armor of a half dozen caravan guards.

Examine the debris for clues.

➔ *Read entry 7557.*

Search for signs of survivors leaving the area.

➔ *Read entry 4284.*

1073

You reach into a belt pouch and grasp the frost rune wrapped in sheepskin. Already the air in the courtyard feels colder, and frost forms on the delicate flowers that grow inside the walls. As you draw out the shard, the dragon halts its action and snaps its jaws at you, fixing its gaze on the object in your hand.

The great lizard's eyes burn, and its nostrils flare as you reach your will into the shard and draw upon the stored magical energy inside. You feel the heat of the dragon's will prodding and attempting to wrest control of the magic away from you, but it cannot bear to touch the chilling energy.

You release from the shard a blizzard that coats the tower and the dragon's wings in bitter frost. The creature roars, and fire builds in its throat, but the frost rune's magic reaches out and snuffs the flames. Just as ice crystals begin to form on the dragon's scales, its long tail slams down beside you, forcing you to dive out of the way and lose focus on the magic.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 1415.*

1165

Your first shot deflects uselessly off the dragon's hide. You aim a second shot at the thinner scales behind the beast's shoulder but discover that even the "weak" parts of a dragon are as tough as steel.

➔ *Read entry 3288.*

1184

By the time you get within reach, you've identified the weakest part of the beast's hide. With a precise jab, you thrust your weapon behind the creature's leg. The spearpoint pierces between the scales and sinks into the flesh, eliciting an angered howl from the dragon.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 9253.*

1213

Again and again, you hear the dragon's breath swell, a distinct popping and the roar of the air igniting into flames that batter your hiding spot. The pattern forms in your mind. You steady your mount, ready to make your move. You hear the popping once more and anticipate the wave of flame that follows.

You kick your mount into action, riding first away from your now glowing hiding place, then around the monster, just out of reach of the fiery breath.

The dragon snaps its jaws and breaks into a run, bounding through the fields toward Evesmoore in parallel with you.

➔ *Read entry 9496.*

1255

You watch how the dragon moves and how its scales move like plates of armor. The beast slashes a clawed paw that passes over your head as you duck and ride under an outstretched wing. You keep calm, and then you see it, the gap in the armor you need. You thrust, and the tip of your spear slips between the scales behind the dragon's foreleg and punctures deep into the soft flesh.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

The dragon jolts suddenly from the pain, and your spear is nearly ripped from your hands before you manage to free it from the beast's armored hide. The creature spins away, sweeping a massive spiked tail in your direction and grazes your shoulder.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

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

➔ *Read entry 5227.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6070.*

1310

You produce your blasting rune from an interior pocket and focus on the energy stored within it. You stretch the magic beyond your fists and sheath your forearms in a field of invisible force. So long as you maintain your focus, you can both strike harder and deflect powerful blows.

You leap toward the dragon, bringing one fist up to deflect an incoming clawed attack. You lunge forward and slam your fist into the beast's chest, sending it reeling backward and sniffing at the air.

You dash and dart and slam your fists into the monster's legs and tail, then wheel to keep yourself at its flanks. Without your blasting rune, the dragon's tail would have crushed you a dozen times over, but the ability to deflect those blunt attacks lets you fight toe to toe.

Finally sensing the magic you're wielding, the dragon pulls back. Its chest and throat swell with golden heat, and it unleashes a terrifying burst of crimson flames. Knowing your magic cannot protect against the fire, you allow the spell to end and flee from the burning assault.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 8540.*

The dragon leaps down from the tower wall to land in the courtyard, causing the ground and walls to shake. A fiery light swells in the creature's throat. The rumble of its growl vibrates in your chest, and you feel the heat of its furnace-blast breath. Lieutenant Bentley and his soldiers draw back from the beast.

Then you hear a whinny and the beating of hooves on the stone bridge. You look to see the frail merchant frantically riding away, still tightly clutching his satchel. The dragon roars and snaps its jaws at the fleeing merchant, then beats its leathery wings, kicking up a whirlwind and lifting itself into the air to follow after the panicked rider.

"Fire!" calls Lieutenant Bentley from behind you. You turn to look over your shoulder at the ballista just in time to see the dwarf soldier let her missile fly. The bolt slices through the air and passes within a hair's breadth of your head, but the soldier knew what she was doing; the steel shaft slides harmlessly past you and horribly into the dragon. It tears a ragged hole through the monster's leathery wing and sinks into its rib cage with a thick, meaty thunk. The beast howls and falters, crashing down among the trees.

➔ *Mark six progress.*

Without so much as stopping to nurse its wound, the dragon bounds after the merchant on foot. You are on your mount in an instant, galloping after the dragon. Soon you break out of the woods and see the dragon bounding across the rocky prairie. Farther ahead is the merchant, riding as quickly as his horse will carry him.

➔ *Time passes.*

The roar of blood pounding in your veins matches the thunder of hooves beneath your mount. In the distance you see the thatched roofs and wooden walls of the village of Evesmoore, and each second that passes brings the dragon closer to destroying them all.

If story point D4 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 3969.*

If story point K6 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 8979.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1878.*

1460

You shield yourself with the only thing you have at hand, your tangleweb bag. The pouch absorbs much of the blow, but one of the dragon's spikes punctures the bag, and the sticky substance inside bursts outward, covering you and your mount in quickly hardening sludge. The force of the blow would have knocked you from your saddle had you not been stuck in place by the sticky oobleck.

➔ *You lose six stamina.*

Your mount staggers in panic and falls to the ground with you stuck to it. You struggle against your alchemical restraints for a flask of universal solvent, but your anxious mount is making it even more difficult than it should be. Eventually, you manage to free one arm and use the solvent to dissolve enough of the oobleck to free yourself and your mount.

➔ *Read entry 1877.*

Suddenly, something huge strikes the side of the watchtower, causing the walls and ceiling to shake. A deafening roar sounds from outside, and a massive clawed hand smashes through the wooden ceiling, slashing through the air overhead.

"Olga to the ballista," calls the lieutenant. "Keven, stay inside and stay low. The rest of you with me!" With that he charges out of the tower, followed by his soldiers and you behind them.

Clinging to the side of the tower is a creature of overwhelming stature with luminescent red scales, each the width and length of a human hand. The monster stands on its hind legs, two stories tall with great leathery wings and a tail just as long as its body that whips from side to side. The creature blindly reaches in through the hole it has created in the roof. As of yet, it has not noticed that you and the soldiers have poured out into the courtyard.

The dwarf woman hustles over to the covered wagon and throws off the heavy tarp to reveal a military ballista mounted on a flatbed wagon. She immediately sets to work, arming the device.

"Keep it distracted!" shouts Bentley. Then he and the two remaining soldiers pull heavy crossbows from their backs and form a rhythm of firing bolts at the great lizard and reloading.

Take aim and fire.

➔ *Read entry 8061.*

Assist the dwarf with the ballista.

➔ *Read entry 8903.*

Buffet the dragon with runic magic.

Requires arcana (skill) or runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 2532.*

Cover the beast in magical ice.

Requires frost rune (item).

➔ *Read entry 1073.*

Swat at the creature's tail and hind legs.

➔ *Read entry 7077.*

1681

You watch the dragon's movements as you ready your crossbow, taking special note of the creature's joints. You rest your crossbow across your arm and steady your mount to line up a shot.

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

➔ *Read entry 9194.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1898.*

1716

You draw your weapon and press your mount into a charge. The dragon takes notice of you only as you come within striking distance. Its eyes are wide and confused but narrow quickly. The beast pounces, swinging a heavy clawed paw in your direction!

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

➔ *Read entry 2759.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7728.*

1782

You fish a small vial from within a belt pouch and pour the icy-hot liquid on your mount's tired shoulders. You soothe the animal with a gentle touch intended to massage the oil into the skin. Soon enough, your mount seems to have overcome its fatigue.

With a renewed vigor, you ride fast and hard, soon coming up beside the bounding dragon.

If you have military (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 6950.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8679.*

1877

The dragon scampers through the fields beside the road, climbing over boulders and leaping shallow irrigation ditches on its path toward the fleeing merchant ahead of you.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 2815.*

1878

Your spirits rise with each desperate snap of the dragon's jaws. It is wounded and enraged. You think you might be able to press your advantage to force the dragon into making a mistake.

Keep the battle conventional and personal.

➔ *Read entry 7092.*

Press the beast with a volley of ranged attacks.

➔ *Read entry 2935.*

Assault the dragon with trickery and bladework.

Requires agility (skill) or thievery (skill).

➔ *Read entry 8924.*

Trade blows at point-blank range with runic magic.

Requires brawling (skill) and runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1310.*

1898

The dragon is simply too protected—its scales too hard, its spines too numerous. You fire a bolt at the creature's side, but it catches a hard crest of bone. You reload your crossbow and fire once more. This time the bolt deflects off the armored scales of the shoulder. You've managed only to ensure the dragon knows of your presence. The beast lunges and swings a massive claw, which slashes your leg.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

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

➔ *Read entry 5428.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3262.*

1900

You quickly recall each of the concoctions you've brought with you, thinking of a use for any of them in this situation. At last, you have an idea that just might work. You retrieve a small sack and an empty flask from a belt pouch. Doing your best to guide your mount with just your legs, you carefully pour the contents of the sack into the flask and tie the flask to the end of a crossbow bolt.

It's not ideal, but this will have to do. You ready your crossbow and take aim. You don't really even need the bolt to do any damage, so long as it strikes near the beast's eyes. You pull the trigger and the bolt soars through the air and strikes one of the horns atop the dragon's head. The flask shatters with the impact and releases a cloud of silvery, glimmering powder that covers the dragon's face and eyes.

The dragon roars and thrashes, pawing at its face and staggering from side to side. The creature shakes its head violently and then stumbles down a small gully into a large tree.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

Finally, the dragon has had enough of this. It half buries its head and breathes out a puff of flame that burns away the silver substance and spreads quickly through the air around you.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 9253.*

2064

You thrust firmly, but the spearpoint deflects off a hard crest of bone. Again and again you stab, each attack is turned aside by bone, spines, or hardened scales. At last, your spearpoint catches between the scales behind the creature's leg—not enough to wound, but enough to get the dragon's attention.

The giant lizard bounds and kicks a massive hind leg at you. Your mount panics and backs away, saving you from an otherwise fatal blow. As it is, the dragon's razor-sharp talons only slice through the flesh of your leg and arm.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 1877.*

2070

Again and again your spearpoint catches on the hardened scales or spines along the dragon's neck. With one particularly fervent strike, you hear a loud crack but are disappointed to see that the sound came from your spear and not the dragon's scales. The beast howls in rage and flaps its wings hard enough to shake you loose.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6326.*

2196

You take aim and pull the trigger. The bolt hits the dragon's wing but merely pierces straight through the thinner membrane. This elicits a huff of fiery breath in your direction, and in your panic to guide your mount away, you accidentally jam a crossbow bolt into your upper arm.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6326.*

2271

From an interior pocket, you retrieve your lightning rune and call upon its power. The dragon sniffs at the air and turns its attention from the grasping vines to the crystal in your hand. You can feel the dragon's mind probing the runeshard and attempting to control the magic it contains.

You decide to act quickly, casting bolts of lightning toward the dragon in rapid succession. The dragon snaps its jaws and turns away the first bolt like it's nothing. The second bolt barely leaves your hand before arcing backward toward you, but the third bolt manages to strike the dragon's wings.

- ➔ *Mark one progress.*
- ➔ *You lose five stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 9253.*

2378

You press forward once more, but the dragon swings its heavy spiked tail, which catches your mount full in the side, swatting it out from under you and possibly breaking your leg in the process. You struggle to your feet and see that your mount lies battered and broken at the side of the road.

- ➔ *You each lose four stamina.*

You make a final, desperate gambit toward the dragon, but it is able to use its torn wing to bound out of your reach. With your mount gone and your leg injured, you have no chance of stopping it.

You do try—with all your heart, with all your might, you do try—but there is no chance of reaching Evesmoore in time. You watch in horror as the dragon reaches the village and begins lighting wooden walls and thatched straw roofs with furious abandon.

The carnage stretches on before the dragon finally uncovers the Rostum merchant who had hoped to hide in a wooden shack. The giant lizard snaps its jaws shut around the man's legs, yanking him from his hiding spot and into the air. His precious guarded satchel drops to the ground. You cannot bear to watch what happens to the man next.

When the dragon's rage is spent, it carefully noses the satchel open to reveal a giant egg, glistening black with marbled red veins that seem to glow with molten heat. The dragon gently lifts the egg in its maw and bounds away from Evesmoore toward the north, leaving you and the village behind without a second glance.

- ➔ *Mark story point U1.*
- ➔ *This quest is complete. Read entry 4311 in the "Dragonholt Village" book.*

2492

You jam your dagger hard beneath a scale and slide it back and forth. You sweep under another clawed attack then pick a new scale and repeat your maneuver. The dragon howls in pain and rage, and soon boiling hot blood is bubbling from beneath its scales, which burns your hands and forearms.

- ➔ *Mark two progress.*
- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 3011.*

2532

You retrieve your blasting rune from a pocket and clutch it firmly, feeling the well of magical energy stored inside. You focus the energy into a shape in your mind, a linear column that stretches from the runeshard toward the dragon.

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

- ➔ *Read entry 4027.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 7976.*

2614

The dragon fire burns your skin, hair, and clothing, but you push through it and hurl your spear toward the dragon's open maw. Your determination pays off as the spearpoint strikes the roof of the creature's mouth.

The dragon howls and staggers backward, affording you freedom from the fiery death that would no doubt have consumed you. The beast flails, knocking your spear to the ground. Then it turns and runs, bounding through the fields toward Evesmoore.

You lean down and scoop up your fallen spear as you give chase.

- ➔ *Mark two progress.*
- ➔ *You lose eight stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 6473.*

2743

The dragon snaps twice, then spits a gout of easily dodged flame in a wide arc across the road. You realize quickly that the attack was meant as a distraction as the dragon ignores you to focus its full attention on the fleeing merchant.

Charge through the fire and close with the beast.

- ➔ *Read entry 8931.*

Launch a volley of fired missiles.

- ➔ *Read entry 8184.*

Snuff the flames and slow the dragon with cold.

Requires frost rune (item).

- ➔ *Read entry 3077.*

Stamp out the flaming crops before giving chase.

- ➔ *Read entry 8413.*

2759

You leap from your mount, and the creature's razor talons cut through the air beneath your feet. You land on the great lizard's back, between its wings and launch an attack against the back of its neck. The beast thrashes and claws at you, but you use the crown of horns and bone that protrudes from its head as cover.

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

Satisfied with the damage you've done, you leap from the creature and land on your mount. Just in time too, as the dragon violently rolls and thrashes on the ground—an act that surely would have crushed you.

- ➔ *Read entry 3011.*

2815

You've fallen behind too far for medium- or short-range tactics. You kick your mount into a sprint in an attempt to make up some distance, but you know the animal can maintain this speed for only a short while before it needs to rest.

Charge forward at full speed.

➔ *Read entry 6979.*

Harass the dragon from behind.

➔ *Read entry 5973.*

2868

You deftly draw a dagger and sink the long blade between the soft scales on the wing. The dragon flails and flaps its wings, but with your new handhold, it cannot shake you. You wait for a moment when the dragon stops flailing to carve a ragged cut in the flesh of its wing, then leap back to your mount before the creature attempts to throw you once more.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 4770.*

2893

You thrust firmly, but the spearpoint deflects off a hard crest of bone. A second stab catches between the scales behind the dragon's leg but doesn't have enough force to puncture through to the muscle. Finally, a third, perfectly executed strike sends the spearpoint plunging into the creature's flesh.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

The dragon barks and snaps its jaw. Then it bounds and kicks at you with its hind leg, a razor-sharp claw graving your chest.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7885.*

2935

You maneuver with the dragon on the road. When the dragon attempts to break away, you follow, but when the dragon attempts to close, you flee. You ready your weapon and take aim.

If you have archery (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 7038.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8214.*

3011

Monstrous eyes—each the width of a buckler—glare at you, filled with hate and fury. In that moment, you can imagine exactly how a rabbit feels as it looks up to find an eagle about to strike.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 7825.*

3077

You reach into a pouch on your belt and feel the frost rune wrapped in sheep skin inside. By the time you've drawn it, the fire around you has been choked out by bitter cold. You press your mount into a sprint and notice you're gaining on the dragon, which is moving slower to catch its breath after releasing the burst of flame.

The dragon bounds across the road in front of you, and you can see an irrigation ditch up ahead. You reach out with the magic of the frost rune and pull several large, jagged spikes of ice out of the water just as the dragon leaps over the ditch.

Unable to stop its momentum, the dragon bowls through the ice shards. One spike pierces the scales beneath a forelimb. A second punctures the leathery membrane of the creature's wing and tears a tattered gash.

The giant lizard stumbles and rolls to a stop—but only for a moment. Within seconds, the creature has pulled itself to its feet, though you can see it now moves with a limp. However, the unnatural cold causes your mount to panic and buck.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 4770.*

3262

You freeze for only a heartbeat, but that's enough. The dragon's claws slash across your back and send you reeling, nearly falling from your mount. By the time you right yourself and snap back to your senses, the dragon has distanced itself from you.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 9496.*

3288

The dragon glares at you, then swivels its head toward the whinnying horse of the fleeing merchant. The anger in the beast's eyes is clear and frightening as it bounds after the merchant at full speed.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 2743.*

3311

You stay close to the dragon's flank, periodically darting forward to stab, but your blade slides off the scales more often than not. The dragon beats its wings and slashes at you as you dance around its legs. Even if you aren't doing much damage, the dragon doesn't seem to be able to catch you.

Your attacks end when your knife blade finally snaps off when you press it into one of the creature's scales. The break throws you off balance, and the dragon swats you aside with a heavy paw.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6326.*

3336

Whether by pure reflexes or sheer luck, you manage to duck the dragon's spined tail and kick your mount forward to remove yourself from the danger of the creature's assault.

The dragon bounds beside you along the road, only vaguely aware of your presence. You heft the leather bladder and hurl it at the giant lizard. It strikes one of the sharp horns on the creature's head and bursts open in an explosion of sticky webbing that covers much of the beast's head, shoulders, and forelimbs.

The dragon roars and looses a gout of boiling flame in your direction as it thrashes, managing only to further spread the hardening substance to its wings. Soon the dragon is unable to move its forelimbs, wings, or neck as it struggles furiously.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

You produce two flasks of yellow-green liquid from your pack and hurl them to shatter against the creature's flank and back. The acid releases a cloud of putrid smoke and sends the dragon into a blind fervor, rolling through the crops and soil attempting to free itself from the burning acid and horrid webbing.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

Eventually, the dragon manages to stumble into a shallow stream. The creature's fire breath sends the water into a violent boiling that cleans away the vile substances.

➔ *Read entry 7885.*

3360

You can scarcely hear the monster howl over the roar of its breath igniting into flame. It spits the fire accurately and continuously—a relentless barrage of death you can do nothing to stop.

You manage to guide your mount straight into the fire, roaring your own battle cry and hefting your heavy spear, ready to throw.

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

➔ *Read entry 2614.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4268.*

3415

You stow your crossbow and instead draw out your frost rune. The large crystal glows with a faint chilling light, and you can feel the vast well of power stored inside it. You reach out with a grasp like a winter gust and pull sharp spikes of ice from an irrigation ditch in the dragon's path.

The giant lizard skids into the spikes, one of which pierces the scales beneath a forelimb. The dragon breathes out a wave of flame and smashes several of the spikes, but you call upon the frost rune's power once more, and two massive pillars of ice jut out of the water and slam together on either side of the beast. However, in your haste, you accidentally touch the crystal to your bare skin which instantly goes numb and darkens.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7885.*

3461

You are able to soothe at least the mount's anxiety about chasing after a dragon much larger than it. You ride fast and hard, soon coming up beside the giant lizard. You draw your weapon and attack, striking the beast's flank. The blows are not much, but they are enough to force the dragon to turn its attention toward you.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 8540.*

3465

You ride up behind the dragon on the road, picking your path wisely to avoid its swinging tail and being cautious of the twists and turns ahead that might cause the dragon to suddenly shift in your direction.

Ride alongside the dragon and attack its flank.

➔ *Read entry 9938.*

Leap onto the giant lizard's back.

➔ *Read entry 5571.*

Entangle the creature's limbs with alchemical oobleck.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 7583.*

3513

You take careful aim and pull the trigger. The bolt strikes true, piercing through the scales on the dragon's flank. You guide your mount with your legs as you ready a second shot. You aim and fire, this time planting a shaft in the base of a wing.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

The dragon snorts and growls, turning and skidding to a stop in your direct path, its jaws and talons ready to end your bothersome assault. You mount rears up in panic, causing your face to collide with the back of its head.

➔ *You lost three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 8540.*

3670

You swiftly guide your mount away and avoid the deadly attack. After coming up and running parallel to the giant lizard, you move in closer, weapon drawn.

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

➔ *Read entry 1184.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6455.*

3707

Your efforts are for naught, and your mount is simply too tired to sprint. You manage to keep pace with the dragon for the most part, but if you do not allow your mount to rest soon, it will collapse from exhaustion. And so will you.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6326.*

3969

The road cuts through a rolling hill, and you see the dragon leap and scramble up the rocky slope, unable to squeeze through the narrow gap. When you emerge from the other side, you see that you have gained some ground on the great lizard, which now bounds through the fields beside you, trampling the crops with complete disregard.

Charge into melee combat.

➔ *Read entry 1716.*

Attack the dragon at range.

➔ *Read entry 9050.*

Strike with runic lightning.

Requires runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 4146.*

4002

The merchant looks nervously between you and Lieutenant Bentley. "I can't say I know," says the lieutenant. "What reason does a bloodthirsty beast have to attack and kill anyone? It's in their nature to be destructive, is it not?"

You inquire if they did anything to provoke the dragon. The frail merchant tightens his grip on his satchel, which you see bulges from its contents.

If story point G8 is marked...

➔ *Read entry 6102.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1490.*

4027

As you draw energy from the shard, the dragon halts its action and snaps its jaws at you, fixing its gaze upon the crystal in your hand. The runeshard responds to the dragon's will, and it takes everything you have to keep the spell from breaking apart.

You take a defiant step toward the great lizard and release the stored magic before it can turn against you. A crash like thunder echoes through the courtyard as an invisible beam of force strikes the dragon's side, causing it to grind its claws deep into the stone walls of the tower to keep from falling.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 1415.*

4030

The dragon's fire breath builds in its throat, a pulsing golden glow of molten air and heat. Then suddenly the glow is gone, and the dragon begins to sputter and cough as great plumes of black smoke pour from the creature's nose and mouth.

You grasp the frost rune in hand, and like Kharthuun, you have frozen a dragon's fire in its throat. With another press of your will, the shard sends a giant spear of ice hurtling through the air.

If you have archery (skill) or runes (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 9714.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8581.*

4119

You charge into reach and swing your weapon, but the dragon merely swats you off your mount. You roll to avoid a second swing that cleaves the hard dirt of the road. You leap to your feet and twirl inside the creature's reach, striking at its underbelly as it rears up to distance itself from you.

The dragon snorts and growls, then spins and slams its heavy tail into your side, tossing you off the road and into the field where your mount is waiting for you. Then the dragon turns away and bounds off toward Evesmoore once again.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

➔ *You lose six stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7682.*

4121

You wait until the dragon telegraphs a snapping bite, dodge to the side, and scramble onto its outstretched neck. You swing onto its back as though it were wearing a saddle and tightly grab hold of one of its spines. The beast immediately begins to buck and writhe, desperate to throw you off.

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

➔ *Read entry 6115.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6618.*

4146

You slip your fingers into a hidden pocket and produce your lightning rune. As you focus on the magical energy inside, dark storm clouds begin to form overhead, and the air hums with energy.

The dragon sniffs at the air, then its eyes shift from side to side in search of the source of the growing power. The beast snaps its jaws as it finds the shard in your hand.

Thunder rolls through the clouds overhead, and a sudden deluge of rain pours down that sizzles against the heat of the dragon's scales and muddies the road.

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

➔ *Read entry 9251.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4808.*

4268

The dragon fire burns your skin, hair, and clothing. Your mount falters, and you know this will be your death. With a panicked scream, you hurl your spear through the flames.

The dragon rears up and swats the weapon from the air. Luckily, this is enough for the beast to halt its fiery onslaught. You struggle to calm your mount and beat out the flames that cling to your clothes. By the time you succeed, you see that the dragon is already bounding through the fields toward Evesmoore.

You lean down and scoop up your fallen spear as you give chase.

➔ *You lose eight stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 9496.*

4284

You search the area for signs of any survivors and discover tracks leading away from the clearing, heading north—several horses and a single set of wagon tracks.

The path splits, and the tracks follow an offshoot up a rocky slope leading to a stone bridge over a crevasse. Beyond the bridge stands a watchtower surrounded by a crumbling stone wall. In the small courtyard inside the wall, you discover the single wagon you had been tracking. It is low to the ground and covered with a thick flame-resistant tarp.

You dismount and approach the covered wagon. As you are about to take a peek under the tarp, a voice calls out to you. “Who goes there?” A soldier—a human woman in the red and white livery of the Belmont family of Rostum county—stands in the tower’s doorway holding a spear.

You explain that you’ve come from Dragonholt having seen the smoke and heard that a dragon was seen in the area. As you speak, the soldier watches the sky anxiously. “Right. You’d better come inside quickly. We barely managed to escape. The dragon might find us at any moment.”

You follow the woman inside and find yourself in the company of four soldiers in Belmont livery, a timid human man in fine clothes, and their five horses. An air of anxiety and fear is heavy in the cramped tower room, and the horses are restless.

“I’m Lieutenant Bentley,” says one of the soldiers—a human man with a grizzled beard and an eyepatch. “We’re grateful you’ve come, but what purpose could you have for approaching a dragon?” he asks, his one eye studying you intently.

You take a moment to consider the question. Bentley’s three remaining soldiers—the human woman you met earlier, an orc man, and a dwarf woman—all seem on edge, perhaps more so due to your presence than the fact they were attacked by a dragon. The other man—the human in fine clothes—sits near his horse, nervously clutching a satchel. He’s clearly not a soldier, perhaps a merchant.

“Came to help any survivors.”

➔ *Read entry 9441.*

“What brings Rostum soldiers to Dragonholt county?”

➔ *Read entry 9113.*

“Why would the dragon attack your caravan?”

➔ *Read entry 4002.*

4668

Cautiously, you place the dragon egg on the ground in front of the beast. Ready to draw your weapon should the need arise, you, Braxton, and Rochelle release the dragon’s restraints.

The dragon doesn’t move at first, doesn’t raise claw, or wing, or tail against you. It sniffs the air and licks at the egg in front of its snout. Then it gently lifts the egg in its maw and bounds away from Evesmoore toward the north, leaving you and the village behind without a second glance.

➔ *Mark story point L5.*

➔ *This quest is complete. Read entry 4275 in the “Dragonholt Village” book.*

4749

You slide between the dragons legs, dancing away from razor-sharp talons and twirling to the beast’s flank. Along the way, you experiment with a few quick stabs, testing the armored scales for weaknesses.

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

➔ *Read entry 2492.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3311.*

4762

You land with the grace of a mountain cat and quickly scamper along the dragon’s spine, using the spikes of bone on its back as footholds and handholds. Once you’re positioned between the creature’s wings, you swing the spear from your back and begin a relentless assault, thrusting your spearpoint through the membrane of the dragon’s wings, between the plates of bone that protect its back, and even puncturing the scales on the back of its neck.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

The dragon roars with fury and pain, beating its wings and bucking—anything to remove you from its back. The creature’s movements increase in ferocity, and you think it time to leave. You leap from its hind end and back into your saddle.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7885.*

4770

There’s a furious exasperation in the dragon’s howls. Its focus is split between its true target (the fleeing merchant) and you (who are clearly so bothersome that it cannot ignore you).

If eighteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 7163.*

4808

The dragon continues to bound over the rolling hills of the prairie, always keeping its gaze fixed on the shard. You can feel its will manipulating and shaping the stored magic. Focused as you are on maintaining control of the magic, you are unable to properly guide your mount on the storm-soaked road.

Your mount falters as it tramples through a mudslide, and the lapse in concentration allows the dragon to wrest control of the magic from your mind. All around you and the dragon, the air is split by jagged forks of lightning. The searing heat and blinding light sends your mount into a mad panic, and you’re forced to pocket the runeshard before you can calm your startled mount.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 3288.*

5090

Suddenly, the dragon rears up, its front claws bearing down on you. You raise your crossbow and fire in a moment of panic. The bolt cuts through the air and breaks against the creature's hard scales. One of the dragon's paws slams into the ground beside you, kicking up soil and crops. The second clawed paw slashes down on your other side, a razor-sharp talon slicing through the flesh of your leg.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

You mount panics and takes off at full speed, carrying you back to the road and toward Evesmoore.

➔ *Read entry 3288*

5166

Regardless of the reasons, the dragon has already killed and poses too great a threat to be left alive. You explain as much to the others as you position your spearpoint between the scales on the back of the creature's neck. Braxton and Rochelle are conflicted, but they cannot disagree that allowing the beast to live would mean putting countless lives in danger.

With a heavy thrust, you press the spearpoint through the dragon's neck, halting its breath instantly. The burning light fades from the magical beast's eyes as blood bubbles up from the wound, a boiling hot substance, even long after the dragon has already died.

➔ *Mark story point L5.*

➔ *You gain one dragon blood (item Q).*

➔ *This quest is complete. Read entry 4275 in the "Dragonholt Village" book.*

5178

Whenever you draw closer to the dragon, it bounds away over a hill or through the crops. With the rolling hills, leading your mount off the road and through the fields would prove unwise.

As the road winds around hills, the dragon slowly begins to pull away from you. For now, you'll have to attempt to slow the dragon from afar.

Fire upon the dragon with your crossbow.

➔ *Read entry 9015.*

Hinder the creature with glimmerdust.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1900.*

Unbalance the beast with runic magic.

Requires runes (skill).

➔ *Read entry 9964.*

Press your mount forward to keep pace.

➔ *Read entry 7639.*

5227

You manage to maneuver your mount away from the assault, ducking the dragon's spiked tail. Then you ride hard and fast back toward the road, distancing yourself from the beast.

➔ *Read entry 4770.*

5416

You attempt to soothe your mount with gentle words and pets, whispering to it that it can rest soon, but for now you must press on and catch up with the dragon.

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

➔ *Read entry 3461.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3707.*

5428

You swiftly guide your mount away, allowing you to lean away just in time to avoid the deadly attack. The dragon roars and bounds forward, thrashing its spined tail to force more distance between you.

➔ *Read entry 9253.*

5440

You bide your time, watching the creature's movements and placing your sights on a damaged scale beneath one of its forelimbs. When the great lizard reaches once more, you fire with a solid twang. The bolt soars through the air and sinks cleanly into the muscles under the beast's arm. With a roar and a gout of flame, the creature turns its attention toward you.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 1415.*

5571

You press your mount into a stupidly dangerous charge, straight toward the dragon's hind end. The giant creature swings its tail, your mount scrambles to stop, and you leap from the saddle. You land on the base of the dragon's tail.

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

➔ *Read entry 4762.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9835.*

5627

From another pouch, you produce your frost rune. One quick thought causes the roots and vines to freeze, sharp shards of ice piercing the dragon's scales. You hold a hand aloft, a spear of ice forming overhead that fires forward and stabs into the beast's back near the shoulder.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 9253.*

5671

You take up your spear and lift its point toward the approaching dragon. The beast launches toward you with the power of a catapult's shot, and you kick your mount into motion.

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

➔ *Read entry 1255.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8517.*

5858

You ride your mount feverishly along the road, keeping pace with the bounding dragon. Whenever it releases a burst of flame, its pace slows momentarily, and you slowly begin to close the distance despite your mount's obvious fatigue.

Press your mount forward as quickly as possible.

➔ *Read entry 5416.*

Fire upon the dragon from afar.

➔ *Read entry 7626.*

Soothe your mount's fatigue with an alchemical mixture.

Requires alchemy (skill).

➔ *Read entry 1782.*

5949

You reach into your pack and retrieve a glass flask containing an oily-looking grey liquid. You hurl the flask to smash on a boulder up ahead, and soon a thick cloud of opaque smoke obscures the field in front of you. Once concealed, you change course, hoping the dragon will lose you in the cover.

You ready a second flask, this one containing a yellow-green fluid. Listening to the dragon's footfalls and angered cries, you throw the flask through the smoke and hear it shatter. The dragon howls as the acid burns its scales. A burst of flame tears through the alchemical smoke, and you ready your crossbow in time to see the dragon beating its great wings to clear the cloud cover.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

If you have archery (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 7075.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 5090.*

5973

You set your mount into a stable pace as quickly as you can while still readying your crossbow and taking aim.

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

➔ *Read entry 6122.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6995.*

6067

You attempt to guide your mount away, but you are too slow. The creature's tail strikes the side of your mount, causing it to panic and pull away from the giant lizard.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

After calming your mount, you manage to come up running parallel to the beast and move in closer, weapon drawn.

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

➔ *Read entry 1184.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6455.*

6070

You guide your mount away from the assault, but you are too slow, too clumsy, and your mount is panicking. One of the razor-sharp spikes on the dragon's tail slashes across your back, opening a stinging red wound. You ride as quickly as your mount will allow toward the road, putting more distance between yourself and the dragon.

➔ *You lose five stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 3288.*

6102

The pieces begin to fall into place: the evidence of the dragon searching the caravan, the number of armed soldiers accompanying a merchant caravan, the nervous attitude of the merchant, and the bulging satchel held with the utmost care.

"You stole something from the dragon," you mutter.

Lieutenant Bentley and his three soldiers draw their weapons, and the merchant shrinks behind them.

"It's time you moved along," growls Bentley.

➔ *Read entry 1490.*

6115

The dragon moves erratically beneath you, but your grip is solid and your legs are clamped on tight. You draw your spear and stab it repeatedly into the dragon's head and neck.

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

➔ *Read entry 8485.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 2070.*

6122

At this range, you know your bolts will lose too much force to puncture the dragon's hard scales. Instead you focus on peppering the creature's softer wings. You can tell your efforts are agitating the giant lizard, but it refuses to give up its chase after the fleeing merchant.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

If you have the frost rune (item)...

➔ *Read entry 3415.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6726.*

6326

Seeing gashes pockmark the dragon's hide and watching blood seep from beneath its scales gives you hope—but each second that passes brings the villagers closer to doom.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 3969.*

6347

Fetid brown teeth twice the length of your hand snap together just overhead as you desperately duck beneath a fatal bite. You dodge backward, and four razor-sharp claws slice through the air a hair's breadth from your face and neck.

Climb onto the dragon's back and attack.

➔ *Read entry 4121.*

Nimblely dodge and search out weak points.

➔ *Read entry 8502.*

6451

You swing furiously, but your weapon glances off of the beast's armored hide. The dragon swings at you, but you duck and dodge away. The dragon grows clearly more frustrated with your constant harassment, but it does not tire as quickly as you do. Eventually, you must put distance between yourself and the dragon before you sustain some real damage.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7682.*

6455

You manage to get yourself within reach and strike frantically at the dragon's side. Your weapon glances off of hardened scales and spines repeatedly until your arms are tired. The dragon leaps and slashes at you with a clawed hand, then thrashes its spined tail in your direction. You give up your assault and guide your mount away to safety.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 9496.*

6473

The dragon's claws sink deep into the soil with each bound as it rushes after the fleeing merchant. Every leap, every pounce brings it closer to Evesmoore.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 8979.*

6489

You ready your crossbow and twist around in your saddle, taking aim at one of the dragon's eyes. Just as you loose the bolt, the dragon leaps into the air, causing the shot to glance off an armored forelimb. The giant lizard's leap catapults it in front of you to land with an earth-shaking force that causes your mount to skid to a stop. The dragon circles you as you scramble to ready your crossbow once more.

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

➔ *Read entry 7075.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 5090.*

6575

You are closing the distance between yourself and the dragon, but it's too slow. You reach into the pouch at your hip and feel the chill of your frost rune. As you draw it out, you find an irrigation ditch out in front of the bounding dragon. You pull on the pool of energy within the shard, and the water in the ditch juts upward, freezing into a thick wall of ice.

The dragon skids into the wall, crashing through it in a tangle of limbs, wings, and tail. This affords you the time you need to close the distance, weapon drawn.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

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

➔ *Read entry 9527.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 4119.*

6593

You move around to the other side of the machine and spin the crank wheel to draw back the string. "Load a bolt," calls the dwarf as she takes up the stock and aims the device at the dragon. You grab one of the long steel shafts from the wagon's bed and slot it into place.

A moment of calm passes as the dwarf lines up her shot, then the machine fires with a sound like thunder that thrums in your chest. The bolt launches straight toward the dragon's head, but the creature twists at the last second. The steel shaft slashes through the scales on the great lizard's neck—only a graze.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

The dragon is none too happy with your attack and turns its attention toward you. You and the dwarf scramble to reload the ballista before it is too late.

➔ *Read entry 1415.*

6618

The dragon jerks erratically beneath you, and your hips slide off the back of its neck. You feel a shock in your leg and look down to discover a claw has torn through your flesh, and blood is streaming down your leg.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

You draw your spear and stab it repeatedly into the dragon's head and neck.

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

➔ *Read entry 8485.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 2070.*

6726

You stow your crossbow and press your mount into a sprint, pushing it to the brink of exhaustion. There's nothing else that you can do but hope to catch up and make a more focused attack.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7682.*

6950

You draw the spear from your back and make several probing jabs at the dragon's flank. Finding a spot where the scales seem thinner, you thrust the weapon hard, punching the spearpoint deep into the flesh. The dragon howls and bucks, and a spike slams against your leg.

- ➔ *Mark two progress.*
- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 8540.*

6979

You ride fast and hard, your own heavy breathing matching that of your mount. But still you press on. You must close with the dragon and prevent it from reaching Evesmoore.

- ➔ *You lose two stamina.*

If you have the frost rune (item)...

- ➔ *Read entry 6575.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 9410.*

6995

You pull the trigger, but the bolt clatters harmlessly off the creature's back. You ready your weapon and fire a second shot that gets caught by the wind and flies wide into the field. After a third failed attack, you decide that you are simply too far behind for your crossbow to be of any use to you.

If you have the frost rune (item)...

- ➔ *Read entry 3415.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 6726.*

7038

As you continue to maneuver around the dragon, you draw back your bow and loose arrow after arrow. Some glance off the creature's hide, but others puncture its wings or strike too close to its eyes for it not to take your harassment seriously. The dragon snaps its jaws at you, but you loose a shaft into the creature's maw that sends it reeling back and choking. A follow-up strikes the dragon's softer underbelly, puncturing the scales and sinking into the flesh. The beast roars, and the air ignites into flame that forces you to retreat.

- ➔ *Mark two progress.*
- ➔ *You lose four stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 7682.*

7075

Suddenly, the dragon rears up, its front claws bearing down on you. You raise your crossbow and fire with practiced aim. The bolt cuts through the air, slicing into the great lizard's left eye. The creature roars and staggers backward, jets of angry flame streaming from its nostrils. You turn your mount and ride back to the road, putting distance between yourself and the raging dragon.

- ➔ *Mark one progress.*
- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 4770.*

7077

You draw your weapon and charge at the creature, realizing only as you approach just how big it truly is. You stand shorter than the giant lizard's hind leg. You slash and strike at the beast's tail and leg, your weapon sliding harmlessly off hardened scales. At last you find a spot where the scales are softer, and the dragon seems to notice you for the first time.

- ➔ *Mark one progress.*

The dragon swats at you with its tail as if you were a fly on a cow's backside. The appendage strikes you in the abdomen and sends you hurtling backward onto the ground.

- ➔ *You lose four stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 1415.*

7092

You stick close to the dragon, maneuvering away to dodge its vicious claws. You press in again, slashing with your own weapon and causing the beast to huff and snap at you. Its vicious fangs slice through your flesh—any deeper and it would have taken your arm.

- ➔ *You lose four stamina.*

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

- ➔ *Read entry 8390.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 6451.*

7152

The dragon slashes at you, but you slip under the attack. Then the beast rears up, ready to slam its forelimbs to the road. You swing around to the creature's flank, but the dragon was expecting it. The giant lizard spins and slams its heavy tail against your side.

- ➔ *You lose five stamina.*

You roll with the blow and manage to scramble back to your feet, dagger still in hand.

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

- ➔ *Read entry 2492.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 3311.*

7163

The dragon swivels its snake-like head and pins you with a burning gaze. Its chest and throat swell with a red-hot glow, and embers and smoke drift from the beast's nostrils. The creature's massive claws sink into the soil as it opens its maw to release a deadly roar.

Dive behind cover and wait out the firestorm.

- ➔ *Read entry 8875.*

Charge through the flames and hurl a spear into its maw.

- ➔ *Read entry 3360.*

Choke the dragon's fire with runic cold.

Requires frost rune (item).

- ➔ *Read entry 4030.*

7557

Though the caravan is completely annihilated, there does seem to be some kind of method to the madness. The crates aren't just burned or smashed open, they've been picked through. And the reinforced trunks that were too well made to burn have been pried open by strong claws. The work must not have been easy, even for a dragon, because you find one of the creature's talons has broken off and stuck in one of the heavy chests.

- ➔ *You gain one dragon claw (item P).*
- ➔ *Mark story point G8.*
- ➔ *Read entry 4284.*

7583

As you guide your mount up alongside the dragon, you pull an oiled leather bladder from your pack. Just as you ready to throw the pouch, the dragon's tail thrashes in your direction.

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

- ➔ *Read entry 3336.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 1460.*

7626

Allowing your mount a respite from a forced sprint, you draw your crossbow from your hip, wind back the string, and load the device. Perhaps a few well-aimed shots can distract the dragon from its furious chase.

If you have archery (skill)...

- ➔ *Read entry 3513.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 2196.*

7639

Rather than attack at range, you hope to close the distance between yourself and the giant lizard. You press your mount into a heated sprint that you know will not be sustainable for long. Still, you manage to keep pace with the beast, and when the terrain levels out, you allow your mount to return to a more manageable pace not far behind the dragon. Both you and your mount panting from exertion.

- ➔ *You lose two stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 1877.*

7682

The battle rages, and blood, sweat, and cinder spread across the prairie. The dragon bounds through the fields, barking bursts of flame at the fleeing merchant, drawing ever closer to Evesmoore.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

- ➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

- ➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Time passes.*
- ➔ *Read entry 5858.*

7728

You slash with your weapon, but it glances off the creature's hard scales. The dragon's attack catches you full in the side and throws you to hang from the side of your mount, which swings away from the dragon's path. Blood blooms on your side as you struggle to right yourself. The dragon's sharp claws have left a deep gash in your side.

- ➔ *You lose six stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 3288.*

7825

The dragon releases a terrifying roar, which rumbles in your chest, and begins a dead charge in your direction. With each breath embers drift from its nostrils and reflect menacingly in its eyes. It is only then, as the creature's glare bores into you, that you realize you've truly angered it.

Check the dragon's aggressive charge from range.

- ➔ *Read entry 8991.*

Brace for its charge and continue the fight in close combat.

- ➔ *Read entry 5671.*

7885

The dragon howls in fury and barks fire at absolute random in frustration. When it finally turns its attention back to you, its eyes are filled with rage.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

- ➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

- ➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Time passes.*
- ➔ *Read entry 1878.*

7976

As you draw energy from the shard, the dragon halts its action and snaps its jaws at you, fixing its gaze upon the crystal in your hand. The runeshard responds to the dragon's will, and you feel the magic warp and twist.

Fearing the magic will rebel, you release your hold on it, and the spell shatters with a clap of thunder that echoes off the walls of the courtyard. The runeshard quivers in your palm, and you pocket it before the dragon can attempt to control it once more.

- ➔ *Read entry 1415.*

8061

You heft your own crossbow from your back. It's old, but serviceable, and has a windlass built into the stock. You crank the heavy bowstring back, nock a bolt, and take aim.

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

- ➔ *Read entry 5440.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 9871.*

8150

Lieutenant Bentley narrows his gaze, and the orc soldier shifts his hand to rest on the blade at his hip. "Y-yes, quite unusual, I'm sure," squeaks the merchant. "Well you see, it is an order from Lord Le—"

"Unusual perhaps," interrupts Bentley. "But it was damn lucky there are so many of us. That dragon tore apart our caravan and fellows easy enough. Had there not been so many of us, Keven here would be dead for sure." As he speaks, the lieutenant grips the merchant by the shoulder, and you can see the thin man wince.

"It is odd though," you say. "Almost as if you were expecting to encounter the creature. Why exactly would a dragon want to attack your caravan to begin with?"

➔ *Read entry 4002.*

8184

You lift your weapon and guide your mount around the fire, managing to loose two shots before your mount returns to the road. One glances off a spike on the dragon's back, but the second pierces through the leathery membrane of the creature's stronger wing. You kick your mount into a sprint to make up the distance and ready for another attack.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

If you have archery (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 8933.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8975.*

8214

All the while, you ready your crossbow, aim, and fire. The process is slow, but you repeat it methodically. One bolt scratches across the scales of the creature's shoulder. A second pierces a wing and soars off into the field behind. A third glances off a horn too close to the dragon's eye for it to take lightly.

Furious, the dragon spits a puff of flame that forces you to back off enough for the creature to turn away and resume its charge after the fleeing merchant.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 7682.*

8335

Your first shot deflects uselessly off the dragon's hide, but you watch the creature's movements carefully and notice a pattern. At the moment when the beast's front legs reach for the next bound, its neck become more exposed. You take careful aim and fire at just the right moment. The shaft buries itself deep in the creature's neck, causing the beast to roar in surprise and agony.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 3011.*

8345

You wrap yourself around the creature's wing with arms and legs to keep from falling. The dragon flails, then begins to flap its great wings. You're sure it would take off had one of its wings not been so badly damaged. The giant lizard continues to bound along the road, flapping its wings until your tired arms can no longer keep hold. You make a final desperate leap and manage to roll to the ground beside your mount without much harm and quickly climb back into the saddle.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6473.*

8390

As you and the dragon snarl and swipe at each other, a new strategy begins to dawn. The next time you lunge in, you slash at its vital neck and chest, executing a vicious, full-power, hit-and-run attack. Your assault leaves the dragon edging away from you.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *Read entry 8540.*

8413

The flames on the road burn only with the fuel provided by the dragon's breath, but you notice that the fire has spread to the nearby crops. You act quickly, charging into the flames and swinging your weapon to chop down the burning stalks, and your mount eagerly stamps out the smoldering foliage. The crops are safe, but you've given the dragon considerable time to get away.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

You kick your mount into a sprint to make up the distance. Luckily, your notice the dragon is moving more slowly after using its fiery breath. You manage to close much of the distance before the beast has caught its breath and returned to full speed.

➔ *Read entry 6473.*

8485

Again and again your spearpoint finds gaps in the dragon's armor, sinking between scales and into soft flesh. Soon blood is pooling up from the wounds, bubbling and boiling hot. The beast howls in pain and rage and flaps its wings hard enough to splatter you with boiling blood and shake you loose.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 3011.*

8502

You keep your feet on the ground and draw a dagger. You adopt a new strategy, sticking too close to the dragon for its attacks to be truly meaningful and flowing like water around its claws and legs.

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

➔ *Read entry 4749.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 7152.*

8507

Try as you might, you cannot find a passage to greater safety. Again and again, you hear the dragon's breath swell and the roar of the air igniting into flames that batter your hiding spot, which now begins to glow around the edges and radiate a heat that you find nearly unbearable, but at least you aren't exposed to the flames directly.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

At last the roaring flames stop. When you work up the courage to peek out from behind your rock, you see that the dragon is bounding through the fields toward Evesmoore. You kick your mount into action and give chase.

➔ *Read entry 9496.*

8517

Shaken by the ferocity of the dragon's charge, you strike blindly as the beast lunges, but your spearpoint is turned aside by the dragon's armored scales. The great lizard moves faster than you had anticipated, and a clawed swing sends you sailing from your mount to a heap on the ground.

➔ *You lose six stamina.*

You roll to your feet and keep low, using the tall crops as cover to move toward your panicked mount. The dragon rears up and scans the area, but notices you only as you manage to climb back into the saddle. The creature spins away, sweeping a massive spiked tail in your direction.

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

➔ *Read entry 5227.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6070.*

8540

You find yourself uncomfortably close to the dragon now. Behind it, you can see the Rostum merchant fleeing along the road toward Evesmoore. At least the dragon isn't charging toward the innocent villagers if it's focused on you.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Time passes.*

➔ *Read entry 6347.*

8581

The ice crystal grazes the dragon's muzzle and shatters against a horn, causing chunks of sharp ice to spray its eyes. The dragon howls and staggers backward. Then it turns and runs, bounding through the fields toward Evesmoore as a hail of sharp ice rains down around you.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6473.*

8679

You retrieve a flask of glistening clear liquid from your pack. You haven't finish testing this particular substance yet, but you can't think of a better opportunity. You smash the flask against the dragon's flank, and a sudden crackling and puff of fog comes from the impact site. You can see that a thin layer of ice has formed over the giant lizard's flank, leg, and tail.

Your attempts to note the effects of the alchemical reaction are cut short when you notice hand has gone numb from the cold.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6326.*

8875

You can scarcely hear the monster howl over the roar of its breath igniting into flame. It spits the fire accurately and continuously—a relentless barrage of death you can do nothing to stop.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

You guide your mount behind a large standing boulder, which begins to grow hot to the touch. Tendrils of fire constantly lick their way around and singe your hair and clothing. Your eyes dart around the prairie as you desperately look for a way to escape.

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

➔ *Read entry 1213.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8507.*

8903

You rush to the dwarf's side and quickly scan the war machine in front of you. "Well don't just stand there!" hisses the dwarf. "Help me crank this."

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

➔ *Read entry 6593.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9682.*

8924

You dash into the dragon's reach, sliding under a clawed swipe and coming to your feet, dagger in hand, at the creature's flank. You have time for a few testing jabs—finding gaps between the dragon's scales where your blade slips cleanly into the softer flesh beneath—before the beast thrashes to the side.

You roll between the dragon's hind legs, then thrust your dagger deep into the meat at the back of its leg. You duck under its swinging tail and pounce onto its back, slashing two tattered cuts in its wing.

The dragon roars and thrashes more violently, and you flip backward off the creature and roll away to safety, managing to escape with no more than a sprained wrist and a gash across your side.

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 8540.*

8931

The dragon's fire is hot but burns quickly. You press your mount forward into a heated sprint and leap the small remaining flames that linger on the road. You note that the dragon moves slower just after releasing its fiery breath, but even still the flames lick at your flesh and clothing.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

As your mount pulls up along side the giant lizard, you stand on your saddle and launch yourself onto the creature's back. The dragon roars and shudders, attempting to shake you off, and you must cling to its wing for purchase.

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

➔ *Read entry 2868.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 8345.*

8933

You take careful aim and land a shot that pierces the scales at the base of the dragon's hind leg. The beast staggers and cries out, its tail and wings thrashing violently in pain and anger. The creature kicks up the earth, pelting you with soil and vegetables.

➔ *Mark one progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 4770.*

8975

You fire once more, but the bolt breaks against the ridge of bony spikes along the creature's spine. You reload your crossbow and fire again, but the shot goes wide as the dragon bounds across the road and over a shallow irrigation ditch.

Frustrated, you decide to focus on catching up. You ride hard and fast, pushing yourself and your mount.

➔ *You lose two stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6473.*

8979

Despite an angrily thrashing tail and treacherous spines jutting from its hide at all angles, if you can reach the dragon's lightly-scaled flank, you'll be given your best chance to inflict some real damage.

Charge into close combat.

➔ *Read entry 9356.*

Fire at the beast from afar.

➔ *Read entry 1681.*

8991

You kick your mount into action, riding into the field and away from Evesmoore. You form a plan of attack as the dragon continues to chase you.

If you have alchemy (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 5949.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 6489.*

9015

You ready your crossbow and fire, sending a bolt that pierces through the thinner membrane of the dragon's tattered wing. The creature doesn't seem to have even noticed. You load your crossbow in preparation for another shot.

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

➔ *Read entry 9430.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 9313.*

9050

The dragon coughs a gout of flame in your direction that billows around you and your mount. The fire burn hot and fast, but quickly it is gone, and you suspect it was only a threat.

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

In a moment, your weapon is in your hand, and you let fly—each shot aimed at a vulnerable eye or its open mouth or an exposed shoulder joint.

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

➔ *Read entry 8335.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 1165.*

9113

The lieutenant grimaces before speaking. "We're tasked with protecting this merchant and his caravan on a trade mission." Bentley looks over his shoulder and calls out, "Keven!"

The skittish merchant jumps to his feet, still clutching his satchel tightly. "Y-yes!" exclaims the timid man as he steps forward. "I-indeed! I've come from Rostum on a—" He trails off, looking to the lieutenant and swallowing before continuing. "—on a trade mission to Haverfor—"

Lieutenant Bentley coughs loudly and clears his throat, causing the smaller man to startle and cease his explanation.

"Why does a merchant need so many guards?"

➔ *Read entry 8150.*

"Why would the dragon attack your caravan?"

➔ *Read entry 4002.*

9194

You identify the weakest part of the beast's hide and, with practiced accuracy, fire a bolt that pierces the scales behind the dragon's leg and sinks deep into the flesh. This causes the beast to release an angry howl of pain. Then the dragon lunges at you, swinging a massive claw that slashes across your leg and your mount's side!

➔ *Mark two progress.*

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

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

➔ *Read entry 5428.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 3262.*

9251

You raise your fist to the sky. Light flashes above the dragon, and a jagged bolt of lightning strikes the ground beside the giant lizard. The dragon roars and glares at you, but a second bolt strikes just in front of its face, blinding it temporarily and causing it to stagger. The sky splits, and a third bolt spikes through the creature's chest and into the soil beneath. The dragon howls in pain and frustration, but the beast manages to turn the bolt on you before you stow your runeshard.

- ➔ *Mark three progress.*
- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 3011.*

9253

The prairie breaks into a particularly rocky steppe, and the dragon bounds onto the road in an effort to find less hindering terrain.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

- ➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

- ➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Time passes.*
- ➔ *Read entry 3465.*

9313

You point your crossbow at the dragon, closing one eye to attempt to line up the shot. You pull the trigger, but the dragon leaps at that moment over a fallen log. Your bolt deflects off one of the large spikes on the creature's back and vanishes into the field of crops. Your arms and shoulders burn as you reload. Your body grows weary.

- ➔ *You lose two stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 1877.*

9356

You press your mount forward, attempting to close the distance between you and the dragon. The creature suddenly thrashes its spiked tail, slashing across your chest and shoulder.

- ➔ *You lose four stamina.*

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

- ➔ *Read entry 3670.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 6067.*

9410

You are slowly closing the distance between yourself and the dragon. You draw your spear and hurl it to clatter against the creature's back, eliciting a snort and a snapping of its jaws.

The dragon seems to accept your challenge as it slows then turns to face you.

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

- ➔ *Read entry 9527.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Read entry 4119.*

9430

You notice a patch of hide on the dragon's neck that is not protected by the hard spikes and horns that armor its back and head. You take careful aim and pull the trigger. Your bolt finds its mark, but the hide is thicker there than you expected. The dragon angrily kicks up soil and crops in your direction, showering you in dirt and vegetation.

- ➔ *Mark one progress.*
- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*
- ➔ *Read entry 1877.*

9441

The other soldiers seem to calm at this, but Bentley still eyes you warily. "Thank you for your concern, but as you can see, the dragon has left now," says Bentley. "Satisfied with destroying our caravan I suppose. If it's the dragon you're looking for, you can follow it north, but we won't be joining you. We've lost enough already."

"What brings Rostum soldiers to Dragonholt county?"

- ➔ *Read entry 9113.*

"Why would the dragon attack your caravan?"

- ➔ *Read entry 4002.*

9496

You and the dragon race over the rolling hills of the prairie. All the while, the wooden buildings and thatched roofs of Evesmoore growing closer.

If eighteen progress has been marked...

- ➔ *Read entry 9987.*

If six or more time has passed...

- ➔ *Read entry 2378.*

Otherwise...

- ➔ *Time passes.*
- ➔ *Read entry 5178.*

9527

You end your charge by leaping from your mount and slashing your weapon at the dragon's face. The giant lizard pulls back and swipes a massive clawed paw, meeting your attack and batting you to the ground.

- ➔ *You lose three stamina.*

You and the dragon begin an almost-knightly duel, maneuvering and watching each other, making testing thrusts or slashes. After sizing up the creature's movements, you notice how it favors certain motions that rely less on its wounded appendages.

You rush forward, swinging your weapon furiously. Your blows land with a force and energy that surprises you. And once you discover how much damage you are inflicting, you focus more on causing injury and less on self-preservation.

A cut finds its way up beneath a foreleg, but then a thrust goes wide and skitters harmlessly off the dragon's scales. The lizard slams a massive paw down, forcing you to back off.

- ➔ *Mark two progress.*
- ➔ *Read entry 7885.*

9682

You move around to the other side of the machine and watch the dwarf for a moment, unsure how to help. You see that she is pulling a lever that turns a wheel and draws back the string. You take hold of another lever and pull. "No!" shouts the dwarf too late. The string releases with a loud twang. Luckily, no bolt had yet been loaded to mistakenly skewer one of the other soldiers.

The sound however, has drawn the attention of the dragon.

➔ *Read entry 1415.*

9714

The ice crystal catches the dragon in the maw, piercing into the beast's throat with a horrid "thunk." The creature staggers backward and claws at the crystal, managing to break it off and cough up sharp fragments that are now painted red with the dragon's blood. The creature hurls the ice spear, which shatters beside you in a spray of sharp crystals. Then it turns and runs, bounding through the fields toward Evesmoore.

➔ *Mark three progress.*

➔ *You lose three stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 6473.*

9835

You falter as you land, nearly falling off, but catch yourself on one of the bone spikes that protrude from the creature's spine. You creep forward on unstable feet until you are positioned between the dragon's wings. You draw your weapon and prepare to make your first attack, but the dragon bucks violently, throwing you forward through the air.

Time seems to move in slow motion as you glide through the air in front of the dragon. Then the dragon raises its horned head, catching you full in the gut, goring you and tossing you to the side of the road like refuse. The pain is overwhelming, and climbing back into your saddle is possibly the hardest thing you've ever had to do.

➔ *You lose eight stamina.*

➔ *Read entry 1877.*

9871

No sooner than you have pointed the device at the great beast, you pull the trigger and launch the bolt. You know a crossbow bolt can easily puncture armor, but the scales of a dragon are no mere armor. The bolt glances off the lizard's thick scales. You doubt the dragon has been harmed, but you've certainly gotten its attention.

➔ *Read entry 1415.*

9938

You guide your mount forward alongside the giant beast, narrowly ducking its thrashing tail as you close. Spear in hand, you position yourself and strike!

If you have military (skill)...

➔ *Read entry 2893.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 2064.*

9964

You draw a gnarled piece of crystal that looks like petrified wood from a belt pouch and hold it in your hand. Reaching out with your mind and the power of the growth rune, you can feel the crops living all around you. The plants react to your call and begin to grasp and pull at the dragon's feet, but it's no use. The dragon is too strong for your magic to stop it from advancing, so you shift tactics and make the terrain treacherous and unstable.

Roots shoot up from the ground and tangle around the dragon's feet. With each step it has to tear more and more vines from the soil. The dragon attacks the entangling vegetation with its burning breath. The flames spread quickly, and soon you are surrounded.

➔ *You lose four stamina.*

If you have the frost rune (item)...

➔ *Read entry 5627.*

Otherwise...

➔ *Read entry 2271.*

9987

The dragon roars and staggers forward several paces. You advance, and its attempts to keep you at bay are weak at best. You see Braxton and Rochelle riding toward you from Evesmoore, and together you are able to restrain the weakened dragon with ropes.

As you are testing the restraints to ensure they are secure, Tallea approaches from the south, dragging the Rostum merchant by the collar. The man is still clutching his satchel, and the dragon huffs and claws at the dirt, struggling forward. Its obsession with the merchant shockingly present even now.

You inform Braxton, Rochelle, and Tallea that the merchant has stolen something from the dragon and fled south to Evesmoore, leading the dragon the entire way.

The merchant's simpering, manic smile fades as Tallea hoists the man up by his collar. "This village," she shouts, "you were willing to sacrifice an entire village to save your own thieving skin. And for what?"

The frail man whimpers and stammers, trying to articulate a defense, but Tallea shakes him and he quiets instantly.

"There is no talking your way out of this," says Tallea. "Your freedom is forfeit. We're escorting you to Dragonholt. The countess will decide what will happen to you next."

You lift his satchel from the ground and open it to reveal a giant egg, glistening black with marbled red veins that seem to glow with molten heat. Immediately the dragon snorts and howls, clawing at the dirt and attempting to reach you.

"You stole a dragon's egg?" gasps Braxton in surprise. "It's no wonder the poor beast is so frantic."

Slay the dragon here and now.

➔ *Mark story point I2.*

➔ *Read entry 5166.*

Return the egg and release the dragon.

➔ *Mark story point W2.*

➔ *Read entry 4668.*